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Barriers to promotion faced by female engineers at a FMCG firm in Johannesburg, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the barriers to promotion faced by female engineers at a FMCG company in Johannesburg, South Africa. Employing a qualitative approach, the study explored factors contributing to this underrepresentation, delved into the experiences of female engineers, and proposed strategies for promoting gender equality in leadership roles. Key findings highlighted industry challenges, persistent gender biases, and structural impediments. The research underscored the interconnectedness of barriers, rejecting isolated solutions. The study identified gender bias, stereotypes, and structural challenges as significant contributors, affecting women's progression from entry levels to leadership roles. Moreover, the research revealed the impact of persistent gender bias on young professional women's career advancement, influenced by biological reasons within the FMCG beverage company. The study emphasized the competitive disadvantage faced by female engineers, shedding light on the need for targeted interventions to mitigate these challenges. The study proposed proactive policies, awareness programs, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture to address gender imbalances. To the FMCG industry, the study recommended policies like having reserved positions for females, and targeted initiatives to ensure equitable representation. Further studies are recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to track the career trajectories of female engineers, to assess the impact of existing diversity and inclusion policies on the career progression of female engineers as well as to investigate how gender intersects with factors such as race, ethnicity, and age. The findings emphasized the importance of actively tracking diversity goals, building on existing policies, and fostering an environment where women could thrive in senior roles within the FMCG beverage firm in Johannesburg.

Keywords: *Female Engineers, FMCG Industry, Promotion Barriers, Gender Equality, Gender Bias, Career Advancement, Workplace Diversity, Leadership Positions, Organizational Policies.*

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

Gender equality and diversity within the engineering industry remain critical issues that require attention and research. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, female engineers continue to face various challenges in accessing senior positions and advancing their careers (Smith, 2020). In particular, the promotion challenges encountered by female engineers within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) company in Johannesburg, South Africa, warrant investigation. This research aims to shed light on the unique experiences and barriers faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg and contribute to the development of strategies to address these challenges effectively.

The underrepresentation of women in senior engineering roles is a persistent concern in the field (Bussin, 2020). While women constitute a significant portion of engineering graduates, their presence diminishes as they progress to higher positions within organizations. This discrepancy underscores the need to examine the barriers preventing female engineers from accessing career advancement opportunities, particularly in the FMCG beverage company. A comprehensive understanding of these challenges and their underlying factors is crucial for fostering gender equality, diversity, and inclusive practices within the engineering sector (Ketchiwou, Naong, Van der Walt, & Dzansi, 2022)

This research specifically focuses on the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa, due to its vibrant nature and significance to the national and regional economy. By narrowing the scope to this specific industry within the context of Johannesburg, the study can closely examine the promotion challenges faced by female engineers and investigate the organizational, cultural, and systemic factors contributing to their underrepresentation in senior positions.

The primary objectives of this research are two-fold. Firstly, it aims to identify and analyze the specific promotion challenges encountered by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. By exploring the experiences and perspectives of female engineers, valuable insights can be gained into the barriers that impede their career progression (Mastenbroek, 2022). Secondly, the research seeks to propose strategies and recommendations to address these challenges and promote gender equality and diversity in leadership positions. Through a

comprehensive analysis of the promotion process and an examination of best practices, mentoring programs, and policies, actionable solutions can be developed to facilitate the advancement of female engineers in the FMCG beverage company.

This study holds significant implications for multiple stakeholders, including organizations, employers, policymakers, and female engineers themselves. By identifying and addressing the specific promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on gender disparities in engineering (Yates & Skinner, 2021). The findings will provide practical insights to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment, inform policy development, and shape initiatives aimed at enhancing career progression opportunities for female engineers.

1.2 Background of the study

The pursuit of gender equality and diversity in the engineering industry has gained increasing attention in recent years. While progress has been made, female engineers continue to encounter various challenges in their career advancement and the attainment of senior positions (Grand View Research, 2022). This is particularly evident within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. To address the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in this specific context, it is essential to understand the broader landscape of gender disparities in the engineering field and the significance of the FMCG company in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg, as a major economic hub in South Africa, hosts a diverse range of industries, including the thriving FMCG sector. Understanding the promotion challenges faced by female engineers within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg holds particular importance as it presents a unique set of organizational, cultural, and systemic factors that may impact career advancement opportunities (The Nielsen Company, 2015).

By investigating the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, this research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on gender disparities in the engineering field. By focusing on this specific industry, a comprehensive understanding can be developed regarding the barriers that hinder female engineers' career progression within a distinct organizational context. Moreover, the findings of this study can

inform the development of strategies and initiatives to promote gender equality, diversity, and inclusive practices within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa.

1.2.1 Common challenges Globally

Globally, women have been faced with significant and varying challenges depending on the region which they originate from. Central to the theme under investigation, is the subjective matter pertaining to culture and religious beliefs. Cultural and religious beliefs in a community or society shape the ideology of individuals which make up the community and bestow specific responsibilities to either the male or female gender. Furthermore, the organizational structures seem to be established in a methodology which favours men over women. To understand the dimensions of the challenges which female engineers face, we can start with a statistical overlook of the nations which are in the globe and review the number of nations which have a female as a Chief Executive Officer. This reflects a system that enhances and solidifies the subjective matter under investigation. In certain nations where the religion of Muslim is practised, women are not even afforded the privilege of attending school and for those that acquire a qualification and chase a career there are plenty of impediments for the career to grow and develop. Research by Somers (2022) on a significant North American retail chain found that female employees had a 14% lower chance of promotion than their male co-workers on average. A study found that although women received higher performance ratings compared to men, they received lower ratings for potential than man (Somers, 2022). The aspects associated with promotional job demands such as long working hours, potential for relocation and continuous traveling were elucidated as personal factors which impeded the progression of women, for them having an interest in attaining promotion (Somers, 2022). This may be explained further through the cultural dimension and perspective. The social structures of a country are always unique, and many of the institutions are likely to influence how a society is built. Some men have an ideology that they do not take instructions from women and they openly challenge the promotion of women into managerial or authority positions within organizations.

1.2.2 Common challenges in the African continent

In Africa, the place of women has traditionally been accepted to be that of being at home performing traditional chores, and specific expectations within the community and society which

then manifest into the work environment and limits female engineers' progression (Gofhamodino, 2018). In African culture, women have a perceived responsibility of keeping and balancing work times with family responsibilities. Gender stereotypes and unfavourable attitudes against African women, organizational recruitment, selection, and promotion procedures, as well as these factors reinforce who is deemed more qualified for a certain position. There is a reluctance to confront the power relations and institutions that result in the levels of gender and class inequality, according to all dimensions of equality. The barriers to female engineers' career progression were ascribed as discrimination, social pressures, work-life balance stereotypes, organizational hurdles, and globalization (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009).

1.2.3 Common challenges in South Africa

The aspects of women exclusion in the work environment can be ascribed to the side of the aspects related to inequality in South Africa and dimensions of inequality encompasses gender and the cultures that are based on gender, shapes and degrees of inequality, organizational processes and visibility of inequalities. According to a recent survey from the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA), less than 25% of prospective engineers in South Africa are women (Mastenbroek, 2022) What is even more concerning is the fact that only 6% of South African professional engineers are female (Mastenbroek, 2022), but there are still less growth or promotion opportunities available to them.

Culture was discussed as the relative accepted way of behaviour amongst a community and group of people and organizational culture pertains to the processes, systems and policies which ascribe employee behaviour. According to Anand, Kothari and Kumar (2016) the exclusive aspect of the culture drives people to conceal their cultural identity and integrate into the organizational culture, making it impossible to balance the demands of professional culture and personal African culture. A gendered hierarchy appears to be maintained and perpetuated via organizational structures. with senior management positions occupied by means while female engineers tend to occupy the lower-level positions (Anand, Kothari, & Kumar, 2016).

From a cultural perspective, men in Africa and in particular South Africa with a variation of tribes and specifically certain tribes which have the ideology that women have a specified social position which they must occupy, and men can never take orders from them.

1.3 Research problem

The underrepresentation of women in senior engineering positions within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa, raises concerns about the promotion challenges faced by female engineers. Despite efforts to promote gender equality and diversity in the engineering field, female engineers continue to encounter barriers that hinder their career advancement. This research aims to investigate the specific promotion challenges encountered by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, identify the underlying factors contributing to these challenges, and propose strategies to address them effectively.

1.4 Research objectives

The secondary objectives of this study:

- To examine the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior positions within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- To explore the perceptions and experiences of female engineers regarding their career progression and the promotion process within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- To propose strategies and recommendations for addressing the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa, with a focus on promoting gender equality and diversity in leadership positions.

The primary objective of the study:

- To explore the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in FMCG companies: The case of South Africa, Johannesburg

1.5 Rationale

The rationale for conducting this study lies in the need to address the persistent gender disparities and promotion challenges faced by female engineers within the fast-moving consumer goods

(FMCG) beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. By investigating the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on gender disparities in the engineering field.

Specifically, the study will shed light on the unique experiences, perspectives, and barriers encountered by female engineers within this specific industry and geographical context. The FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg is significant both regionally and nationally, playing a crucial role in the economy. However, the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in senior positions within this industry remain relatively unexplored. Therefore, conducting research in this specific context will provide valuable insights into the promotion challenges faced by female engineers and the underlying factors that contribute to these challenges.

Furthermore, this study's findings and recommendations will have practical implications for various stakeholders, including organizations, employers, policymakers, and female engineers themselves. By identifying and addressing the specific promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company, this research will help develop strategies and initiatives to foster gender equality, diversity, and inclusive practices within the industry. Additionally, it will contribute to the overall efforts aimed at breaking down barriers and creating a more inclusive work environment for female engineers.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The study will pay specific attention to the challenges female engineers face, related to growth opportunities/ promotions in the FMCG industry in South Africa, specifically Johannesburg.

1.7 Definition of terms

Promotion

Promotion is a process of elevating employees to higher positions within an organization based on their qualifications, skills, and performance. According to Michael Armstrong, promotion is the advancement of an employee to a higher rank or position within an organization (Armstrong, 2014). Promotion is a crucial element of career development and employee motivation, as it provides employees with the opportunity to take on more challenging roles and responsibilities, and to advance in their careers.

In the FMCG sector, promotion is essential for ensuring that employees are motivated, engaged, and committed to the organization's goals. Research has shown that promoting employees can improve their job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity (Deepa, Palaniswamy, & Kuppusamy, 2014). In the context of FMCG companies, promotion is particularly critical because these companies operate in a highly competitive and dynamic market, and retaining talented employees is essential for their success.

Female Engineers

Female engineers are women who have pursued an education and career in the engineering field. Research has shown that they can bring significant benefits to organizations. For example, a study by Catalyst found that companies with more women in leadership positions, including engineering roles, outperformed their peers in terms of financial performance (Catalyst, 2022). Furthermore, diverse engineering teams, including those with female engineers, have been found to be more innovative and better at problem-solving (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

In the FMCG sector, engineering roles are crucial for ensuring the smooth operation and success of the organization. Engineers play a vital role in product development, production, and quality assurance, among other areas. As such, promoting and retaining talented female engineers in FMCG companies is essential for their success and competitiveness.

Challenges

Challenges can be defined as obstacles, difficulties, or problems that hinder the achievement of goals or the completion of tasks. Challenges can arise from various sources, including internal factors such as limited resources, inadequate skills or knowledge, and external factors such as changes in the market, competition, and economic conditions.

The challenges faced by female engineers in FMCG companies refer to the obstacles or difficulties that hinder their career advancement and promotion. These challenges may include a lack of support and mentorship, unconscious bias, discrimination, gender stereotypes, and a lack of opportunities for career development and advancement. By overcoming these challenges, FMCG companies can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment that fosters the career development and advancement of all employees, regardless of gender or other characteristics.

FMCG Companies

FMCG stands for Fast-Moving Consumer Goods, which refers to a category of products that are sold quickly and at a relatively low cost. FMCG companies are organizations that produce, distribute, and sell these types of products, which include food and beverages, personal care products, cleaning supplies, and other household items. They typically operate in a highly competitive and dynamic market, where they must continuously innovate, adapt to changing consumer preferences, and manage complex supply chains to maintain their market position and profitability. Some examples of FMCG companies include Unilever, Nestle, Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola, and PepsiCo.

FMCG companies play a significant role in the global economy, contributing to job creation, trade, and economic growth. As such, they are subject to various regulations and standards related to quality, safety, and environmental sustainability, among others. FMCG companies also play a vital role in shaping consumer behaviour and influencing social and environmental issues through their products and marketing strategies.

Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is a term used to describe the invisible barriers that prevent individuals, particularly women and minorities, from advancing to higher-level positions in their careers, despite their qualifications and experience. In the context of this dissertation, the glass ceiling is a relevant term because female engineers may face barriers that prevent them from advancing to leadership positions in FMCG companies.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a process in which an experienced and knowledgeable person provides guidance, advice, and support to a less experienced individual to help them develop their skills and achieve their career goals. In the context of this dissertation, mentoring is a relevant term because it can help female engineers overcome the challenges they face in their careers by providing them with role models, guidance, and support to advance to higher-level positions in FMCG companies.

1.8 Assumptions of the study

Based on the existing research and theories in the field of gender and engineering, as well as the specific context of FMCG companies in South Africa, Johannesburg. The proposed study will aim to investigate these assumptions and provide empirical evidence to support or refute them.

- Female engineers face challenges in advancing their careers in FMCG companies in South Africa, Johannesburg.
- Promotion challenges for women are related to gender stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices, which create a glass ceiling that limits female engineers' career advancement opportunities.
- The social identity of female engineers as women in a male-dominated field influences their experiences and career advancement opportunities.

1.9 Chapter outline

Chapter One: Introduction and Background. This chapter introduces the dissertation, providing a background to the study, outlining the problem statement, and stating the research objectives and questions. It highlights the significance of examining promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a Johannesburg-based FMCG company. The chapter also defines key terms, establishes the scope and limitations of the study, and offers a rationale for choosing this specific focus within the FMCG industry.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. In this chapter, an extensive review of existing literature is presented. The historical context and current status of gender disparities in engineering are explored. Challenges faced by female engineers, including stereotypes, bias, and barriers to promotion, are examined. The chapter also delves into strategies employed globally to promote gender equality in the engineering field. It identifies gaps in the literature and establishes a theoretical framework that guides the subsequent analysis.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology. This chapter outlines the research design, sampling strategy, and data collection methods chosen for the study. It discusses the case study approach and justifies the selection of participants based on specific criteria. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the chosen methods of data analysis, incorporating the qualitative approach.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis. Presenting the gathered data, this chapter provides insights into the demographic information, work experience, and challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG company. The analysis includes qualitative findings and, if applicable, with comparisons to existing literature. The implications of the findings for the promotion challenges faced by female engineers are discussed, offering a comprehensive view of the data.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations. The final chapter summarizes the key findings, draws conclusions, and discusses the contributions of the study to existing knowledge. Recommendations are provided for FMCG companies to address promotion challenges faced by female engineers. The chapter also suggests directions for future research in this area, providing a comprehensive conclusion to the dissertation.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the research by providing a background to the study on the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a Johannesburg-based FMCG company. It outlines the historical context and contextual factors contributing to gender disparities in the workplace. The chapter defines the specific problem, stating research objectives and questions, emphasizing the study's significance for gender equality in the FMCG industry. It discusses the scope and limitations, defines key terms, and rationalizes the focus on female engineers within the chosen context. The chapter concludes by presenting an outline of the research, hinting on what each of the five chapters of this research report will cover.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review on the existing literature on the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG company in Johannesburg. The review will identify the key barriers that hinder the advancement of women in this industry and explore possible solutions to address them. The literature review will also highlight the current state of gender diversity in the FMCG sector and examine the extent to which it promotes women's career advancement. The chapter provides an overview of the FMCG industry, its significance in the South African economy, and the role of female engineers in this sector. The review then explores the literature on gender diversity and its importance in promoting business success. This sets a foundation to examine the promotion challenges faced by women in the FMCG company in Johannesburg and how these challenges impact their career progression. After a review of challenges, strategies to promote gender diversity and women's advancement in the FMCG industry are explored, leaving the chapter to end with identification of gaps in the existing literature.

2.2 Background discussion

Studies have shown that women are underrepresented in the engineering profession, particularly in leadership roles, and face unique challenges in career advancement. Gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination are some of the factors that have been identified as the main barriers to women's career advancement in engineering (Barkhuizen, Masakane, & Van der Sluis, 2022) These barriers are more pronounced in male-dominated fields such as engineering, where women are often perceived to lack technical skills and leadership qualities.

Research has also shown that women engineers face specific challenges in FMCG companies, which include limited opportunities for career advancement, lack of mentorship and sponsorship, and gender discrimination (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009). These challenges often result in women engineers leaving the profession or being stuck in low-level positions, leading to a lack of diversity and inclusion in leadership positions in FMCG companies. Furthermore, studies have identified the importance of mentorship and sponsorship programs in addressing the challenges faced by women engineers. These programs provide women with access to mentors and sponsors who can offer guidance and support in career advancement, as well as opportunities for networking and visibility. In addition, organizational policies and practices that support work-life balance and

flexible working arrangements have also been identified as essential for supporting women engineers in advancing their careers (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009)

2.3 Analytical Framework

2.3.1 Theoretical framework

Gender inequality remains a pervasive issue in the engineering profession globally, including South Africa. Despite the increase in female enrolment in engineering programs, the number of women who remain in the profession and progress to senior levels remains low. This theoretical framework aims to explore the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in FMCG companies in South Africa to inform the situation in Johannesburg. The framework draws on two key theories namely the Glass Ceiling Theory and the Social Identity Theory.

Glass Ceiling Theory

According to Eagly and Carli (2007), the glass ceiling refers to the "invisible barriers that limit the advancement of women and minorities to the highest levels of organizations". These barriers can take many forms, including discrimination, stereotyping, and bias against women and minorities. Research has shown that the glass ceiling can have a significant impact on women's ability to advance in their careers. For example, a study by Catalyst (2022) found that women are significantly underrepresented in executive-level positions, with only 29% of senior management roles held by women globally. This is despite the fact that women now make up almost half of the workforce in many countries.

One reason for this disparity is that women are often subjected to gender-based stereotypes that limit their opportunities for advancement. For example, women may be seen as less competent or less committed to their work than men or may be judged more harshly for displaying assertive or aggressive behaviour (Heilman, 2001). These stereotypes can create a "double bind" for women, where they are expected to conform to traditional gender roles while also demonstrating leadership skills (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women may also face barriers related to organizational culture and practices. For example, a study by McKinsey & Company (2020) found that women are less likely than men to receive feedback and development opportunities that are critical for career advancement. Women are also more likely to experience bias in performance evaluations, which can limit their opportunities for promotion.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory can help explain why female engineers may struggle to get promoted within their organizations. Research has shown that women in male-dominated fields, such as engineering, may experience a phenomenon known as stereotype threat, in which they feel pressure to conform to negative stereotypes about their gender (Steele, 1997). This can lead to a decrease in confidence and performance, which may contribute to difficulties in obtaining promotions. Gender is a socially constructed concept that shapes the roles, expectations, and opportunities of women and men in society. The engineering profession, like other STEM fields, has traditionally been male dominated, with women being underrepresented in the profession. Gender stereotypes and biases have been identified as contributing to the low representation of women in the engineering profession.

According to Tajfel & Turner's (1979) social identity theory, individuals identify with and derive their self-concept from the groups to which they belong. In the context of female engineers, gender identity may influence their perception of their roles and opportunities in the profession. This theory is adopted by this study because it closely relates to the cultural connotations associated with gender roles and stereotypes in South Africa and Africa at large.

Research has also shown that women in male-dominated fields may face biased evaluations that result in lower performance ratings and fewer opportunities for promotion (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). This bias may be a result of implicit biases and stereotypes about gender roles and abilities, which can influence how managers evaluate and promote employees. To address these issues, organizations may need to implement strategies that promote diversity and inclusion, such as mentorship programs, bias training, and diversity initiatives that aim to increase the representation of women in leadership positions (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). By addressing the impact of social identity on organizational dynamics, organizations can work to promote diversity, inclusion, and equitable opportunities for all employees.

2.3.2 Conceptual Framework

In this study, the glass ceiling theory is depicted as the central concept, with social identity theory as a supporting theory. The framework illustrates how gender stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices can lead to a glass ceiling that inhibits women's career advancement opportunities in FMCG companies. The framework also highlights the role of social identity theory

in shaping female engineers' experiences in FMCG companies and their career advancement opportunities. The study will use this framework to investigate the challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG company in Johannesburg, South Africa. By applying the glass ceiling theory and social identity theory, the study aims to explore how gender stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices impact female engineers' career advancement opportunities and identify measures that can be taken to overcome these challenges.

2.4 Conceptualisation of the FMCG industry

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is a global industry that encompasses the production, distribution, and marketing of consumer goods that are sold quickly and at relatively low cost. FMCG products include food and beverages, personal care products, household goods, and other everyday products that consumers purchase frequently. This overview will explore the FMCG industry at global, Africa and south Africa levels.

2.4.1 Overview of the FMCG industry Globally

The FMCG industry is a significant contributor to the global economy and is characterized by intense competition among a large number of players, both domestic and multinational. The industry is driven by changing consumer preferences, innovation, and advancements in technology, which have resulted in the development of new products and distribution channels. According to a report by Grand View Research (2022), the global FMCG market size was valued at USD 5.04 trillion in 2020 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.2% from 2021 to 2028. The growth of the industry is driven by the increasing population, rising disposable income, and the growing demand for convenience and packaged food products.

The FMCG industry is dominated by large multinational companies such as Unilever, Nestle, Procter & Gamble, and PepsiCo, which have a global presence and significant market share. These companies have established brand recognition, strong distribution networks, and innovative product portfolios, which have enabled them to maintain their dominance in the industry. The industry is also characterized by a high level of consolidation, with mergers and acquisitions being a common strategy for companies to expand their market share and enter new markets. For example, in 2020, Nestle acquired a majority stake in a Chinese food company, Yinlu Foods Group, to strengthen its presence in the Chinese market.

2.4.2 Overview of the FMCG industry in Africa

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is a significant sector in Africa, comprising both local and multinational companies that produce and distribute consumer products such as food and beverages, personal care items, and household goods. The FMCG industry plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, employment creation, and poverty reduction in many African countries. According to a report by Nielsen, the FMCG industry in Africa is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.5% from 2020 to 2025, driven by factors such as population growth, rising disposable income, and changing consumer preferences. The report also notes that multinational companies dominate the FMCG industry in Africa, accounting for around 80% of the market share.

The African FMCG market is diverse, with a range of local and multinational players competing for market share. Multinational companies such as Unilever, Nestle, Procter & Gamble, and Coca-Cola have a significant presence in the African market, with established brand recognition and distribution networks. However, local companies are also growing in prominence, particularly in countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, where they have been able to compete effectively against multinational companies.

One of the challenges facing the African FMCG industry is the lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, which makes it difficult to distribute goods to consumers. This has led to innovative distribution models, such as the use of mobile technology and local networks of small retailers, to reach consumers in remote areas. The African FMCG industry is also increasingly focused on sustainability and social responsibility, with companies adopting sustainable practices and investing in initiatives that support local communities. For example, Unilever has launched the Sustainable Living Plan in Africa, which aims to promote sustainable agriculture, reduce waste, and improve hygiene and sanitation.

2.4.3 Overview of the FMCG industry in South Africa

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is a key sector of the South African economy, which makes a sizeable contribution to the GDP of the nation and creates employment opportunities for millions of people. This literature review aims to provide an overview of the FMCG industry in South Africa by examining the key features, challenges, and opportunities in the sector.

The FMCG industry in South Africa is characterized by its fast-paced nature, with a high demand for products and services that are used frequently and consumed quickly. The industry covers a broad range of products, including food and beverages, personal care items, household cleaning products, and tobacco products. The industry's supply chain is complex, involving several stages from manufacturing to distribution and retailing. Retail stores, including supermarkets, convenience stores, and specialized retailers, are the primary channels for FMCG products in South Africa. The industry is highly competitive, with several multinational and local players competing for market share.

The FMCG industry in South Africa faces several challenges, including high operational costs, infrastructure constraints, and regulatory challenges. High operational costs, such as energy costs, transportation costs, and raw material costs, have a significant impact on the profitability of FMCG companies. Infrastructure constraints, such as inadequate transport infrastructure and energy supply, also affect the industry's efficiency and competitiveness. Regulatory challenges, including health and safety regulations and environmental regulations, add to the industry's compliance costs. The industry also faces challenges related to changing consumer preferences, including a shift towards healthier and more sustainable products (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2016).

Despite the challenges facing the FMCG industry in South Africa, there are several opportunities for growth and innovation in the sector. One of the primary opportunities is the growing demand for FMCG products in the African continent. South Africa's geographic location and economic stability position the country as a gateway to other African markets. The industry also has opportunities for innovation, including the development of new products and services that cater to changing consumer preferences. The growing demand for sustainable and environmentally friendly products also presents opportunities for FMCG companies to adopt sustainable practices in their operations.

The FMCG industry is a significant contributor to the South African economy, accounting for a significant share of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to the South African National Treasury, the FMCG industry contributes approximately 15% to the country's GDP (National Treasury , 2021). The industry's contribution to GDP is primarily driven by its high

demand and wide consumer base, with FMCG products consumed by almost every household in South Africa.

The FMCG industry is a significant employer in South Africa, providing direct and indirect employment opportunities to millions of people. The industry is labour-intensive, with a high demand for skilled and unskilled labour in several stages of the supply chain, including manufacturing, distribution, and retailing. According to the South African Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition, the FMCG industry employs over one million people directly and indirectly, making it one of the largest employers in the country (Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition, 2020)

The FMCG industry also plays a significant role in South Africa's foreign exchange earnings, with several FMCG products exported to other countries. The industry's primary exports include processed foods, beverages, and tobacco products, among others. According to the South African Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition, the FMCG industry contributes approximately 7% of the country's total exports (Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition, 2020). The industry's contribution to foreign exchange earnings is essential to the country's balance of payments and its ability to finance its imports.

2.5 Gender diversity in the FMCG sector

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in South Africa is a critical industry that requires a highly skilled workforce. Although the industry has made significant strides towards gender diversity, women, particularly female engineers, remain underrepresented in the sector.

Gender diversity has been found to have significant implications for business success, including improved financial performance, enhanced innovation, and increased customer satisfaction. Research has shown that gender diversity can improve organizational outcomes. A study by Credit Suisse found that companies with a higher proportion of women in senior leadership positions tend to perform better financially (Credit Suisse, 2019). Another study by McKinsey & Company found that gender-diverse companies are more likely to outperform their peers in terms of profitability (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Furthermore, gender diversity has been found to enhance innovation and problem-solving, leading to increased creativity and adaptability (Catalyst, 2022).

To promote gender diversity, organizations can adopt various strategies. One such strategy is to establish diversity and inclusion policies and practices (McKinsey & Company, 2019) These policies can include initiatives such as diversity training, flexible work arrangements, and diversity quotas. Another strategy is to provide mentorship and networking opportunities for women, such as women's leadership programs and networking events (Knights & Omanovic, 2015). Finally, organizations can work to overcome unconscious bias through initiatives such as blind recruitment and selection processes.

Despite the benefits of gender diversity, promoting gender diversity in the workplace can be challenging. One common challenge is the existence of unconscious bias, which can hinder the recruitment and advancement of women in the workplace. Also, stereotypes and gender norms can lead to a lack of diversity in certain industries, such as engineering and technology (Yates & Skinner, 2021) Women may also face a lack of mentorship and networking opportunities, which can hinder their career development (Knights & Omanovic, 2015).

Gender diversity in the FMCG industry has historically been low, particularly in leadership positions. A study by the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) found that only 13% of executive directors and 18% of senior management in the FMCG industry are women (SABPP, 2019). Notably, women in the FMCG industry often face challenges such as the gender pay gap, a lack of mentorship opportunities, and limited opportunities for career advancement (Bussin, 2020).

Research has found that gender diversity initiatives can have significant benefits for companies in the FMCG industry. For example, a study by McKinsey & Company found that gender-diverse companies in the consumer goods sector are more likely to outperform their peers in terms of financial performance (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Additionally, gender diversity initiatives can enhance innovation, problem-solving, and decision-making by bringing diverse perspectives to the table (Catalyst, 2022).

Bussin (2020) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between gender diversity and financial performance in South African companies. The study revealed that companies with higher levels of gender diversity had a better financial performance. The study highlights the importance of gender diversity in the FMCG sector and how it can contribute to the growth and success of companies. Despite these findings, Bussin’s (2020) review of progress and challenges regarding gender diversity in the South African workplace revealed that despite the implementation of

legislation and policies to promote gender diversity, the progress has been slow. The study highlights the need for more significant efforts to promote gender diversity in the workplace.

Another study revealed that despite the increase in the number of women in leadership positions, women still face significant challenges in terms of discrimination, bias, and lack of support from their male counterparts. Mastenbroek (2022) conducted the study to investigate the trends and challenges of women in leadership positions in South Africa. The study highlights the need for more significant efforts to promote gender diversity in leadership positions. This goes along with the findings by Bussin (2020) who conducted a study to investigate gender diversity practices in South African FMCG companies. The study revealed that while some companies had implemented gender diversity policies, there were still significant challenges in terms of implementation and monitoring of these policies. The study highlights the need for more significant efforts to promote gender diversity in the FMCG sector.

2.5.1 Contributions of Female Engineers

Female engineers in the FMCG sector in South Africa have made significant contributions to the industry, particularly in innovation and product development. Female engineers bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills to the industry, leading to the creation of new products and solutions that meet the needs of consumers. Additionally, female engineers have played a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices in the industry, including reducing the environmental impact of FMCG products and improving supply chain efficiency.

2.5.2 Challenges Faced by Female Engineers

Female engineers in the FMCG sector in South Africa face several challenges that hinder their career progression and advancement. These challenges include gender bias, stereotyping, lack of mentorship and networking opportunities, and limited access to training and development programs. According to a study by the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE), female engineers in South Africa are often overlooked for promotion and leadership positions, with only a small percentage reaching senior management roles (SAICE, 2019).

2.5.3 Opportunities for Female Engineers

Despite the challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG sector in South Africa, there are several opportunities available to them. The industry has recognized the importance of gender diversity and has implemented policies and strategies to attract and retain female engineers. For

instance, several FMCG companies have established mentorship and networking programs to provide female engineers with guidance, support, and career development opportunities. Some companies have introduced flexible working arrangements to help female engineers balance their professional and personal responsibilities.

2.6 Promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG industry.

While there has been an increase in the number of women in the engineering field, gender disparity is still prevalent, and women often face unique challenges. These challenges range socialisation, cultural expectations, gender roles, stereotypes, low recognition, limited capacitation, low self-worth among other factors.

2.6.1 Limiting factors affecting women in the FMCG industry.

In a study conducted by Hyland & Bunker (2021) on the progress and challenges regarding gender diversity in the South African workplace, the findings revealed that despite the implementation of legislation and policies to promote gender diversity, the progress has been slow. Women still face challenges in terms of career advancement due to cultural biases and a lack of support from male counterparts. (Heilman, 2001) in a different study that focused on advancement opportunities and barriers for female engineers in the South African construction industry, found that women face challenges in terms of career advancement due to gender stereotypes, limited opportunities for training and development, and a lack of mentoring and sponsorship. These findings were the same with those obtained by (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009) who conducted a study to explore the barriers to the career advancement of women in engineering in South Africa. The study revealed challenges that women face due to cultural biases, stereotypes, and a lack of support from male colleagues and superiors. Women also face challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities, which affects their career advancement.

Slightly different by not opposing findings were obtained by (Ketchiwou, Naong, Van der Walt, & Dzansi, 2022), where they conducted a study to identify the factors influencing the advancement of women engineers in the South African workplace. The study revealed that women face challenges in terms of career advancement due to gender stereotypes, a lack of support, and a lack of access to training and development opportunities. The study also highlighted the importance of mentorship and sponsorship in promoting the advancement of women engineers.

2.6.2 Strategies to promote gender diversity and women's advancement in the FMCG industry.

Gender diversity in the FMCG industry is essential for business success and growth. Companies that prioritize diversity and inclusion tend to have better financial performance and higher levels of employee satisfaction. Campbell (2019) suggests that companies can promote gender diversity in the FMCG industry by implementing policies and practices that support women's advancement. These include flexible work arrangements, mentorship programs, and training and development opportunities. Pederson & Partners (2023) conducted a review of the strategies for promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in the South African manufacturing sector. The study revealed that companies can promote gender diversity by implementing gender-neutral recruitment policies, providing training and development opportunities, and addressing unconscious biases. These findings also suggested that companies can promote gender diversity in the FMCG industry by establishing diversity and inclusion committees, providing unconscious bias training, and creating a culture of inclusivity (Pederson & Partners, 2023).

In a different study by Mastenbroek (2022), the findings let to suggestions that companies can promote gender diversity in the FMCG industry by creating a business case for diversity and inclusion. Among the recommendations, the researchers suggested improving talent acquisition and retention, increasing innovation and creativity, and enhancing brand reputation. Adding to this recommendation are suggestions by (Pederson & Partners, 2023), that companies can promote gender diversity in the FMCG industry by implementing policies and practices that support women's advancement, such as flexible work arrangements, mentorship programs, and gender-neutral recruitment policies. Their study also suggests the importance of creating a culture of inclusivity and addressing unconscious biases.

2.7 Gaps in the existing literature and research questions

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in the FMCG industry, there are still gaps in the existing literature and research that need to be addressed. The gaps in the existing literature on gender diversity in the FMCG industry suggest that there is a need for more research that takes an intersectional approach, examines the role of organizational factors, employs longitudinal designs, and pays attention to the role of men in promoting gender diversity. Addressing these gaps in the literature will be crucial for developing a more comprehensive

understanding of gender diversity in the FMCG industry and for developing effective strategies for promoting gender diversity and women's advancement in the industry. Some of the gaps identified through this review of literature include:

2.7.1 Lack of Focus on Intersectionality

The existing literature on gender diversity in the FMCG industry tends to focus primarily on the experiences of white women. There is a lack of research on the experiences of women of colour and women from other marginalized communities in the FMCG industry (Warnat, 2012). This gap in the literature is problematic because it overlooks the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds.

2.7.2 Limited Understanding of Organizational Factors

The existing literature on gender diversity in the FMCG industry tends to focus on individual factors that affect women's advancement, such as bias and discrimination (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009). However, there is a limited understanding of how organizational factors, such as leadership, culture, and policies, affect gender diversity in the FMCG industry. This gap in the literature is problematic because it overlooks the role that organizations play in promoting gender diversity and creating inclusive environments.

2.7.3 Lack of Longitudinal Studies

There is a lack of longitudinal studies that track the progress of gender diversity in the FMCG industry over time. Most studies focus on a particular moment in time and do not provide insights into how gender diversity in the FMCG industry changes over time. This gap in the literature is problematic because it limits the ability to understand the factors that contribute to sustained progress in gender diversity.

2.7.4 Insufficient Attention to the Role of Men

The existing literature on gender diversity in the FMCG industry tends to focus on women's experiences and perspectives. There is a lack of research on the role that men play in promoting gender diversity and creating inclusive environments in the FMCG industry (Gouws, 2018). This gap in the literature is problematic because it overlooks the importance of male allies and advocates in advancing gender diversity.

2.8 Gap addressed by this study

This research focused on the gap on limited understanding of organizational factors that affect gender diversity in the FMCG industry. While investigating the promotion challenges faced by female engineers, this research can shed light on the gender disparities that persist in this industry through understanding organisation-specific factors. From literature reviewed in this study, gender diversity has been linked to improved organizational performance and innovation. By examining how leadership, culture, and policies within the FMCG company affect gender diversity, this research can provide insights into how these organizational factors can be optimized to create a more inclusive and effective work environment. This knowledge can assist companies in fostering diversity, attracting and retaining top talent, and gaining a competitive edge.

Research findings in this area can inform policymakers, industry leaders, and HR professionals about the specific challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG sector. By identifying the barriers to promotion and highlighting the organizational factors that hinder gender diversity, this study can contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and practices aimed at promoting equality and enhancing women's career advancement opportunities.

More so, this research aims to address the limited understanding of how organizational factors affect gender diversity in the FMCG industry. By focusing on this gap, the research contributes to the existing body of knowledge, providing valuable insights and empirical evidence that can guide future research endeavours and contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and diversity in the workplace.

2.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter provided an overview of the FMCG industry, its significance in the South African economy, and the role of female engineers in this sector. This was broken into specific subtitles to ensure a thorough review of the related literature to expose the gaps to be covered by this and other possible research in future. The next chapter focuses on the research methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present a comprehensive account of the research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes employed to investigate the promotion challenges encountered by female engineers in a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study endeavours to gain a profound comprehension of the experiences, perceptions, and outlooks of female engineers concerning their professional development and advancement in the FMCG beverage sector.

3.2 Research approach & Paradigm

3.2.1 Research Approach

This dissertation employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a research method that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and their underlying meanings through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data (Creswell, 2014). This approach is chosen because it allows for exploration of novel experiences, perceptions, beliefs and individual positions. These are key in understanding gender related subjects as they are often interpreted and understood differently every individual.

3.2.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm employed in this study is the interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes the objective investigation of phenomena through the collection and analysis of empirical data. This paradigm aligns with the research aim of exploring the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG industry in Johannesburg, South Africa. By adopting an interpretive approach, the study seeks to understand the challenges as they are from subjective experiences of individuals in order to provide reliable and generalizable findings. A meaning-oriented methodology will be used in a form of an interview with the participants. The research questions are designed to examine the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior leadership positions, the impact of gender bias on promotion opportunities, and the organizational practices that can enhance gender equality in promotions. The use of an interpretive

paradigm in this study will enable the objective investigation of promotion challenges and provide empirical evidence to inform strategies for promoting gender equality within the FMCG industry.

3.3 Research design

The study will use a case study research design to investigate the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. Case study research is a qualitative research method that involves an in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon within a specific context (Yin, 2014). The case study research design is appropriate for this study as it allows for a detailed exploration of the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of female engineers in the FMCG beverage sector in Johannesburg.

3.4 Data collection methods

For this study, the data collection method that will be employed is semi-structured interviews with female engineers in a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection method that enables researchers to ask open-ended questions that allow participants to express their views, attitudes, and experiences in their own words (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method for this study as they provide an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of female engineers regarding their professional development and advancement in the FMCG beverage sector. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses, and they enable the researcher to explore issues in greater depth and detail (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to collect data that is context-specific, which is particularly relevant for this study as it is focused on the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to provide information about their specific experiences and challenges within the context of the FMCG beverage sector in Johannesburg.

3.5 Population and sample

3.5.1 Population

The study population for this dissertation consists mainly of female engineers working in a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. However, to ensure a balanced input into the research data, men in positions of leadership will also be included as part of the study population.

3.5.2 Sample and sampling method

Both the main sample and the key informants will be purposively selected. The main sample will be based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) female engineers with a minimum of three years of work experience in a FMCG beverage company, (b) currently employed in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, and (c) willing to participate in the study. The key informants will be selected considering (i) at least five years in an FMCG beverage company, (ii) having held a decision-making position and (iv) willing to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research question (Creswell, 2014). In this study, purposive sampling was chosen because the research question is focused on the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. By selecting participants based on the inclusion criteria, the study can gain an in-depth understanding of the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in this context.

The sample size for this study will be determined by data saturation, which occurs when new data no longer provides additional insights or themes related to the research question (Creswell, 2014). The study will continue until data saturation is achieved, which is expected to occur after interviewing 10-15 participants.

3.6 The research instrument

For both general respondents and key informants, the research instrument that will be utilized for this study is a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide will consist of open-ended questions that will be used to explore the experiences, perspectives, perceptions of female engineers regarding their professional development and advancement in the FMCG beverage sector, as well as the views of the key informants. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the research instrument for this study as they enable the researcher to explore issues in greater depth

and detail. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses, which is particularly relevant for this study as it seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to follow-up on responses and ask probing questions, which can lead to richer and more detailed data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The use of a semi-structured interview guide also provides consistency in the data collection process. The interview guide ensures that all participants are asked the same questions, which enables the researcher to compare responses across participants and identify patterns and themes related to the research question.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

To ensure the quality and rigor of the data collection process, the researcher will adhere to the ethical guidelines for conducting research with human participants, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and respecting the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher will also keep a research journal to document the research process, including any deviations from the research protocol and reflections on the data collection process. The data collection process for this study will involve the following steps:

(i) **Recruitment of participants**: Participants will be purposively selected based on the inclusion criteria. The researcher will contact potential participants through email or phone and provide them with information about the study, including the research question, aims, and participant criteria.

(ii) **Informed consent:** Participants who express interest in participating in the study will be provided with an information sheet and a consent form. The information sheet will outline the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the potential risks and benefits of participation. Participants will be given sufficient time to read and understand the information before deciding whether to participate.

(iii) **Semi-structured interviews:** Participants who provide written informed consent will be scheduled for a face-to-face or virtual semi-structured interview. The interview will be audio-recorded with the participant's permission and is expected to last between 45-60 minutes.

(iv) **Data management:** The audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim and stored securely in a password-protected computer. The researcher will listen to the audio recordings and review the transcripts to ensure accuracy and completeness.

3.8 Data analysis strategies and interpretation

The data analysis for this study will follow thematic analysis, which is a flexible and iterative method for identifying patterns, themes, and concepts within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis involves several steps, including data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme refinement, and report writing as described below:

(i) **Data familiarization**: The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews and read through the transcripts several times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data.

(ii) **Initial coding:** The researcher will code the data line-by-line, highlighting key words and phrases that are relevant to the research question. The codes will be recorded in a codebook and reviewed for accuracy and consistency.

(iii) **Theme generation**: The researcher will group similar codes into potential themes and subthemes. The researcher will review and refine the themes through an iterative process, checking for coherence, consistency, and relevance to the research question.

(iv) **Theme refinement**: The researcher will refine the themes by reviewing the codes and their relationship to each other, consolidating, or splitting themes as necessary. The researcher will also identify patterns and outliers in the data and consider their implications for the research question.

(v) **Report writing**: The researcher will write a narrative report that describes the themes and provides illustrative quotes from the participants. The report will highlight the key findings and their relevance to the research question.

The interpretation of the data will involve a process of reflection and reflexivity, in which the researcher critically examines their own assumptions, biases, and values in relation to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher will consider alternative interpretations of the data, identify areas of uncertainty and ambiguity, and discuss their implications for the research

question. The researcher will also consider the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

3.9 Possible limitations and challenges of the study

Several limitations are possible in this study. It is important to acknowledge these limitations and their potential impact on the study findings. The researcher will discuss these limitations in the study and make recommendations for future research to address these limitations. These potential limitations include:

(i) **Potential for bias:** The researcher may bring their own biases and assumptions to the data collection and analysis, potentially influencing the findings.

(ii) **Limited sample size**: The sample size for this study may be small, which could limit the diversity of perspectives and experiences represented in the data.

(iii) **Self-report bias:** The data collected through interviews may be subject to self-report bias, as participants may be reluctant to disclose sensitive or negative information.

(iv) **Language barriers:** The study is conducted in English, which may limit the participation of individuals who are not fluent in English.

(v) **Time and resource constraints:** The researcher may face time and resource constraints that limit the scope of the study and the depth of the analysis.

3.10 Quality Assurance

3.10.1 External validity OR transferability

Transferability, also known as external validity or generalizability, refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be transferred or applied to other settings or populations (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, transferability is an important consideration, as the aim is not to generalize the findings to a larger population, but rather to transfer the findings to other similar contexts.

In this study, transferability of the findings will be enhanced by several strategies. Firstly, purposive sampling will be used to select participants who represent a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. This will help to ensure that the findings are relevant to other female engineers working in FMCG beverage companies in Johannesburg and potentially other similar contexts. Additionally, the researcher will provide a detailed description of the study methodology and context, which will enable readers to assess the applicability of the findings to their own contexts.

Secondly, the study will use multiple sources of data, including interviews and document analysis, to enhance the credibility and transferability of the findings. This will help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg and potentially other similar contexts. The researcher will also use a reflexive approach, which involves acknowledging and addressing their own biases and assumptions throughout the research process. This will help to ensure that the findings are not influenced by the researcher's own perspectives or experiences, which could limit the transferability of the findings.

3.10.2 Internal validity OR credibility

Credibility, also known as internal validity, refers to the degree to which the findings of a study accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Yin, 2014). In qualitative research, credibility is an important consideration, as the aim is to produce findings that are trustworthy and reflect the reality of the participants' experiences.

In this study, several strategies will be used to enhance the credibility of the findings. The researcher will use a purposive sampling technique to select participants who have experienced the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. This will help to ensure that the participants are knowledgeable about the topic and can provide rich and detailed data that accurately reflects their experiences. Further, the researcher will conduct in-depth interviews with the participants to gather data about their experiences and perspectives. The interviews will be semi-structured, which will allow the participants to discuss their experiences in their own words, while also enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions to clarify and deepen their understanding of the participants' experiences.

Member checking will also be applied, this involves presenting the findings to the participants to ensure that they accurately reflect their experiences and perspectives. This will enable the participants to provide feedback on the accuracy and relevance of the findings, which will enhance the credibility of the study. As an enhancement of credibility measure, the researcher will also use a reflexive approach throughout the research process, which involves acknowledging and addressing their own biases and assumptions. This will help to ensure that the findings are not influenced by the researcher's own perspectives or experiences, which could compromise the credibility of the findings.

3.10.3 Reliability OR dependability

Dependability, also known as reliability, refers to the consistency and stability of the findings of a study over time and across different researchers (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, dependability is an important consideration, as it ensures that the findings are not influenced by the researcher's own biases or assumptions. In this study, the researcher will use a detailed research protocol, which will outline the research procedures and ensure that the study is conducted in a systematic and consistent manner. This will help to ensure that the findings are reliable and not influenced by the researcher's own biases or assumptions.

A consistent approach to data collection and analysis, which will enhance the dependability of the findings will be adhered to. The interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, and the data will be analysed using a thematic analysis approach. This will help to ensure that the data is analysed consistently and that the findings are reliable. The researcher will use an audit trail, which involves keeping a detailed record of the research procedures and decisions made throughout the research process. This will enable other researchers to review the research procedures and decisions and assess the dependability of the findings. Also, the researcher will use peer debriefing, which involves seeking feedback from other researchers or experts in the field. This will help to ensure that the findings are not influenced by the researcher's own biases or assumptions, and that the research is conducted in a rigorous and systematic manner.

3.11 Ethical considerations

When conducting research, it is important to uphold ethical principles and guidelines to protect the rights and welfare of participants. The following are some of the ethical considerations that will be followed in this study:

(i) **Informed consent:** The researcher will obtain informed consent from all participants before the study begins. This will involve explaining the purpose and procedures of the study, potential risks and benefits, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

(ii) **Confidentiality and anonymity**: The researcher will ensure that all data collected is kept confidential and anonymous. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity, and data will be stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

(iii) **Voluntary participation**: Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, and participants will not be coerced or pressured to take part. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

(iv) **Respect for participants' rights and dignity:** The researcher will respect the rights and dignity of all participants. This includes treating participants with respect and sensitivity, and avoiding any actions or statements that could be perceived as discriminatory or stigmatizing.

(v) **Data protection:** The researcher will ensure that all data collected is protected from misuse, unauthorized access, and breach of confidentiality.

(vi) **Debriefing and aftercare:** The researcher will provide participants with debriefing after the study to explain the purpose and significance of the study. Participants will also be provided with aftercare and referrals to relevant support services if it becomes necessary.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology exclusively employed for this qualitative exploration of the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in a Johannesburg-based FMCG beverage company. It elucidates the rationale behind participant selection, highlighting the criteria applied to ensure relevance to the research objectives. The qualitative nature of the study is emphasized throughout the chapter, focusing on data collection methods such as interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Ethical considerations are meticulously addressed to safeguard participants' rights and confidentiality, while the chapter transparently acknowledges the inherent limitations of a qualitative approach.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALSYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter marks the transition from data collection to the thorough presentation, analysis, and comparison of the gathered data. The primary objective of this chapter is to methodically present, critically analyse, and thoughtfully compare the findings, each section aligned with a specific research question. This structured approach aims to unveil the multifaceted aspects of the promotion challenges faced by female engineers, presenting a nuanced understanding that transcends mere statistics by delving into the qualitative intricacies of their experiences. As the narrative unfolds through each research question, the chapter illuminates emerging themes, utilizing direct quotes and thematic analyses to give substance to the data. The intent is not only to contribute to the existing knowledge on gender-related workplace issues but also to furnish practical insights for advancing gender equality and professional advancement within the FMCG sector.

4.2 Data Presentation

4.2.1 Demographic Data

A. Main Research Sample

CODE	SEX	YEARS	ROLE IN FMCG
R-1	Female	3	Operations
R-2	Female	4	Operations
R-3	Female	4	Utilities Engineer
R-4	Female	4	Process Engineering
R-5	Female	5	Safety Engineer
R-6	Female	7	Food Safety Engineer
R-7	Female	5	Operations
R-8	Female	6	Operations
R-9	Female	4	Production Technician
R-10	Female	8	Process Engineering
R-11	Female	5	Engineering Specialist
R-12	Female	6	Safety Engineering
R-13	Female	3	Operations
R-14	Female	4	Operations Supervision
R-15	Female	3	Unit Engineer

Table 1: Sample Composition

The main research sample consisted exclusively of female engineers who met the predetermined inclusion criteria, thereby ensuring the relevance and focus of the sample.

All respondents identified as female, aligning seamlessly with the study's criteria for gender representation. Notably, their collective professional tenure in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) beverage company exhibited a diverse spectrum, ranging from 3 to 8 years.

The diversity within this sample extends beyond years of experience and is reflected in the array of roles occupied by the participants in the FMCG beverage company. Roles embraced by respondents include Operations, Operations Supervision, Utilities Engineer, Process Engineering, Engineering Specialist, and Food Safety Engineering. Each role encapsulates a distinct facet of the FMCG beverage production process, contributing to a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the professional landscape for female engineers.

This carefully curated sample composition holds immense value for the research. The deliberate inclusion of female engineers with a minimum of three years of experience ensures that insights are drawn from individuals with a foundational understanding of the industry. Moreover, the variation in roles held by the participants enhances the richness of the data, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the challenges and opportunities unique to each professional domain within the FMCG beverage sector. As a result, the study is poised to offer not just generalized findings but tailored insights that can inform strategies for promoting gender equality and career progression within distinct roles in the FMCG industry in Johannesburg.

B. Key Informants Research Sample

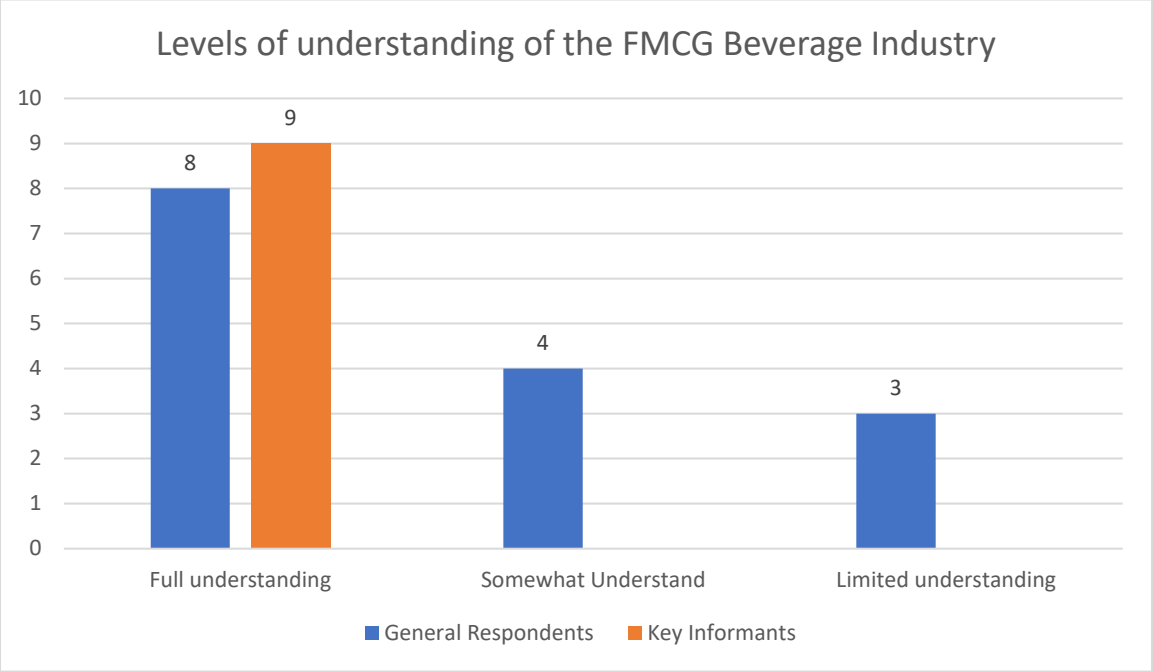
The key informants selected for this research present a well-rounded and diverse cross-section of decision-makers within the FMCG beverage company. Their collective experience, spanning from 5 to 16 years, covers various facets of the industry, including production, engineering, and human resources. The sample is also gender-diverse, featuring both male (6) and female (4) informants, providing a balanced perspective on the issues at hand. The inclusion of key informants with decision-making roles is particularly valuable. Their insights offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for female engineers from a managerial and strategic standpoint. The diversity in positions and backgrounds enhances the richness of the data, ensuring that the research can draw from a wide array of perspectives within the FMCG beverage company. Insights from these key informants inform strategic recommendations and interventions to address promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg.

Table 2: Profile of Key Informants

Position Held	***Years of Experience***	***Gender***	***Age***	***Code***
Production Manager	13 years	Male	38 years	KI-1
Engineering Manager	5 years	Male	31 years	KI-2
Executive Director	8 years	Female	34 years	KI-3
Plant Engineer	16 years	Male	40 years	KI-4
Chief Executive Officer	11 years	Male	46 years	KI-5
HR Manager	14 years	Female	42 years	KI-6
Production Manager	8 years	Male	34 years	KI-7
Plant Engineer	16 years	Female	40 years	KI-8
HR Manager	8 years	Female	42 years	KI-9

4.2.2 Conceptualization of the FMCG Beverage company

Figure 1: Levels of understanding g of the FMCG Beverage company



A. Understanding of the FMCG beverage company, its products, and its characteristics.

The respondents, both general and key informants, collectively described the FMCG beverage company as dynamic, characterized by the rapid production and distribution of everyday products with a limited shelf life. Their responses highlight the industry's competitive nature, emphasizing

the importance of efficiency, branding, and adaptability to consumer trends. The key informant's insights provide a broader perspective, underscoring the multifaceted nature of the industry beyond the immediate production of beverages.

One female respondent (R-1) said,

"The FMCG beverage company is all about fast-paced production and distribution of non-durable goods. These are products that consumers use on a daily basis, and they have a limited shelf life. It's an industry where demand fluctuates based on consumer preferences and trends."

Another respondent (R-4), contributed saying,

"Our products are those that consumers grab off the shelves without much thought. They are everyday items, like soft drinks, juices, and bottled water. The key characteristics are that they are quick to produce, have a short shelf life, and are often essential items in a household."

Echoing these sentiments (R-3), shared, "The FMCG beverage company is defined by the need for efficiency. Products must be manufactured rapidly to meet demand. Additionally, the market is highly competitive, with factors like branding, pricing, and consumer appeal playing pivotal roles in success."

Complementing the general respondents, a male key informant (KI-1), offered a broader perspective, stating,

"The FMCG beverage company is characterized by its relentless pace. Products need to move swiftly from production to consumption. It's not just about the beverages; it's about meeting consumer expectations, responding to trends, and managing a complex supply chain to ensure products are readily available in the market."

B. Key trends and challenges that the FMCG beverage company is currently facing.

This data presentation underscores the nuanced perspectives of both female respondents and key informants on the challenges and trends within the FMCG beverage company. The alignment in their insights reinforces the depth of understanding across different roles, highlighting the interconnected nature of these challenges and the need for collaborative strategies to address them. The following themes emerged from the findings:

Load Shedding

Load shedding emerged as a pressing challenge in the FMCG beverage company, impacting operational efficiency and elevating production costs. One respondent (R-2) expressed,

"Load shedding disrupts our production schedules, making it challenging to meet volume targets. It's a constant struggle that affects the entire production chain."

Similarly, a key informant (KI-5), irrespective of gender, commented,

"Load shedding is a persistent obstacle. It directly impedes our ability to meet production goals and contributes to increased costs, affecting the overall competitiveness of the industry."

Illicit Products

The recognition of illicit soft drinks, cigarettes, and alcohol as challenges underscores a profound awareness of market dynamics and potential threats to product integrity. R-6 described a trend involving illicit products, she said,

"Dealing with illicit products is a constant battle. It not only affects our sales but also tarnishes our brand reputation."

A key informant (KI-7), a male, concurred, stating,

"The infiltration of illicit products poses a serious threat. It jeopardizes the authenticity and safety of our products, requiring constant vigilance and preventive measures to safeguard the industry."

Consumer Mindset and Habits

The acknowledgment of the influence of consumer habits on industry trends emanated reflecting a keen understanding of market responsiveness. A female respondent (R-14) noted,

"Consumer preferences change rapidly, impacting the demand for our products. Staying attuned to these shifts is crucial for maintaining market relevance."

In alignment, a key informant emphasized,

"Understanding and adapting to consumer habits is a dynamic challenge. It requires continuous market research and strategic planning to ensure our products align with evolving consumer preferences."

Labor Costs

Identification of high labor costs underscores awareness of economic factors influencing industry dynamics. A female respondent (R-13) remarked,

"*Labor costs are a substantial part of our expenditures. Balancing fair wages with cost-effectiveness is an ongoing challenge."*

A key informant (KI-9) shared a similar perspective, stating,

"Managing labor costs is intricate. It requires a delicate balance to ensure a motivated workforce while maintaining competitiveness in a challenging economic landscape."

Lack of Diversity

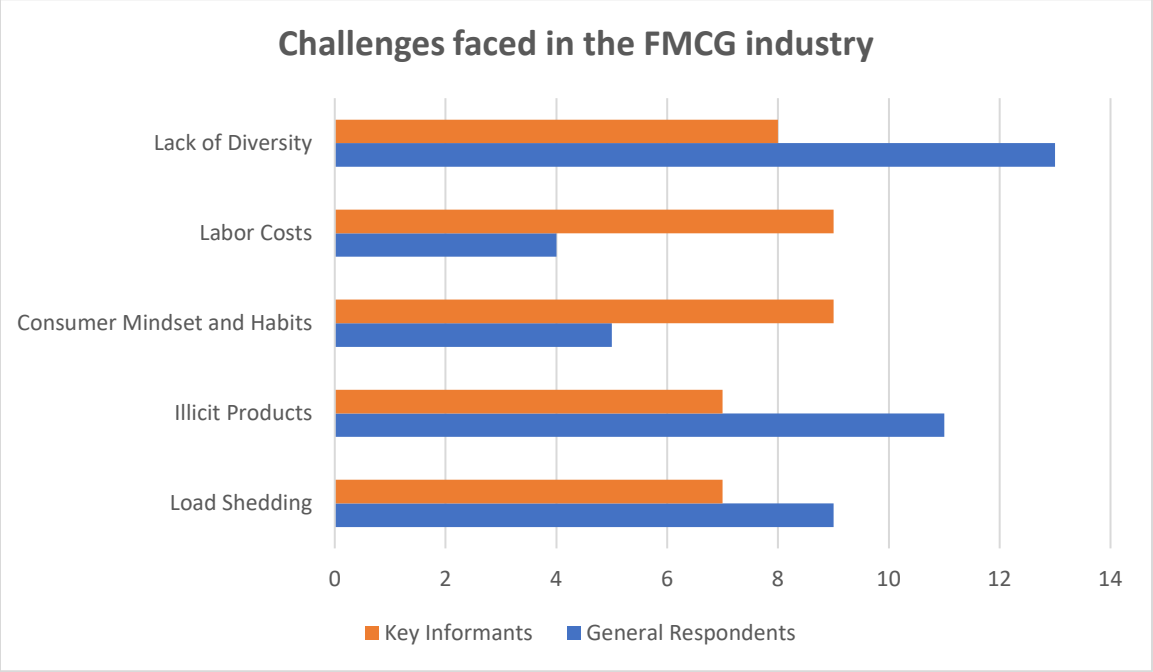
The recognition of the issue of gender diversity as a challenge showcases an understanding of the broader societal context within which the FMCG industry operates. A female respondent (R-8) shared,

"There's a noticeable lack of diversity, particularly in leadership roles. It hinders a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process."

A key informant emphasized,

"Addressing the lack of diversity is not just a corporate responsibility; it's crucial for fostering innovation and resilience within the industry. Gender diversity contributes to a richer and more sustainable business environment."

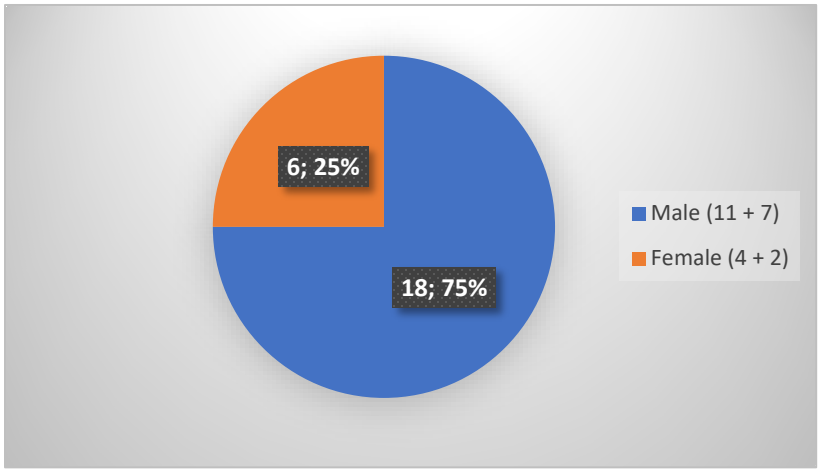
Figure 2: Challenges faced in the FMCG Industry



4.2.3 Gender Diversity in the FMCG Beverage Company in Johannesburg

The data reveals a recognition of the current male-dominated state within the companies, accompanied by deliberate policies and practices aimed at addressing gender imbalances. The systematic tracking of diversity goals signifies a proactive approach to measuring progress and aligning with broader initiatives for gender inclusivity in the workplace.

Figure 3: Reports of male dominance



Eighteen respondents (Eleven (11) general respondents and 7 of the key informants) reported that there is male dominance in the FMCG beverage company. This provided picture of a great need for increased efforts towards gender diversity within the FMCG beverage company.

A. Male Dominance

R-7 acknowledged the male-dominated nature of their company, stating,

"Our company is currently male-dominated, especially in leadership positions. We're working towards changing that, but the current state is still far from our diversity goals."

In alignment, KI-1, a key informant, emphasized,

"The industry, in general, has been traditionally male-dominated. Even within our company, it's evident. However, we've set specific targets to enhance female representation across management levels, recognizing the importance of diversity in fostering innovation and balanced decision-making."

"In a male-dominated environment, negative input exceeds positive feedback, so I educated myself to accept both politely. I also learnt that boys will be boys and managing my emotions around them will make my life easier, as they sometimes make jokes which are just that and should not be taken personal." (R-10)

B. Policy Issues

There were also reports that there are specific policies supporting or hindering the ascension of women to leadership positions in the FMCG industry. One such policy was highlighted by R-12, stating,

"When a female colleague resigns, there's a policy to ensure that her position is filled by another female. It's a direct effort to maintain or increase our female representation, especially in critical roles ". This was also reiterated by one of the key informants (KI-2) who further emphasized,

"Our company has implemented benefits that favor women, such as longer maternity leave and management development programs specifically designed to address the gender gap. These initiatives are strategic moves to create an inclusive workplace and nurture female talent."

C. Tracking of Gender Diversity

R-3 detailed the tracking mechanisms in their company, she said,

"Our diversity goals are not just on paper; they are actively monitored. We track progress on the Company Balanced Scorecard (CBN) and the Monthly Scorecard to ensure that we are moving towards our targets."

KI-1, from the same company as R-3 reinforced this commitment, saying,

"Measuring progress is critical. We've incorporated diversity goals into our key performance indicators, tracking them rigorously on the CBN and Monthly Scorecard. This not only signals our commitment but allows for informed decision-making to further enhance gender diversity."

D. Lack of mentorship for women

"I think the practice of mentoring is the answer to all our (female engineers) problems is the ideal solution. Female engineers who have managed to reach leadership levels and male engineers in those levels should guide us in achieving our successes and understanding our failures. Failures allow us to assess our capabilities and can even help us place talent in the right positions to maximize skills and achieve the desired results. All of these possibilities allow us to learn, grow, and guarantee that improvements are made to provide better results and engineers in the future." (R – 11).

4.2.4 Promotional Challenges for Female Engineers

Promotional challenges for female engineers within the FMCG beverage company reveal a landscape where gender disparities persist. Female respondents and key informants shed light on specific hurdles faced by women in their career progression.

A. Competitive disadvantage

The first thing raised is a competitive disadvantage. R-9, a female respondent said,

"The competition is tough, especially for young women like me. We have to prove ourselves against men who have more experience, and that's a real challenge. Also, females face of gender bias and discrimination, most individuals believe most women are promoted prematurely, due to most companies are chasing their EE compliance, KPI or trying to inflate their EE numbers to score more deals or clients which are BEE compliance stringent."

B. Manpower-Intensive Jobs

Further to this, it emanated also that the Engineering field is mostly populated by manpower-Intensive Jobs and promotion will depend on excelling at these levels. R-14, another female respondent said,

"Some junior roles are really manpower-intensive, which can be tough for women. It's not about capability but the perception of physical demands that can be a challenge for female engineers in those positions."

C. Inflexible technical positions

The researcher also recorded inflexible technical positions among the reported promotion challenges faced by female engineers. R-5, Female Respondent exclaimed,

"Some technical positions are demanding and inflexible, making it hard to balance work and family. It's a real challenge for women who want to progress in their careers while also managing personal responsibilities."

D. Gender bias and stereotypes

Among both males and females, gender bias and stereotypes were pronounced as historic and standing challenges,

"There's still a lot of bias. The perception that women are not as competent or committed as men is a barrier. Stereotypes contribute to unequal opportunities, and breaking through that is a constant struggle." - KI-1, Key Informant

E. Perceived Emotional Instability

There is perceived emotional instability among women, both men and women confirmed this, one respondent said,

"Women have emotional cycles that sometimes tend to influence the way in which decisions are made. Because of this, there is a superiority complex (over women) that most men secretly possess. It's just there and inherent, albeit subconsciously so in some cases" (R-7)

E. Low uptake of engineering career path by females

One key informant highlighted that while company policy, and every universities encourage women to take the engineering career path, there is still low uptake;

"It is more complex than that. If you look at the universities and determine the percentage of female engineering graduates against the male counter parts, the percentage is low. Furthermore, females often select office-based roles such as consulting firms, management consulting, and projects which leads to a very small pool of females to select and promote in an FMCG workplace.

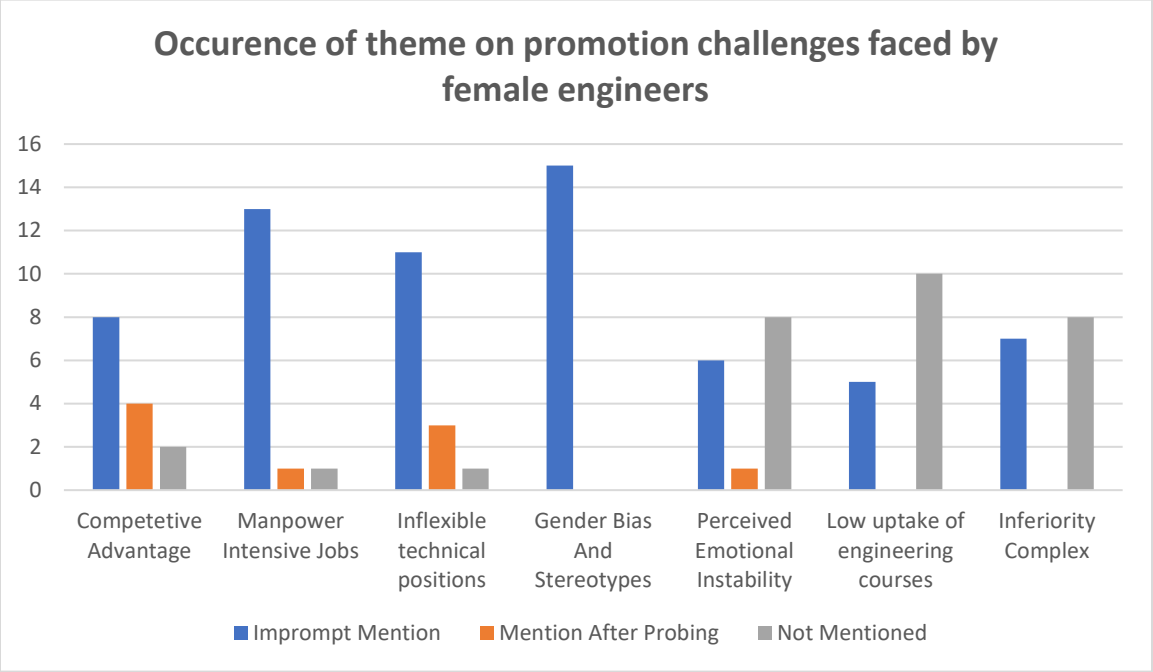
There are definitely challenges but most are related to absolute numbers hence why the statistics currently favour male". (KI – 7)

F. Inferiority Complex and Labelling

The research reached one of the women who experienced labelling and ended with an inferiority complex, she confessed,

"As a woman, it is practically an unspoken law that certain lines must not be crossed if you want to succeed. This has harmed my self-esteem, and I frequently choose to keep mute when the floor is open for suggestions or questions out of fear of being labelled dumb or uninnovative. I am also conflicted because at times, I have impressive suggestions to proffer, but do not put my hand up to voice them, and someone else voices the very thoughts I have and they receive the approval of everyone around the table, which can be very disheartening, and if I were to mention that I wanted to say exactly the same thing, I would be considered an attention-seeker" (R-3).

Figure 4: Promotion challenges faced by female engineers



4.2.5 Comparison Between Female and Male Engineers

This data presentation provides insights into the varied perspectives on the comparison between female and male engineers within the FMCG beverage company. The quotes from different

respondents underscore the complexities and nuances associated with gender dynamics in this professional context.

A. Theory, knowledge, and capability

The female respondents said that in theory, knowledge and capability, equality among man and women is there, however, not in practice;

"In theory, knowledge and capability come out as equivalent. There is ideally no difference in my opinion, at least not until we get on the ground" - R-2, Female Respondent

B. Quantity

The general availability of engineers practically has more men than women, respondents felt like this has nothing to do with inequality by rather socialisation.

"We are Africans, we have stuff that we simply reserve for men, engineering is one of them. Before we blame or condemn anyone, there are more male engineers compared to female engineers." - R-1, Female Respondent

C. Flexibility in Harsh Conditions:

"Male engineers are more flexible and able to adjust to harsh conditions compared to women engineers." - R-6, Female Respondent

D. Confidence Disparity

There is a reported general disparity in levels of confidence between males and females;

"I have seen some female engineers lack confidence, while their male counterparts are very confident." - R-10, Female Respondent

E. Development Hunger

"Some female engineers are not showing hunger for development compared to male engineers." - R-13, Female Respondent

F. Focus on Appearance and Phones:

"They fail to establish themselves in lower positions where they compete with males because they focus more on how they look and on their phones." - R-12, Female Respondent

G. Reluctance to Start at the Bottom:

"Some female engineers are not keen to start at the bottom, where there is dirt and hard labor, while the males are keen to start and grow up from the ranks." - R-14, Female Respondent

H. Leadership Approach:

"I do not look at gender in approach as a leader. I look at capability or competency, so I see female engineers the same as males." - R-3, Female Respondent

I. Harder Work for Reputation:

"Some female engineers have to work harder than their male counterparts to earn themselves a good reputation." - R-9, Female Respondent

"I am not engineer, however as a HR professional I have had to convince male GM's to promote female's into senior role. They needed convincing as they always believed that female's will always prioritise their personal commitments e.g., starting a family versus business commitments" (KI-2).

Table 3: Compared advantage of men over women

Theme	Given Explanations
Theory, Knowledge and capability	No clear difference reported between males and females in engineering.
Quantity	There are more males because Africans believe that manual jobs are for men and not women.
Flexibility in harsh conditions	*Men are reported to be more flexible to work under harsh conditions.*
Confidence disparity	*Respondents report that women have a lower confidence in themselves as engineers.*
Development hunger	*There is a perception that women lack the hunger to develop themselves, thus disqualifying themselves for promotion*
Focus on appearance and phones	*There is a perception that women are more concerned with their appearance and social media. This hinders their promotion*

Reluctance to start the bottom	*Both general women and key informants report that women are not ready to start at the bottom and work their way up through promotion, the bulk of them are reported to desire starting with office jobs, avoiding the groundwork.*

4.2.6 Barriers to Promotion for Female Engineers

A. Perceived Laziness:

"Some are lazy. Unfortunately, this perception becomes a barrier to recognizing the true potential and capabilities of female engineers." - R-7, Female Respondent

B. Lack of Junior Rank Ambition:

"They don't show hunger to grow at junior ranks. This lack of ambition can hinder their progression within the industry." - R-14, Female Respondent

C. Resistance from Older Generation Leaders:

"The old generation of leaders found it difficult to accept that females can offer the same as males. However, in my view, I have not observed any barriers that hinder their progress." - R-3, Female Respondent

D. Challenges During Pregnancy:

"As much as in other cases it becomes challenging when they are pregnant, but if you understand the bigger picture as a leader, you should not base your decisions on things that are resulted by nature." - R-8, Female Respondent

E. Physical Strength Stereotype:

"In general, I have witnessed women being passed on because of the assumption that one needs to be physically strong and able. This stereotype can unfairly limit opportunities for female engineers." - R-12, Female Respondent

"As female engineers, we are continually passed over for opportunities due to our perceived pettiness. Women are perceived as providing a supporting role to men, even if their qualifications and experience are equal." R-9, Female Respondent

F. Emphasis on Appearance:

"Need for maintaining one's looks has played a part in some discussions, nails and hair, dress code, etc. This emphasis on appearance adds an extra layer of scrutiny for female engineers." - R-9, Female Respondent

G. Higher Education Expectations:

"There was a case involving the need for the level of education to be higher for a female counterpart. Unwarranted expectations based on gender can act as a barrier to progression." - R-15, Female Respondent.

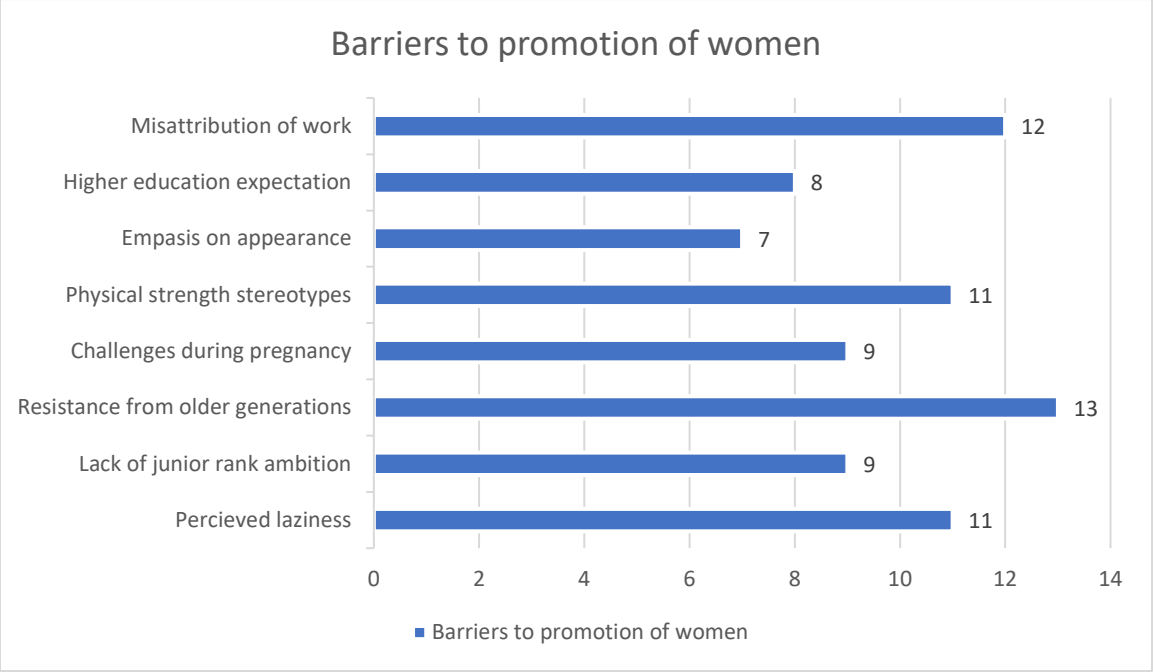
H. Misattribution of Work:

"There are cases where it was construed that female worker(s) are not actually completing their own tasks. It was, in fact, male colleagues doing the work and passing." - R-4, Female Respondent

I. Cumulative Challenges:

"It's not just one thing. There are multiple factors that contribute to barriers for female engineers. Understanding this complexity is crucial for designing effective strategies for promotion and inclusion." - R-8, Female Respondent

Figure 5: Barriers to promotion of female engineers



4.2.7 Policies Impacting Female Engineers' Promotion

This data illuminates the varied policies and practices in place within the FMCG beverage company, showcasing both supportive and challenging aspects for the promotion of female engineers. The quotes provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of these policies on the professional landscape for women in the field.

A. Replacement Policy

"When a lady resigns, they should be replaced by a lady. This policy aims at maintaining gender balance and ensuring that opportunities for female engineers are consistently available." - R-4, Female Respondent

B. Reserved Positions:

"Some positions should be reserved for ladies. This proactive approach creates targeted opportunities for female engineers, fostering a more inclusive work environment." - R-1, Female Respondent

C. Gender-Specific Benefits

"We have more benefits that Favor ladies, longer maternity leave, engineer development programs for ladies. These policies aim to address specific challenges faced by female engineers and promote their professional growth." - R-15, Female Respondent

D. Clear Targets for Gender Equality

"Clear targets are set to address this inequality. Having defined goals ensures that efforts toward gender equality are deliberate and measurable." - R-8, Female Respondent

E. Balancing Male-Female Promotion Gap

"Organizations do have policies, and a percentage of female management target is one way to do it. However, for this policy to be effective and sustainable, the gap between male and female colleagues during the promotion period needs to be reasonable." - R-9, Female Respondent

F. Diversity and Inclusion Policy

"A strong and brought to life diversity and inclusion policy can be a stepping stone that begins to change the narrative and gets male colleagues sensitized on this matter." - R-3, Female Respondent

G. Career Development Plan

"A proper career development plan for aspiring and promotion-ready female engineers should be implemented. Utilizing the 70-20-10 development methodology and assigning an on-the-job mentor ensures comprehensive skill development, aiding in appointing qualified and competent female engineers." - R-6, Female Respondent

H. Benefits

"Longer maternity leave and specialized development programs for female engineers are essential benefits that address gender imbalances and support women in their career journeys." - R-15, Female Respondent

"I have seen that other female engineers abuse some benefits for women, such as family responsibility leave, sick leave, etc in the workplace, which makes leaders think that we are all the same." (R-14).

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This discussion of findings underscores the richness and depth of insights gained from both female engineers and key informants in the FMCG beverage company. The shared understanding of industry dynamics, challenges, and gender-specific issues provides a solid foundation for formulating strategic recommendations to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity in the workplace. The diverse perspectives and experiences within the sample ensure a nuanced exploration that can inform targeted interventions at different organizational levels and within distinct roles in the industry.

4.3.1 Sample Composition and Demographics:

The main research sample, consisting exclusively of female engineers with a minimum of three years of experience in the FMCG beverage company, provides a focused and relevant exploration of the challenges faced by women in this field. This carefully curated sample exhibits a diverse

range of professional tenures (3 to 8 years) and roles, including Operations, Operations Supervision, Quality Control, Process Engineering, Safety Engineering, and Food Safety Engineering. The inclusion criteria ensure that insights are drawn from individuals with a foundational understanding of the industry. This diverse sample ensures the exploration of challenges and opportunities unique to each professional domain within the FMCG beverage sector. The variation in roles enriches the data, providing nuanced insights that can inform tailored strategies for promoting gender equality within distinct roles in the FMCG industry in Johannesburg.

The key informants, selected based on their decision-making roles, present a well-rounded and diverse cross-section of the FMCG beverage company. Their collective experience spans various facets, covering production, engineering, and human resources. The sample includes both male and female informants, ensuring a balanced perspective on the issues at hand. The inclusion of key informants with decision-making roles is particularly valuable. Their insights offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for female engineers from a managerial and strategic standpoint. The gender diversity within this sample ensures a holistic view of gender-related challenges within the industry.

4.3.2 Conceptualization of the FMCG Beverage company

Respondents describe the industry as dynamic, competitive, and characterized by rapid production and distribution of non-durable goods. Key characteristics include quick production, short shelf life, and essential daily items. Key informants emphasize the relentless pace, market responsiveness, and the need to manage a complex supply chain. This shared understanding across respondents provides a robust foundation for exploring challenges and trends. It ensures that recommendations and interventions are grounded in a comprehensive grasp of the industry's intricacies.

Load shedding, illicit products, consumer habits, taxation, infrastructure issues, water shortages, labor costs, and lack of diversity emerged as key trends and challenges. Both general respondents and key informants recognize these issues, showcasing a shared awareness of the industry's complexities. This shared recognition indicates a common understanding among individuals in different roles and positions. It underscores the interconnected nature of these challenges and the need for collaborative strategies.

4.3.3 Gender Diversity in the FMCG Beverage Company in Johannesburg

Female respondents acknowledge the current male-dominated state within their companies but express a commitment to more participation. Key informants affirm the industry's historical male dominance but highlight specific targets and initiatives to enhance female representation. This acknowledgment and commitment to change signify a shift in the industry's mindset, laying the groundwork for promoting gender diversity. Respondents report specific policies supporting or hindering the ascension of women to leadership positions. Policies such as the replacement policy, reserved positions, and gender-specific benefits aim at addressing gender imbalances and fostering inclusivity. The existence of these policies reflects a proactive approach by companies to create an inclusive workplace and nurture female talent.

Companies actively track diversity goals, measuring progress on scorecards and monthly reports. This commitment to systematic tracking indicates a strategic approach to gender diversity. Regular monitoring of diversity goals ensures accountability and provides data for informed decision-making.

4.3.4 Promotional Challenges for Female Engineers

Respondents highlight a competitive disadvantage for young professional women, especially when competing with more experienced male counterparts. Key informants recognize persistent gender bias and stereotypes contributing to unequal opportunities for women. The acknowledgment of these barriers indicates a nuanced understanding of cultural and organizational dynamics affecting women in the industry.

There was a direct identification of certain roles as manpower-intensive emphasizes structural challenges that may disproportionately affect women in junior roles. Recognizing structural challenges contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities women face at various levels in the industry.

Data reveals a recognition of the inflexibility and demands of certain technical positions which sheds light on work-family balance challenges faced by female engineers. Identifying work-family balance challenges provides insights into potential barriers and informs strategies for creating a more supportive work environment.

There was an acknowledgment of persistent gender bias and stereotypes contributing to unequal opportunities for women demonstrates an understanding of cultural and organizational dynamics. Awareness of biases indicates a need for cultural and organizational change to ensure equal opportunities for women in the industry.

4.3.5 Comparison Between Female and Male Engineers

Observation of more male engineers compared to female engineers points to a numerical gender disparity within the industry. Recognizing the numerical disparity is a crucial step in addressing gender imbalances in recruitment and retention.

Respondents' perceptions of male engineers as more flexible, confident, and hungry for development reveal existing gender stereotypes and biases. Identifying these stereotypes is essential for challenging and dismantling biased perceptions that hinder the professional growth of female engineers.

Highlighting specific challenges faced by female engineers, including focus on appearance, reluctance to start at the bottom, and resistance to manual labor, provides insights into potential barriers. Understanding these challenges informs strategies to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for female engineers.

4.3.6 Barriers to Promotion for Female Engineers

Assertion of laziness as a barrier underscores potential biases against female engineers threatens the efforts of creating a fair and equal promotion process. Identification of a perceived lack of ambition among female engineers reveals potential barriers to career advancement. Addressing perceptions of ambition is essential for promoting a fair and merit-based promotion system. Acknowledgment that multiple factors contribute to barriers faced by female engineers suggests a clear understanding of the complexities involved. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of challenges allows for targeted interventions and systemic changes. The data illuminates varied policies and practices in place, showcasing both supportive and challenging aspects for the promotion of female engineers. Understanding the impact of policies is crucial for designing interventions that foster gender equality and career progression.

4.4 Comparisons with Theoretical Framework

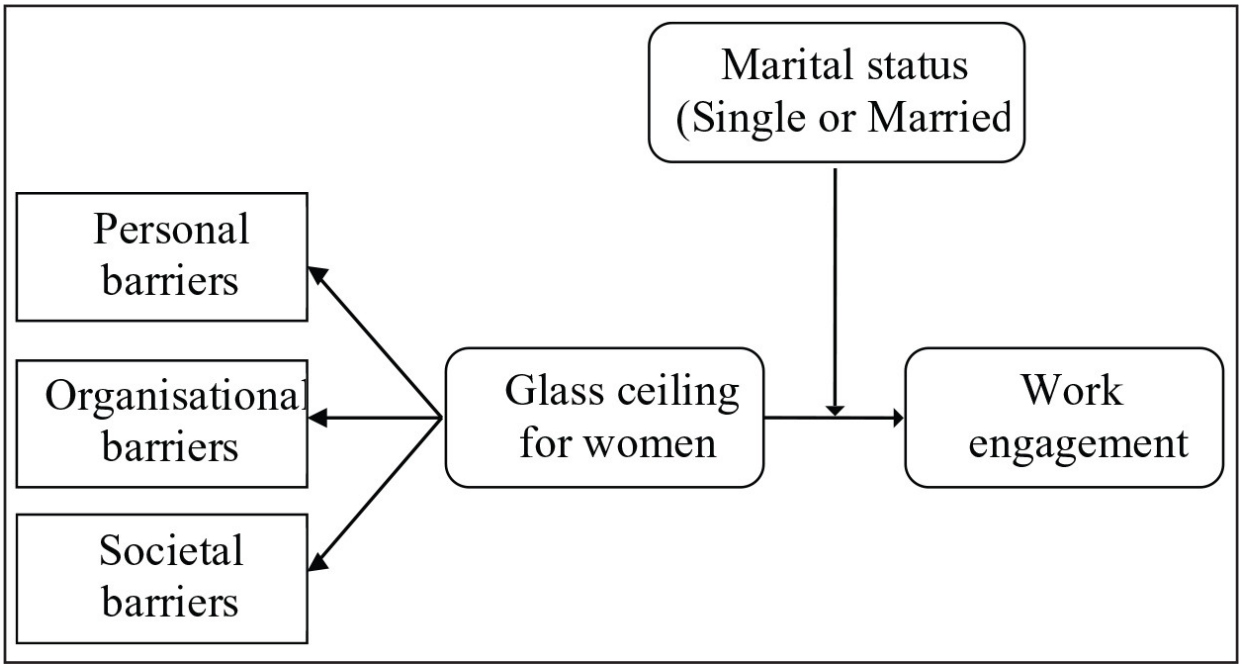
The findings provide a textured understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company. While aligning with certain aspects of the Glass Ceiling Theory and Social Identity Theory, the data also introduces complexities and nuances that challenge simplistic interpretations.

The identified policies and proactive measures point to a dynamic organizational response that goes beyond the passive existence of a glass ceiling. This challenges the notion that gender-based limitations are solely a result of invisible, systemic barriers. Moreover, the focus on individual experiences and perceptions within the group, as opposed to purely inter-group dynamics, adds layers to the Social Identity Theory.

4.4.1 Glass Ceiling Theory:

The Glass Ceiling Theory posits that there are invisible barriers, often discriminatory, that limit the upward career mobility of women.

Figure 6: Illustration of Glass Ceiling theory



In examining the findings of this study, there are notable alignments and divergences from this theoretical framework. The acknowledgment of a male-dominated representation within the companies aligns with the concept of the glass ceiling, where women face challenges in breaking

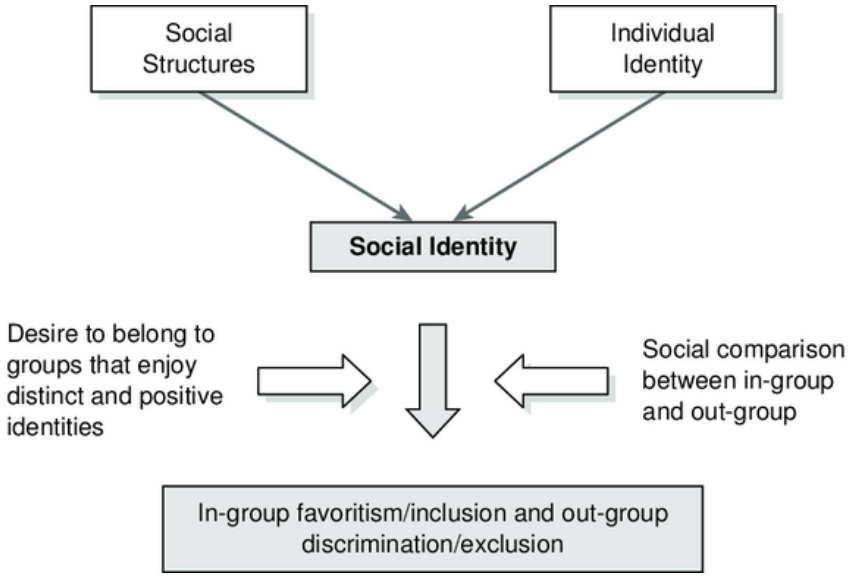
through to leadership positions. The identified promotional challenges for female engineers, such as a competitive disadvantage and stereotypes, resonate with the glass ceiling notion. These challenges impede the smooth progression of women in the FMCG beverage company.

On the contrary to the traditional glass ceiling narrative, there were explicit policy initiatives mentioned in the findings. Policies such as the replacement policy and reserved positions for females are proactive measures to address gender imbalances, challenging the passivity often associated with the glass ceiling.

4.4.2 Social Identity Theory:

Social Identity Theory explores how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, and how this categorization influences their perceptions and behaviors.

Figure 7: Illustration of social identity theory



Examining the findings in light of Social Identity Theory reveals both enriching and challenging aspects. The recognition of the lack of diversity, particularly in leadership roles, aligns with Social Identity Theory. This theory would predict that individuals within the minority group (in this case, female engineers) might feel a lack of inclusivity and representation. Instances of stereotypes and biases against female engineers, as highlighted in the responses, resonate with Social Identity Theory. Individuals may be subject to biases based on their gender identity, impacting their experiences in the workplace. On the other hand, the Social Identity Theory often emphasizes inter-group dynamics. However, the study also delves into intra-group dynamics, particularly the

comparisons between female and male engineers. This nuance challenges the theory's typical focus on inter-group relations. The presence of policies explicitly favoring women challenges the expectation of pure in-group favoritism. Social Identity Theory would predict favoritism toward one's social group, but the findings suggest a more nuanced approach influenced by deliberate organizational policies.

4.5 Validation of Findings

In this study, several strategies were employed to enhance the rigor of the research process. The validation strategies employed in this qualitative study, including member checking, peer debriefing, data saturation, methodological triangulation, and thick descriptions, collectively contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. Addressing challenges encountered in the qualitative analysis process ensures transparency and robustness in the research outcomes.

4.5.1 Member checking

One crucial strategy to validate the findings was the implementation of member checking. This involved going back to the participants, both general respondents and key informants, to present the preliminary findings and interpretations. By seeking their feedback, the research aimed to ensure that the participants recognized and agreed with the representation of their perspectives. This iterative process helped in refining and confirming the accuracy of the data interpretation.

4.5.2 Peer Debriefing:

Peer debriefing was another integral aspect of the validation process. The qualitative researcher engaged in regular discussions with peers who were well-versed in qualitative research methodologies. These discussions served as a form of external validation, where the researcher's interpretations and analytical decisions were scrutinized by peers. This external input provided a check on potential biases and ensured that the interpretations were grounded in the data.

4.5.3. Data Saturation:

The principle of data saturation was applied to ensure that a sufficient and comprehensive amount of data was collected. Data saturation, the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data, is a critical aspect of qualitative research validity. The inclusion of participants continued until redundancy in responses was achieved, ensuring that the findings were grounded in a thorough exploration of the research questions.

4.5.4 Methodological Triangulation:

To enhance the credibility of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed. This involved using multiple sources of data, including interviews with both general respondents and key informants. By triangulating data from different perspectives within the same industry, the study aimed to validate the consistency and convergence of themes across different sources.

4.5.5 Thick Descriptions:

The inclusion of thick descriptions, where the researcher provides detailed contextual information about the participants and the research setting, was an additional strategy. This enhances the transferability of the findings to similar contexts and allows readers to assess the applicability of the findings to their own situations.

4.6 Limitations

This research faced limitations that underscore the contextual and exploratory nature of qualitative research. The findings provide a snapshot of experiences within a specific context but do not claim universality. The sample's representativeness and the subjective nature of responses emphasize the need for cautious interpretation. There is potential for bias, both from participants and researchers, which highlights the importance of transparency in the research process. Despite these constraints, the study contributes valuable qualitative insights that offer depth and context to the understanding of gender dynamics within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg.

The study exclusively focused on female engineers in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to other industries or geographic locations. The findings may not capture the broader experiences of female engineers in different contexts, thus limiting the applicability of the study's insights.

Qualitative data is context-specific and time-bound. The study captures insights at a particular moment, and industry dynamics may evolve. Findings might not reflect changes or developments in the FMCG beverage company beyond the study period, limiting the temporal relevance of the insights.

4.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a nuanced and detailed exploration of the qualitative findings, offering a snapshot of the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. The insights contribute to the understanding of gender-related issues and offer a foundation for subsequent conclusions and recommendations in the following chapters. The next chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The sample composition and demographics reveal a diverse group of female engineers with varied roles and experiences, ensuring a deep exploration of the challenges.

5.1.1 Conceptualization of the FMCG Beverage company:

- The FMCG beverage company is understood as a dynamic, competitive industry characterized by rapid production and distribution.
- Key challenges faced in the industry include load shedding, illicit products, consumer habits, taxation, and infrastructure issues.

5.1.2 Gender Diversity in the FMCG Beverage Company:

- There is a clear acknowledgment of the male-domination in the FMCG beverage company.
- There are specific policies supporting the promotion of female engineers, however, there are also some policies that are still hindering female ascension.
- Companies are actively tracking diversity goals.

5.1.3 Promotional Challenges for Female Engineers:

- There is a reported competitive disadvantage for young professional women at the lower levels, and yet a challenge for anyone, regardless of gender to get promoted without experience at the lower level.
- The research found that there are persistent gender biases and stereotypes affecting opportunities.
- There was a clear identification of certain roles as manpower intensive and therefore restrictive to women.
- Key informants emphasized recognition of inflexibility and demands of technical positions as open to female engineers.
- There are perceptions of male engineers as more flexible, confident, and hungry for development.

5.1.4 Barriers to Promotion for Female Engineers:

- The research found that both females and males possess an assertion of laziness among female engineers, this is presented along with a perceived lack of ambition, these two are known as common barriers to the rise of female engineers in the FMCG industry.
- The research found that there is no clear cut, isolated barrier to female engineers' promotion, it is rather an interwoven web of multiple factors that are structural, socio-cultural and personal.
- The research found that there is exists policies and practices that are both supportive and challenging to promotion of female engineers.
- Biological reasons and female related natural cycles were blamed as disadvantaging women or rather commonly cited as key challenges for females to be promoted into certain positions.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Conclusions on Research Objectives

Objective 1: Factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior positions within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The examination of factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior positions revealed persistent challenges. Gender bias, stereotypes, and structural impediments create barriers for women in career progression within the FMCG beverage company. The numerical gender disparity observed also contributes to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. The research concludes that:

- Gender bias, persistent stereotypes, and structural impediments are significant contributors to the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior positions within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg.
- The numerical gender disparity observed in the industry reflect that challenges faced by female engineers at entry levels in the industry create substantial barriers for women in advancing to leadership roles.
- Female engineers face inherent challenges due to the perceived inflexibility of certain technical positions and structural issues, impeding their career progression within the FMCG beverage company.

Objective 2: Perceptions and experiences of female engineers regarding their career progression and the promotion process within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The exploration of perceptions and experiences uncovered a competitive disadvantage for young professional women, along with the recognition of persistent gender bias and stereotypes. Female engineers face challenges related to the inflexibility of certain technical positions and structural issues that may disproportionately affect women in junior roles. These findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of experiences influencing career progression. The research concludes that:

- Young professional women experience a notable competitive disadvantage, often tied to biological reasons, in their career progression within the FMCG beverage company.
- Persistent gender bias and stereotypes significantly influence the experiences of female engineers, impacting their opportunities for advancement.
- Structural challenges and inflexibility in certain technical positions contribute to the complexity of career journeys for female engineers.
- The reluctance to start at the bottom, resistance to manual labour, and focus on appearance are additional challenges that female engineers encounter, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to address these specific barriers.
- Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers both individual and organizational factors influencing the perceptions and experiences of female engineers.

Objective 3: Strategies and recommendations for addressing the promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage

In response to the identified promotion challenges, specific strategies and recommendations are proposed. Proactive policies, such as the replacement policy and reserved positions for females, challenge gender imbalances and demonstrate a dynamic organizational response. Recommendations also include addressing biases and stereotypes through awareness programs, fostering a more inclusive workplace culture, and implementing mentorship programs to support female engineers in their career journeys. The research concludes that:

- There is need for advocacy for proactive policies, including the replacement policy and reserved positions for females, as effective strategies to challenge gender imbalances in the FMCG beverage company.
- Awareness programs and fostering an inclusive workplace culture directly address identified biases and stereotypes, offering practical solutions for promoting gender equality in career advancement is needed.
- The proposal of mentorship programs as a strategic intervention emphasizes the research's conclusion that support mechanisms are essential to facilitate the career progression of female engineers.

The proposed strategies align with the overarching goal of promoting gender equality and diversity in leadership positions. Companies are encouraged to actively track diversity goals, measure progress, and create an inclusive workplace. The acknowledgment of existing policies supporting female engineers highlights a foundation for change, while recommendations aim to further enhance these efforts and foster an environment where women can thrive in senior roles within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. Therefore, the research further concludes that:

- Actively tracking diversity goals, measuring progress, and creating an inclusive workplace culture are crucial steps for companies aiming to promote gender equality and diversity in leadership positions.
- The acknowledgment of existing policies supporting female engineers in the industry provides a foundation for change, with the research emphasizing the need to build on these initiatives for sustained progress.
- Fostering an environment where women can thrive in senior roles within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg is key and will contribute to a positive shift in the industry's gender dynamics.

5.2.2 Contributions to Existing Knowledge

This research contributes valuable insights and practical recommendations to advance the discourse on gender equality in technical professions.

- The research significantly contributes to understanding the intricate gender dynamics within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. By delving into the experiences of

female engineers, it provides a clear perspective on the challenges they face, offering valuable insights for academia, industry professionals, and policymakers.

- The research adds to the existing body of knowledge by identifying specific barriers hindering the career progression of female engineers in the FMCG beverage sector. By highlighting factors such as gender bias, stereotypes, structural challenges, and industry-specific demands, this study provides a detailed understanding of the complexities faced by women in technical roles.
- This research contributes by proposing targeted and actionable strategies to address the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior positions. The recommendations, including proactive policies, awareness programs, and mentorship initiatives, fill a gap in existing knowledge by offering practical solutions for promoting gender equality and inclusivity in the workplace.
- The study challenges traditional theoretical frameworks, such as the Glass Ceiling Theory and Social Identity Theory, by introducing complexities and nuances. The existence of proactive policies in the face of a male-dominated industry challenges the passivity associated with the glass ceiling. Additionally, the focus on individual experiences within the group challenges the Social Identity Theory's typical emphasis on inter-group dynamics, adding depth to the understanding of gender-related challenges.
- By uncovering the intricacies of gender disparities in the FMCG beverage company, this research sets the stage for future investigations. The detailed insights into the experiences of female engineers and the proposed strategies for promoting gender equality offer a solid foundation for further scholarly inquiry and practical interventions in similar industries and contexts.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for FMCG Companies

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed for FMCG companies to address promotion challenges faced by female engineers and promote gender equality and diversity in leadership positions:

i. **Implement Proactive Policies:** Establish and enforce proactive policies that explicitly address gender imbalances and promote the advancement of female engineers. This may

include the introduction of a replacement policy, reserved positions for females, and targeted initiatives to ensure equitable representation.

ii. **Conduct Awareness Programs:** Develop and implement awareness programs to address biases and stereotypes within the workplace. Promote a culture of inclusivity through workshops, seminars, and training sessions that foster understanding and challenge preconceived notions, creating a more supportive environment for female engineers.

iii. **Initiate Mentorship Programs:** Launch mentorship programs to provide guidance and support for female engineers in their career journeys. Pairing experienced mentors with female engineers can help navigate challenges, offer valuable insights, and contribute to professional development, fostering a culture of mentorship within the organization.

iv. **Regularly Monitor Diversity Goals:** Actively track and monitor diversity goals related to gender representation. Regularly assess progress through scorecards and monthly reports, ensuring accountability and transparency in the organization's commitment to promoting gender equality in leadership positions.

v. **Review and Adjust Promotion Practices:** Evaluate existing promotion practices to identify and eliminate biases. Address any structural challenges that may disproportionately affect the promotion of female engineers. Implement merit-based promotion systems that recognize and reward competence and skills irrespective of gender.

vi. **Encourage Work-Life Balance Initiatives:** Recognize and address challenges related to work-family balance by implementing supportive policies. Introduce flexible working hours, family-friendly policies, and initiatives that foster a healthy work-life balance, contributing to a more inclusive workplace for female engineers.

vii. **Foster a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion:** Promote a culture that values diversity and inclusion at all organizational levels. Encourage open communication, celebrate diversity, and create an inclusive environment where the contributions of all employees, regardless of gender, are recognized and valued.

viii. **Regularly Review and Update Policies:** Periodically review and update diversity and inclusion policies to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Stay informed about industry best practices, evolving societal expectations, and legal considerations to maintain a progressive and inclusive approach.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the insights gained from the current study, several avenues for future research are suggested to further deepen the understanding of promotion challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company and contribute to the broader field of gender equality in the workplace:

i. **Exploring Intersectionality:** Investigate the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, ethnicity, and age to understand how multiple dimensions of identity intersect and influence the experiences of female engineers. This approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by diverse groups within the industry.

ii. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track the career trajectories of female engineers over an extended period. This approach can capture the evolving dynamics and identify the long-term impact of interventions and policies aimed at promoting gender equality within FMCG companies.

iii. **Comparative Studies Across Industries:** Explore and compare the experiences of female engineers in the FMCG beverage company with those in other related industries. Comparative studies can identify industry-specific challenges and best practices, contributing to a broader understanding of gender dynamics in technical professions.

iv. **Assessing the Role of Educational Pathways:** Investigate the influence of educational pathways on the career progression of female engineers. Explore how different educational backgrounds, including specific STEM disciplines and educational institutions, impact the opportunities and challenges faced by women in the FMCG companies.

v. **Employee Perception Studies:** Explore the perceptions of both male and female employees regarding gender equality initiatives. Investigate how these perceptions influence workplace dynamics, collaboration, and overall organizational culture, providing insights into the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion programs.

vi. **Policy Impact Assessment:** Conduct assessments of the impact of existing diversity and inclusion policies on the career progression of female engineers. Evaluate the effectiveness of different policy interventions and identify areas for improvement to inform the development of future policies.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the promotion challenges faced by female engineers within the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg, South Africa. Through a rigorous examination of factors contributing to underrepresentation, perceptions and experiences of female engineers, and the formulation of strategies for gender equality, the research sheds light on a complex landscape where gender disparities persist.

The findings underscore the existence of deep-seated challenges, including gender bias, stereotypes, and structural impediments, contributing to the underrepresentation of female engineers in senior positions. The numerical gender disparity observed serves as a stark reminder of the barriers hindering women's advancement in technical roles within the industry. Moreover, the study reveals the nuanced experiences of female engineers, emphasizing a competitive disadvantage for young professionals and highlighting the multifaceted nature of challenges faced, including biases related to appearance and reluctance to manual labor.

In response to these findings, a set of strategic recommendations is presented for FMCG companies to address these challenges actively. From implementing proactive policies and awareness programs to fostering mentorship initiatives and monitoring diversity goals, these recommendations form a roadmap for creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace for female engineers. The proposed strategies not only aim to dismantle barriers but also emphasize the importance of fostering a supportive culture that encourages the career progression of female engineers.

This research contributes significantly to existing knowledge by identifying specific challenges faced by female engineers in the FMCG beverage company, proposing targeted strategies for gender equality, and challenging traditional theoretical frameworks. The recommendations offer practical guidance for FMCG companies to actively address gender disparities and promote diversity in leadership positions. Furthermore, the study sets the stage for future research by suggesting avenues such as exploring intersectionality, conducting longitudinal studies, and conducting employee perception studies.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Guide (Female Engineers).

Consent Note:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. Before we proceed, I would like to inform you that participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Please note that your participation in this study involves answering a set of questions related to the promotional challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. Your responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential and anonymous. Your identity will not be disclosed in any way, and all information collected will be stored securely. The interview will be recorded to ensure accurate capture of responses, but the recording will be used solely for the purpose of transcribing and analysing the data. The recording will be destroyed after the data is transcribed.

Section A: Conceptualization of the FMCG beverage company

1. Can you describe your understanding of the FMCG beverage company, its products, and its characteristics?
2. What are some of the key trends and challenges that the FMCG beverage company is currently facing?

Section B: Gender diversity in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg

1. Can you describe the current state of gender diversity in the FMCG beverage company that you are employed in?
2. What are some of the policies and practices that your company has in place to promote gender diversity and inclusion?
3. How does your company measure and track progress towards gender diversity goals?

Section C: Promotional challenges pertaining to female engineers in the FMCG beverage company.

1. Have you ever faced any specific challenges related to promotion in your career within the FMCG beverage company? If so, could you describe them?

2. How do you perceive the promotion opportunities for female engineers in the FMCG beverage company that you are employed in, compared to the male counterparts?
3. Are there any specific barriers that you have observed or experienced that hinder female engineers from being promoted in the FMCG beverage company that you are employed in?
4. Are there any policies or practices in place that may be particularly helpful or challenging for female engineers in terms of promotion in the FMCG beverage company that you are employed in?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to add that has not been covered in this interview?

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide (Key Informants).

Consent Note:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. Before we proceed, I would like to inform you that participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Please note that your participation in this study involves answering a set of questions related to the promotional challenges faced by female engineers in a FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg. Your responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential and anonymous. Your identity will not be disclosed in any way, and all information collected will be stored securely. The interview will be recorded to ensure accurate capture of responses, but the recording will be used solely for the purpose of transcribing and analysing the data. The recording will be destroyed after the data is transcribed.

Section A: Demographic Data

- **i.** Age
- **ii.** Sex/Gender
- **iii.** Years in FMCG industry
- **iv.** Years in a Leadership Position

Section B: Conceptualization of the FMCG beverage company

i. Can you describe your understanding of the FMCG beverage company, its products, and its characteristics?
ii. What are some of the key trends and challenges that the FMCG beverage company is currently facing?

Section B: Gender diversity in the FMCG beverage company in Johannesburg

i. Can you describe the current state of gender diversity in the FMCG beverage company
ii. What are some of the policies and practices in place to promote gender diversity and inclusion?

iii. Are there any clear ways to measure and track progress towards gender diversity goals?

Section C: Promotional challenges pertaining to female engineers in the FMCG beverage company.

5. Would you say female engineers face challenges related to promotion within the FMCG beverage company? If so, could you describe them?
6. How do you compare female engineers against their male counterparts?
7. Are there any specific barriers that you have observed or experienced that hinder female engineers from being promoted in the FMCG beverage company?
8. Are there any policies or practices in place that may be particularly helpful or challenging for female engineers in terms of promotion in the FMCG beverage company that you are employed in?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to add that has not been covered in this interview?