A FRAMEWORK FOR OVERCOMING IMPEDIMENTS TOWARDS WOMEN'S SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION – A LOOK AT SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN CORPORATES

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BLOEMFONTEIN
FEBRUARY 2023

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled “A framework for overcoming impediments towards women’s skills development and career progression - a look at selected South African corporates” submitted by me for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Management at the Central University of Technology, Free State, is my independent work. Also, all sources used or quoted in this thesis have been indicated and duly acknowledged in-text and in the reference list. I also declare that I have not submitted this thesis for a degree at another faculty/university.

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FEBRUARY 2023

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the Lord God almighty, to Jesus and to my faithful companion and guide, the Holy Spirit, who have made it possible for me to achieve this qualification. I give God all the glory.

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ABBREVIATIONS

HCD: Human Capital Development

HR: Human Resources

HRM: Human Resource Management

HRD: Human Resource Development

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IR: Industrial Revolution

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

SEM: Structural Equation Modelling

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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ABSTRACT

Topic: A framework for overcoming impediments towards women's skills development and career progression – a look at selected South African corporates.

African countries are still experiencing challenges in achieving gender equality in the workplace. The topic has been increasingly researched in the past century, yet gender discrimination, in terms of skills development and career progression, still continue to be an issue in the workplace. Although legislation, such as the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Labour Relations Acts, the Basic Conditions of Employment Acts the Skills Development Acts, the Employment Equity Acts, and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Acts, were promulgated to promote gender fairness and address gender inequalities in and out of the workplace, these laws have not achieved their purpose fully because they fail to provide practical solutions to the challenges women face in their skills development and career progression.

This research study investigated factors affecting women's skills development and career progression in selected South African corporates with the aim of providing a framework for overcoming impediments in this regard. The first objective was to determine whether some workplace impediments and support strategies impact the skills development and career progression of women. The second was to determine the link between gender discriminatory practices and women's skills development and career progression. The third objective was to assess whether women's skills development is linked to women's career progression. The fourth objective was to determine the extent to which selected personal factors and family responsibilities impact women's skills development and their

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career progression. The last objective was to evaluate the link between gender-related legislation and women's skills development and career progression.

This study was grounded on a few theories. The theory of human capital, the expectancy, goal setting, agency, needs and motivation as well as general systems theories anchored deliberations on employee development. Also, career theories discussed as applicable to this research were work-adjustment, the career motivation and the social cognitive career theories. Given that this study was to advance the course of women, liberal feminism, postmodern feminism and African feminism theories were also considered. The social aspect of this research also warranted reflections on social exchange, social comparison, equity and social learning theories.

This research was a cross sectional survey and primarily espoused a quantitative approach. A questionnaire, consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, was self-administered online to 412 women (working in service firms in Johannesburg) sampled through a convenient non-probability sampling method. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the demographic distribution of the sample and central tendency measures. Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients were used to test normality. The maximum likelihood was performed with SPSS AMOS 27 to test the structural model. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) methodology was utilised to represent, test and estimate theoretical models. To assess the measurement model, a confirmatory factors analysis was conducted (i.e., goodness-of-fit, the validity of the measurement model, the reliability and convergent validity, and the statistical evidence of discriminant validity), followed by a structural model analysis.

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Statistical analysis of quantitative data shows that ‘workplace support strategies’ and ‘personal attributes’ were statistically and significantly related to the ‘skills development of women’. also, ‘workplace support strategies’, ‘family responsibilities’, ‘personal attributes’ and ‘skills development of women’ are statistically and significantly related to ‘career progression of women’. Contrarily, the constructs ‘workplace impediments’, ‘family responsibilities’, ‘legislation on gender applicable to the workplace’ and ‘workplace gender discriminatory practices’ had non-significant relationships with ‘skills development of women’. Likewise, ‘workplace impediments’, ‘workplace gender discriminatory practices’ and ‘legislation on gender applicable to the workplace’ had a non-significant effect on the ‘career progression of women’.

Open-ended questionions were analysed using a manual thematic content analysis approach. Results show that empowering women, providing development opportunities, availing resources to support skills development, giving rewards, helping women manage their careers and having fair internal systems are vital for women’s skills development. Similarly, providing internal advancement opportunities, facilitating skills development, providing leadership opportunities, offering work-family support, having fair organisational practices at all levels, rewarding performing women and institutionalising mentorship programmes promote women’s career advancement. Likewise, having institutional strategies towards gender equity and avoiding practices that promote male domination, gender-pay disparity, unequal growth opportunities and favour racial groups restrain women’s careers. In addition to organisational support, family support and personal responsibility play a crucial role in women’s skills development and career progression.

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Although having legislation on gender equity is vital, change will only happen when organisations institutionalise and implement the right policies.

This study concludes that when organisations have workplace support strategies in place, women's skills are more likely to be developed. Also, when women's skills are developed, they stand a greater chance of ascending the organisational ladder. More so, with adequate family support, women are more likely to progress in their career. In addition, personal responsibility plays a critical role in women's skills development and their career progression.

Key words: Skills development, career progression, women, workplace, service industry, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

The service industry is composed of enterprises that mostly generate revenue by providing intangible products and services (Business Dictionary, n.d). These companies are in banking, retail, education, hotels, real estate, social work, health, financial services, computer services, electricity, recreation, media, communications, gas and water supply. This fast-growing industry provided a pool from which the sample for this study was drawn. Nowadays, companies are pressured to provide increasingly better services to customers (Chen et al., 2019). There is also major competition in this industry as companies strive to keep abreast with clients' changing needs and their demand for quality service in a fluctuating business environment. Hence the need for employees to continuously develop their knowledge and skills to remain relevant and marketable. Also, within the service sector, the quality of the service delivered is dependent on the employee, and factors such as the employee's motivation and satisfaction (Ahmad, Wasay & Malik, 2012; Dzansi et al., 2016), both of which are affected by the employee's skills development and career progression. Moreover, Hakim (2016) argues that recent flexible-work developments in the labour market have created beneficial social and economic situations for women. The service sector offers congenial and flexible work environments suitable for women, limiting discriminations that impact family life, such as physical presence in an office and specific working times.

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There has been a worldwide cry to eradicate gender discrimination (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2018; United Nations (UN), 2019; United Nations Women, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2020). International non-governmental organisations have invested enormous resources and have put different measures in place to eliminate this prejudice in the workplace yet it still persists. The UN, since its revolutionary agreements (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN, 1979) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995)), has made remarkable progress in promoting gender equality. The UN continues to reflect its interest in gender equality through its fifth (out of its seventeen) Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, i.e., "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (UN, 2019, p. 8). In support of this goal, the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, (the arm of the UN dedicated to gender equality and women empowerment within member countries) implements programmes that promote meaningful employment, assets accumulation, institutional influence and other public policies linked to the growth and development of women (United Nations Women, 2019).

Likewise, the African Union, through one of its Key Programme Areas called "Women, Gender and Development", has designed a 2018-2028 strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment which was launched during the Union's summit in February 2019. Pillars of the strategy applicable to this study are: promoting the implementation of laws, policies, institutions and gender machineries that protect women's rights by enforcing the Maputo Protocol; and fighting for equal gender representation in all spheres of decision-making, and for the removal of all barriers to women's participation with impact (African Union, 2018). These pillars are aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063

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Aspiration 6 which is “An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth” (African Union, 2018, p. 8), an objective that is also in synchchrony with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 stated in the preceding paragraph.

Despite the meaningful efforts to reduce gender gaps in the labour market, disparities persist and, therefore, need to be addressed by governments, together with employers, workers and representative organisations (ILO, 2018a). According to the World Economic Forum (2020, p. 5), “On average, only 55% of adult women are in the labour market, versus 78% of men, while over 40% of the wage gap (the ratio of the wage of a woman to that of a man in a similar position) … are still to be bridged”. The Forum reports that several countries have made progress towards gender parity, with improvements in 101 out of the 149 countries surveyed in the last two years. However, the process has been slow and investments in women’s talent is still limited in many countries. There is a shortage of women in general leadership, and there is even a greater shortage at executive level. Women comprise a mere 5% of CEOs in the private sector in Africa”, and the representation at the Board level is still very low (Africa Union, 2018, p. 50). Grant Thornton (2016) affirms that women only hold 24% of senior roles globally. In general, women around the globe experience slower career development than men (Komalasari, Supartha, Rahyuda & Dewi, 2017), a practice that could hinder their appointment at board and/or executive levels. While developed countries are successively making progress towards gender equality, most developing countries, such as South Africa, still lag behind (ILO, 2018a, 2018b; UN, 2013; UN, 2019).

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The UN Development Programme (UN, 2016) measures Human Development Composite Indices using concepts such as inequality index, gender development index, multidimensional poverty index, education and achievements, national income and composition of resources, work and employment, human security, international integration, perception of wellbeing, life-course gender gap and sustainable development. This report consistently ranks South Africa under countries with “Medium Human Development” while most other African countries are classified under the “Low Human Development” category. In addition, based on the per capita Gross National Income evaluation criteria, South Africa is one of the developing countries classified under the “Upper Middle Economies” group. The country is also far ahead of its peers on the continent with regard to economic development, policy development and implementation, labour markets, mineral resources, trade and industrialisation (UN, 2016) and gender empowerment (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche & Zahidi, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2020). Furthermore, South Africa is ranked 17th out of 153 countries surveyed in the Global Gender Gap Index 2020 rankings, taking the 3rd position in Africa, after Namibia and Rwanda (1st) (World Economic Forum, 2020). The nation holds the 92nd position out of 153 countries for economic participation and opportunity; 67th out of 153 nations for educational attainment with a score of 0.994/1; and 10th out of 152 countries for political empowerment with more than 48% of women among ministers, thereby closing at least 50% of its political empowerment gender gaps (World Economic Forum, 2020). This high ranking of South Africa can be attributed to the nation’s relatively robust legal system and the government’s determination to achieve gender equality in all areas, including the workplace. Legislation promulgated to promote fairness and gender equality in the South

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African workplace which is relevant to this study comprises: the Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) and the amended Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 52 of 2002 (RSA, 2002) which gives effect to Section 9 when read with Item 23(1) of Schedule 6 of the Constitution; the Labour Relations Act, Act 66 of 1995 (RSA, 1995); the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997 (RSA, 1997); the Basic Conditions of Employment Amended Act, Act 7 of 2018 (RSA, 2018); the Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998 (RSA, 1998); the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) as amended by the Employment Equity Amendment Act, Act 47 of 2013 (RSA, 2013) and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, Act 46 of 2013 (RSA, 2013).

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (2019), a South African state organ that is strategically located within the Presidency, has made substantial progress towards establishing structures and institutional mechanisms to advance women's empowerment through all state functions, and enforcing gender equality principles that influence legislation. However, in agreement with this department, Matotoka and Odeku (2021) indicate that although gender transformation in the public sector is fast paced, progress in the private sector has been sluggish because gendered practices and norms still prevail and corporate response has been tardy. This resistance has resulted in women being poorly represented within corporate boards and senior management roles, even in companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). In South Africa, women only consist of 21.2% of the top management and only 32% of women are Managers (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2018). Likewise, only 20.7% of directors and 29.4% of executive managers are women, and at the top

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leadership level of organisations women account for only 11.8% of CEOs or chairpersons (Business Women's Association of South Africa, 2017). Moreover:

> JSE listed companies have 4.7% of female CEOs, 6.9% of female Chairpersons, 19.1% of female Directors and 29.5% of female Executive Managers while data for SOEs revealed 5% of female CEOs, 10% of female Chairpersons, 41.2% of female Directors and 28.5% of female Executive Managers" (Business Women's Association South Africa, 2017, p. 8).

The above reports indicates that JSE listed companies underperformed in terms of gender representation in senior posts. Recent statistics confirm that women are underrepresented in management positions (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022). These findings provide evidence that national and international legislations, together with related policies and programmes, have not fully served their purpose. Some research studies reveal that even when legislation is implemented, it is merely for compliance to avoid sanctions (Bosch, 2011; Oosthuizen, Tonelli & Mayer, 2019; Schwartz, 1989) as day-to-day experiences of women still differ from the promised standards (Alexaander, 2019). "Much still needs to be done to overcome the barriers of gender equality in the South African workplace" (Moalusi & Jones, 2019, p.2). Yet there seems to be little commitment to implementing change. In spite of gender equality laws, state efforts and extensive research, gender discrimination continues to be an issue in the workplace and the nation (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; Jaga, Arabandi, Bagraim & Mdlongwa, 2017; Steyn & Jackson, 2015b) consequently, impacts women' skills development and their career progression (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018).

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There is evidence that women are more likely to experience everyday discrimination in the workplace than men (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci and Warner (2017) affirm that women's workplace experiences usually differ from those of men. Women, likewise, face different sets of challenges from their male counterparts in their career path (Botha, 2017; Gipson et al., 2017; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; ILO, 2018a). When attempting to address this discrepancy, emphasis is often placed on eye-catching discriminatory issues (such as lower pay and promotions) and subtle issues are usually ignored (for example, the lack or inadequate support for women going through experiences that are peculiar to women such as pregnancy, motherhood and invisible gender barriers within the workplace). Women deplore the limited training provided for their access into leadership positions and the lack of support from upper management (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Maternity-leave breaks, glass ceilings, sexual harassment, poor working conditions, restricted skills development opportunities and limited access to leadership roles are some of the challenges women encounter when seeking to develop themselves and climb the career ladder (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; Grundling & Bosch, 2011). Anecdotal revelations suggest that men habitually display sexist, oppressive and discriminatory behaviours (Gerber & Schlechter, 2019) that restrict women's progress. Furthermore, discriminatory gender-role ideologies, that view men as family head breadwinners who have higher career advancement and need more support than women, concomitantly affect compensation for work performed (Berdahl & Moon, 2013; Carr, Gunn, Kaplan, Raj & Frend, 2015; Moalusi & Jones, 2019) as these ideologies ascribe more value to men's services than to those of women (Acker, 2012). Moreover, a limited number of women

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advance, making it difficult for women to catch up at senior levels because there are considerably fewer women to recruit or promote to senior manager positions at each subsequent higher level (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Early inequality impacts the talent pipeline and greatly obstructs female representation at senior levels. Organisations often apply diligence for junior and mid-tier equity appointments but there are disproportionate efforts in top management strata (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). In companies with rooted masculinity practices, systems of masculine privileges remain entrenched, even if organisational policies prohibit gender discrimination (Moalusi & Jones, 2019) making it difficult for women to advance to topmost positions. It can be stated, therefore, that organisations, as social institutions, are not gender-neutral (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Nemoto, 2013) and gender justice within organisations is not the norm.

Organisational structures prevent women from fully participating in their workplaces (Jaga et al., 2017; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). These lacunas are evident at different levels of Human Resource Management, including recruitment, skills development, career progression and employee development (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Howson, Coate & de St Croix, 2018). Extra support given to women, such as maternity leave, provision of crèches and flexible working hours, can add value to women's workplace experience and create opportunities for them to flourish, develop their skills and climb the organisational ladders (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gledhill & Harwood, 2015; Hancock & Hums, 2016; San Miguel & Mikyong, 2015). Yet these support elements often are not present in organisations. Career Junction (2019) and Bosch (2017) lament that South Africa still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality in the workplace. This claim warrants in-depth investigation to understand the

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manner in which organisations can provide support for female employees and address the challenges they encounter in their skills development and career progression, and to develop a framework that can be emulated throughout Africa, especially by countries that view South Africa as a pace setter. This study was conducted within the service industry (see details in Section 1.11.2 below) to determine the impact of selected organisational factors (see details in Section1.5.2 below) on women's skills development and their career progression.

1.2. Background of the study

Any organisation that wants to grow, develop and be sustainable must recognise the relevance of its essential assets (i.e., people), and invest in them (Aroge & Hassan, 2011; Dhar, 2015; Fallon & Rice, 2015). Organisations no longer view expenditure in employee development as costly and worthless (GetSmarter, 2019; Leadership Resources, 2019; LinkedIn Learning, 2018). Nowadays investment in human capital development is perceived as the means of securing the organisation's future and promoting its economic growth (Naong, 2016). Both Nguyen and Shao (2019) and Vnoučková et al. (2015) concur that, while employee development is costly and time consuming, it usually results in a broad range of returns.

Rapuano (2020) reveals that the increasingly competitive and turbulent business environment has forced organisations to remain agile and viable in the global labour market, resulting in changed employment conditions and working strategies. The dynamic business environment prompted by technological advancement and globalisation has created the necessity for many organisations to valuate employee development in order

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to achieve organisational performance (Muiruri, Kahuthia & Muraguri, 2019). Vnoučková et al. (2015) anticipate that with the present increase in competition globally, more organisations will concentrate on the development of employees' talent. Evaluations undertaken between 2008 and 2018 reveal that from 2011 onwards there has been a gradual but steady increase in the average number of United States dollars spent on workplace training per employee worldwide (Statista, 2020a). The top three learning and development content in such training are 14% for managerial and supervisory content, 13% for mandatory/compliance related training and 10% for interpersonal skills (Statista, 2020b).

The overall performance of a company depends on the alignment between its strategy and its human resources expressed through the calibre of staff recruited, trained and developed (Buller & McEvoy, 2012). Employee development is an important functions of Human Resource Management and has proved to be beneficial not only to individuals but also to teams, organisations and societies at large (Crawshaw & Brodbeck, 2012; Department of Education South Africa, 2009; Fallon & Rice, 2015). Employee development focuses on activities that are relevant to employees' future job requirements (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Gibbs et al., 2015) and has increasingly been used to retain employees, increase their participation in the workplace, improve their long-term performance and secure their future marketability (Garava, Carbery & Rock, 2011; Gibbs et al, 2015). Organisations that want to gain competitive advantage should develop their staff (Naong, 2016; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries & Sels, 2014) and ensure that they possess skills that are valuable, rare, difficult to replace and not easily transferable (Noe, Alena & Clarke, 2014). The above facts notwithstanding, employee development is

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challenging and necessitates contributions from all involved parties. Organisations have to be committed and provide the necessary resources while employees need to be dedicated to self-development, continuously strive for self-refinement and take personal responsibility for overcoming existing barriers to their development (Vnoučková et al., 2015).

However, when considering gender nuances, the above conditions are 'easier said than done'. The UN considers gender inequality as the "greatest human rights challenge of our time" (Lawson, Martin, Huda & Matz, 2022, p. 1). Women continue to experience gender inequality globally, despite the fact that the first protest for better working conditions for women occurred in 1908 (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022). Women encounter different challenges to those of their male counterparts in terms of workplace development (Gipson et al., 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Literature discloses that family, cultural and societal roles together with organisational dynamics are responsible for workplace skills development disparity between male and female employees (Łaba, 2011; Omair, 2010; World Economic Forum, 2020). Social and family responsibilities limit women's participation in activities that contribute towards their skills development and professional progression (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Jaga et al., 2017; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). More so, personal beliefs regarding gender, race, social revolution, cultural and gender prejudice often stall women's career development (Jaga et al., 2017; Łaba, 2011; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). The close interconnection between the different aspects of a woman's life warrants special attention and are often areas in which women critically need support in the form of experienced mentors (Hancock & Hums, 2016; San Miguel & Mikyong, 2015) and influential sponsors (Chanland & Murphy,

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2017; Ibarra et al., 2010) for their development and progression. However, adequate mentorship (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016) and sponsorship (Ames et al., 2019) are often not available to women.

Cognisance of the disparity between men and women in the workplace and consideration of the array of challenges women face, has resulted in the promulgation of a range of legislation to address existing gaps. The Constitution (RSA, 1996) protects citizens from any form of unfair discrimination. The Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995), which provides guidelines for relationships between employers, employees and labour unions, cautions against unfair treatment. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (RSA, 1997) likewise promotes social justice and fair conditions of employment for men and women. Furthermore, the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998) prescribes training and skills development as a catalyst for improving the quality of life, enhancing labour mobility opportunities for designated groups (i.e., Blacks, women, and people with disabilities), and improving the productivity and competitiveness of businesses. In addition, the Employment Equity Act (RSA, 1998) together with the Employment Equity Amendment Bill of 2012, prohibit direct and indirect unfair discrimination of designated groups. Jaga et al. (2017) report that although the Employment Equity Act (RSA, 1998) and the Skills Development Act (RSA,1998) were enforced to redress past inequalities in South Africa, these two pieces of legislation still have not fully achieved their purpose. However, evidence reveal great strides have been made in the made espeacially from management and lower levels (Maleka & Siziba, 2019; Omar & Kiley, 2022). The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBEE) Act (RSA, 2013) aims to increase the ownership, management control and employment of Black citizens (i.e., Indian, African, and Coloured

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people) in companies. The BBEE Act has allocated compliance targets to Black women's voting rights as board members and executive directors, under management and control elements. Amendments to the BBEE Act's codes are still underway in an attempt to eliminate persistent gaps in the representation of people from targeted groups in private companies (Department of Trade and Industry, 2019). Persisting challenges in achieving gender equity within organisations, despite legislative prescriptions (Sobczak, 2018) necessitate the design of a framework and guidelines to address issues relating to women's development and career progression within the workplace, especially in the service firms in Johannesburg chosen for this study. A research study of this nature allowed the researcher to scrutinise data to identify existing connections, characteristics and variances, and to search for possible explanations to similarities and differences among different groups in the sample. Analysis of results aimed to yield exciting insights, as well as a fresh and deep understanding of gender issues around women's skills development and their career progression.

1.3. Problem statement

Globalisation has increased competitiveness among organisations (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019) and getting employees to achieve their full potential has become a daunting task (Naong, 2016). Within the forever competitive and changing business environment it has become crucial for organisations of all sizes and scope to retain and develop talented employees (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015) in a systematic manner (Vnoučková et al., 2015). An organisation's 'talent pool' is considered a key strategic resource to create its competitive advantage (Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries & Sels, 2014). Also, as indicated above, an organisation's accomplishments are extremely reliant on the nature and quality

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of its employees' contributions (Chen et al., 2019), thus, it is imperative to acquire, develop and keep talented employees within the organisation.

Worldwide crisis and turbulence in the workplace, often the result of volatile workplace relationships, have caused governments and employers to become more cautious regarding the welfare of employees. In the past, most organisations focused on training with the aim of improving employees' effectiveness in their current jobs (Bhatti & Kaur, 2010; Turaba & Casimir, 2015). By so doing, these organisations have failed to invest in the long-term skills development, marketability and progression of their employees (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Adhikari, 2020; Gibbs et al., 2015; Setiawan & Julaeha, 2020). This myopic approach has limited women's professional development and advancement.

Moreover, within literature pertaining to employee development, it is common to find information relating to employees irrespective of gender (Steyn & Jackson, 2015a, 2015b). Yet, gender issues appear to play a significant role in the development of women (Jaga et al., 2017). The social position women occupy and their family responsibilities usually make it difficult for them to focus solely on their skills and career development (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; Penney, 2015). Even though research has been conducted to address issues relating to women in the South African workplace (Bosch, 2017; Geldenhuys, 2013; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Naudé, 2017; Oosthuizen et al., 2019), these studies focused on facets of gender other than skills development and career progression simultaneously. Some South African studies on gender issues in the workplace have focused on labour laws (Botha & Cronjé, 2015a; Pienaar & Kok, 2017; Pienaar, Naidoo, & Malope, 2018; Pienaar, & Sonnekus, 2016). Other studies have examined gender fairness and equality in the workplace (Bosch, 2017; Coetzee, 2017;

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Gouws, 2019; Grundling & Bosch, 2011; Moleko, 2019; Naudé, 2017), the behaviour of women who occupy senior positions (Gerber & Schlechter, 2019) and sexuality in the workplace (Du Toit, 2012). A few research studies have examined the evolution of gender issues in the democratic era in South Africa (Barclay, 2018; Geldenhuys, 2011; Lwesi, 2019; Wittmann, 2012) while other studies have investigated strategies to increase women's representation in fields in which they are under-represented (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012; Botha, 2017; Botha & Cronjé, 2015b; Mathur-Helm, 2018; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; PWC, 2018a; Wright, 2018). A limited number of researchers have examined issues around women's progression to leadership positions (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Botha, 2017; Haffajee, 2015; Mayer, Surtee & Barnard, 2015; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Nkomo, 2012), as well as factors that influence women's career success (Doubell & Struwig, 2014). In addition, other researchers have looked at the impact of women-specific experiences on women's career (Boninelli, 2016; Bosch, 2014, 2016; Chipunza & Dhlamini-Kumalo, 2016; Jacobson, 2014), gender pay gaps, (Boninelli, 2015; Bosch, 2011, 2015; Bussin & Nienaber, 2015; Pienaar, 2015), motherhood and work (Lits & Rubin, 2014), and the retention of women in the workplace (Abbott, 2012). Further research investigated the use of time by men and women in South Africa and fairness in the family setting (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2001; Gouws, 2017). While these studies concentrate on the position of women in the workplace, they give little attention to skills development as a means to achieve career progression. Continuous research needs to be conducted to ascertain the progress made regarding the impact of women-specific experiences on women's careers in South Africa. In addition, global studies only provide an overview of gender issues within the workplace without giving in-depth

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consideration to the context (ILO, 2018a; World Economic Forum, 2020). Research gaps both in South Africa and globally necessitate investigations into the various challenges working women experience, including their skills development and career progression.

Chetty and Naidoo (2017), as already stated, reveal that although legislation governs the South African workplace, gender inequalities in terms of skills development and career progression continue to exist, thus, insinuating that organisations may have to go beyond legal compliance to eradicate gender inequality. Absence due to maternity leave, unequal remuneration, sexual harassment, negative personal gender beliefs, social revolution, gender roles, cultural prejudice, traditional organisational structures, lack of participation in the workplace and the glass ceiling effect that excludes them from climbing the organisational ladder and attaining senior leadership roles, are some of the many constraints women face (ILO, 2022; Jaga et al., 2017; Gledhill & Harwood 2015; Łaba, 2011). South Africa has committed to workplace gender equality and equal opportunities for all employees in line with the UN prescriptions and has given priority to devising measures to support and promote women. However, despite the existing employment legislations pertaining to women in the workplace, women and men are not progressing equally due to organisational factors and the social roles they play. This situation warrants this research study – a conviction that will be supported further by the literature review discussions below.

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1.4. Preliminary literature review

This section provides an overview of existing literature on employee development, career progression, feminism, the African context and the legislative background against which the study was conducted.

1.4.1. Employee development

The importance of training in the workplace, as an approach towards achieving employee development, is undeniable (Vnoučková et al., 2015). Training improves employees' current performance (Gibbs et al., 2015; Turaba & Casimir, 2015) but employee development goes further to address a wider range of strategies that deal with an employee's self-awareness, self-reflection, personal and professional development, feedback, managerial support, training, promotion, staff retention and future marketability (Gibbs et al., 2015; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Employee development, in the form of training can influence an employee's feeling of empowerment (Kurniawati & Sari, 2019). Chen et al. (2019) stipulate that empowerment the act of uplifting people (mostly through delegation of authority) to a point at which they both wish and feel capable of shaping their work role and context. Also, employee development in the form of performance-based promotion is perceived as a fair opportunity to increase career levels thereby empowering employees towards career enhancement (Njagi, 2012; Kruja et al. 2015). Thus, employee development, through training and promotion, empowers and motivates employees to produce better results. Men are given more career enhancement opportunities (Khalid, Rehman, Muqadas & Rehman, 2017) while women receive fewer grooming opportunities that will prepare them for senior positions (Ames, Malloy &

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Coplen, 2019). McKinsey and Company (2019) found that fewer women than men, perceive that they have equal development opportunities, access to sponsorship and advancement opportunities, promotions are fair and based on objective criteria, best opportunities are given to the most meritorious employee, and only the most qualified employees are promoted. These differences in opinion depicts that women perceive greater gender inequality within organisational systems than men in terms of employee development and advancement.

Learning is the process of change in knowledge, while development is the process of attaining desired changes through learning (Vnoučková et al., 2015). According to Birdi, Allan and Warr (1997), developmental activity formats used to develop employees fall under four main categories, namely: required training courses in work time, work- based development activities in work time, voluntary learning activities in one's own time and career planning activities. Learning and development are now at the top of organisations' agenda. Many companies plan and increase their budget for development initiatives yearly (Carucci, 2018; LinkedIn Learning, 2018). However, even with the augmented need for human resource development, some organisations have decreased their financial allocation for this purpose because of increased global economic competition and technological developments (Banyhmadana, Mualab, Al-Ghalabic & Abu Adid, 2020). Employee development however, is imperative for organisational growth and cannot be ignored.

Developmental activities can be initiated by the employee or the employer (Chetty & Naidoo 2017; Fallon & Rice, 2015; Łaba, 2011) but the commitment of both parties is imperative (Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Rapuano, 2020; Vnoučková et al., 2015).

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Employees' awareness of opportunities and their positive attitude towards those opportunities are fundamental factors in increasing their participation in developmental activities. Yet women are not always aware of the growth opportunities available to assist them to ascend to leadership positions (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014), even though it is these openings that will motivate then to strive. Ames et al. (2019) mention that the combination of personal motivation/drive, proactive career management and performance are essential to women's career success. However, the employees' urge, attitude and goals alone are not sufficient, organisations need to support them and provide the necessary resources (Craig, 2018; Raheja, 2015). Support is often reflected by organisational culture, attitude of top management and opportunities, the absence of which impedes employees' willingness to participate in developmental activities (Hameed & Waheed, 2011).

Employee development is among the most significant roles of the Human Resource Management function (Awasthi, & Kumar, 2016; Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). This human resource dimension has proven to be advantageous to individuals, teams, organisations and societies at large. For individuals, employee development is known to increase performance, improve their perception of the value of their relationship with their employer and increase their opportunities within and outside of the organisation (Crawshaw et al., 2012; Dhar, 2015; Sinha & Sinha, 2012). Employee development can also stimulate personal and professional growth and can help employees to develop strategic leadership skills, responsible job performance, effective work culture, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, cordial workplace relationships, as well as pleasurable and peaceful personal, family and work life (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016). In addition, employee

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development increases team performance and creates a convenient atmosphere for innovation and knowledge sharing (Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Dong et al., 2017) through employee development initiatives that facilitate work engagement (Kim & Park, 2017). Furthermore, organisational efforts towards employees usually provide benefit to the company. The social exchange theory advocates for reciprocity (Blau, 1964), meaning that when employees receive organisational support in the form of training and promotion, they reciprocate with professional behaviour and high performance (Kurniawati & Sari, 2019). Employee development enhances organisational effectiveness, performance and success (Shah et al., 2012; Visagie & Kruger, 2011; Stacho et al., 2019). Also, employees who perceive favourable career development opportunities exhibit proactive behaviour that involves higher organisational commitment and less careerist orientation (Crawshaw, Dick & Brodbeck, 2012; Dhar, 2015; Shah, et al., 2012). Organisations that seek to retain committed, loyal and highly performing employees need to provide them with relevant career development opportunities that will enhance their employability, promotion and job security (Crawshaw et al., 2012; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Sinha & Sinha, 2012). To counter the numerous threats that companies currently face (such as workplace complexity, global trade, and economic competitiveness), nations have realised the need to develop agile and innovative workforces for rapid adjustment to volatile economic environments (Stacho, Stachová & Raišienė, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2016).

1.4.1.1. Female employee development

According to the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (2019), the number of women in higher-skilled occupations in South Africa has increased radically in most fields of work, possibly as a result of increased feminisation of the labour market

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that can be attributed to factors such as lower marriage rates, lower fertility rates and changing household structures. However, new opportunities, with their underlying traditions, reveal new threats for women and the society. The massive entrance of women into the labour market has incited new patterns of inequality and discriminatory practices in the form of barriers that obstruct the advancement of women (Chanland & Murphy, 2017) but has not eliminated the pernicious effects of previous discriminations, among which are: salary gaps, access to leadership, limited workplace participation and gender inequality in the workplace (Bosch, 2011; Ensour, Al Maaitah & Kharabsheh, 2017). Moalusi and Jones (2019) report that even with the increase in the number of women employed in male dominated sectors, several gender inequalities persist. Although women nowadays have more openings to pursue different roles and careers, it is still not 'a levelled playing ground' (Banks & Milestone, 2011; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). Work and organisations are not gender neutral because women do not experience organisations and work in the same way as men (Acker, 2012). Some workplace practices affect family responsibility and adversely impact women more than men (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018), hence, disadvantaging their development. Examples of such conditions include work-hour policies, and practices that forbid nursing and pregnant women from performing certain duties. Even though these practices are precautionary measures to protect women and their babies, they can negatively impact women and their careers in that they force women to take career breaks.

Bosch (2011) and the World Economic Forum (2020) consistently identify gender salary gaps in the workplace, with women being disadvantaged. Yet, skills acquisition and performance ratings are factors used to determine salaries, pay and progression

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(Boninelli, 2015; Bosch, 2011, 2015; Moorhead & Griffin, 2014), and workplace progression is purportedly linked to the individual's skills set (Khalid et al., 2017). Although employee development improves skills development, enhances employee performance (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2009; Crawshaw et al., 2012) and promotion prospects (Heathfield, 2019). Moalusi and Jones (2019) report that it is sometimes difficult to find women with the necessary qualifications and experience required for high profile jobs. Sadly, the authors also reveal that some organisations are reluctant to further develop women who demonstrate potential for more senior positions for further advancement. Employee development is critical for women to ascend the organisational ladder and attain executive levels.

The above problem notwithstanding, McKinsey and Company (2019, p.10) find that "more women are being hired at the director level … senior-level women are being promoted on average at a higher rate than men". Yet, Grundling and Bosch (2011) and Fauzi et al. (2017) caution against token female appointments. Tokenism happens when a member of a specific category receives different treatment from others in the form of a symbolic effort to comply with representational prescriptions (Linkov, 2014). In a research study conducted by Oosthuizen et al. (2019, p. 6) focusing on employment equity, a White male respondent commented that "individuals should be employed based on skills, ability and knowledge and not based on race or gender". Also, Black Africans complained about not being acknowledged for their hard work, capability and skills as valuable employees but rather seen as 'quota employees' and Black African women are frustrated and angered by the fact that they are being treated as token appointments. In addition to tokenism, women's progress is usually credited to their sensuality rather than their professional

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expertise (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Women should be promoted because they possess relevant skills and capabilities rather than as a form of compliance with legislation meant to avoid penalties and litigations or their feminine attributes. Firms should develop women's technical and functional skills in order to enhance these abilities and increase the probability of their appointment to senior positions (Grundling & Bosch, 2011) and embark on internal talent growth (Chen et al., 2019) because education, (Afande, 2015) and training and development (Rath, Mohanty & Pradhan, 2019) can help women climb organisational ladders. In addition, corporate politics play a role in people's ascension to higher positions (Ames et al., 2019; Khalid et al., 2017). It is often thought that White women are usually at the top of the hierarchy of the 'woman' category and are assumed to be free of the challenges women of other racial groups and religions experience, yet White women, together with all other women, experience pressures to conform to gendered norms regarding the 'what', 'when' and 'how' of a woman's lifestyle (Basotia & Kothari, 2020). With regard to the gender challenges affecting women's development and lives, there is a need for organisations to support women in their careers and provide conducive work environments which are void of gender inequalities.

The overall environment plays a critical role in freeing women from gender inequality chains. As the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (2019, p.16) rightly states:

> …an environment that enables and empowers women to effectively engage in the labour market and be productive is essential to eliminate the various economic and social inequalities that exist between men and women.

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However, existing organisational cultures are created by men and for men (Chanland & Murphy, 2017), therefore, these behavioural code reflect and promote masculine traits and behaviour that often are detrimental to women's skills acquisition and career progression (Grundling & Bosch, 2011; Islam et al., 2018) because they fail to recognise women's particular characteristics and needs , and valorise masculine behaviours that marginalise women, thus legitimising existing gender barriers (Moalusi & Jones (2019). When women dare to challenge masculine norms, they usually suffer as a result (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). An appropriate organisational culture of work is one which considers equality in opportunity and fairness, a safe and respectful work environment, and work-life flexibility (McKinsey & Company, 2019). The onus is on governments to introduce initiatives and create policy frameworks that improve women's access to opportunities and progress in the workplace (Hausmann et al., 2013), and for organisations to create conducive environments in which female talent can flourish (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017) and, subsequently, progress.

1.4.2. Career progression

Career progression is the movement from a lower to a higher position (Osibanjo et al., 2014) within a company or different companies. For employees to successfully navigate their way upwards, they need to plan. Career planning helps employees to project a long-term view of their career aspirations and to map their trajectory to avoid unintentionally closing doors to relevant opportunities (Ames et al., 2019).

Three main career models are recurrent in literature. First, traditional career models are characterised by vertical progression, rigidity, full-time employment and uninterrupted

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careers, with little consideration for the multifaceted challenges women face in their careers, as well as expectations family and society place on women (Herman, 2015). Women often have no choice other than to adapt to criteria dictated by the masculine world (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Naudé, 2017). Secondly, modern career models reflect the complex career environments categorised by several breaks, nonlinearity, horizontal movements, periods of unemployment, instability, mobility and greater personal initiatives (Rapuano, 2020). Lastly, sustainable career models consider the social space (multiple contexts), time (continuity), agency (personal responsibility) and personal career meaning (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015; McDonald & Hite, 2018). The first model is theoretically outdated with few organisations using amended versions of the model, while the second and the third are more appropriate because they portray today's dynamic work environment, consider challenges women face in their careers, and highlight the role of personal responsibility in women's career success and progression.

Career progression has several benefits for employees and organisations. Promotion improves employees' abilities and skills (Osibanjo et al., 2014), produces greater employee satisfaction (Chen, 2020; Vasel, 2019) and often is accompanied by greater pay, influence, authority and responsibility (Heathfield, 2019). Which are come with increased pressure and stress. For organisations, promotion is a tool used to communicate to other employees the kind of behaviour, actions and values they require (Heathfield, 2019). When employees are promoted internally, it saves the company recruitment costs (Osibanjo et al., 2014) and increases overall firm performance and productivity (Vasel, 2019).

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1.4.3. Feminism

Feminism is about advocating for women's rights on the basis of equality of sexes (Ranjan, 2019). It aims at foster greater gender equality, generally through the recognition of women's rights and the legal protections of their rights (Čakardić, 2017; Stephens, Jacobson & King, 2010). Legally, feminism is about women and the law, as well as improving the status of women and the conditions under which they live and work (Lawson, 1995). This research seeks to arouse awareness that is imperative for both government and society to protect the interests of women, and improve their conditions in the workplace in line with legal prescriptions. It is crucial that they promote political and social activities aimed at achieving gender equality, thereby ending gender oppression and dismantling patriarchy (Mishra, 2021; Yahya, Anwar & Zaki, 2021). Since the introduction of the concept and gradual development of feminism in the 19th and 20th centuries, and its establishment as a 'women's liberation movement' in the 1960s, feminism has developed beyond legal boundaries to include various aspects that affect a woman's life (Ranjan, 2019). Recent developments embrace women's diversity with multiple truths, multiple realities and multiple roles (Olson, 1996). Women do not want to be confined to specific roles, paths and deny socially and culturally constructed gender realities (Ensour et al., 2017). Women are as intellectually and physically capable as men (Tong, 2009), and, thus, they should be considered as equal beings within the workplace, without gender prejudices.

The understanding of gender and sex is key in feminism studies. Gender and sexuality are the two essential fundamental elements any discourse on impediments to women's career advancement should consider (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). West and Zimmerman

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(1987) assess existing perspectives on sex and gender and introduce distinctions between sex, sex category as well as gender and “doing gender”. Sex is biologically determined. Genes and hormones control male and female reproduction and have nothing to do with their social roles as a man and woman (Ford, 2002; Sobczak, 2018). There is nothing in the functioning of the difference sex organs that “biologically recommends segregation; that arrangement is a totally cultural matter” (Goffman, 1977, p. 316). Sex categorization is based upon sex-membership displays (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Hence there is a possibility of claiming a sex category without fulfilling the biological sex criteria. The word “gender” interrogates the belief that the social roles of women and men are biologically determined (Ahmad & Khan, 2020). Gender relates to activities and attitudes associated with sex category, and is created and structured through interactions. Assignments to male and female categories are products of cultural events rather than physical attributes, and one’s behaviour and activities are subject to other people’s perceptions. Socially controlled functions have resulted in males being considered superior to women and the qualities of ‘femininity’ as being inferior to those of ‘masculinity’ and, thus, worthy of derogatory behaviour from the ‘superior sex’. There is a specific manner in which a woman is expected to behave and act in the society and in the workplace and these expectations of ‘womanlike’ characteristics determine the way others see and evaluate women (Bosch, 2014; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). ‘Doing gender’ is the art of creating unnatural, unnecessary and non-biological differences between boys and girls, and men and women (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Such behaviour appropriately legitimizes sex-categorisation, based

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on institutional and social arrangements. Failing to ‘do gender’ according to social norms results in individuals being held socially accountable for the dissonance.

Although it is important to recognise complexities around issues of gender and sex highlighted in the preceding paragraph, this study will refrain from engaging in the intricate debates and deliberations around these concepts and will only consider the naturally allocated biological sex to determine who is a woman and who is not. Hence this study focuses on the social and cultural context in and out of the workplace, that supress women’s ability to excel in their careers (Horwood et al., 2020).

Gender equality remains on the agenda of the world’s most powerful organisations (Lawson et al., 2022). Currently, no country around the globe has reached full level of gender equality, including in the workplace (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche & Zahidi, 2013; United Nations Women, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2020). Until such a time, research on this topic remains relevant. The bringing about of the desired gender perceptions requires social movements, social changes, media coverage and constant monitoring at different levels (i.e., interactional, institutional and cultural) (Horwood et al., 2020; Yahya, Anwar & Zaki, 2021). All concerned parties are required to play their roles to eradicate gender inequality and support women. Ideally, research output provides input for governments to draft legislation and provide an enabling environment within which organisations can align their policies, codes of conduct, procedures and strategies to remove gender gaps and discriminations within the workplace.

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1.4.4. The African context

In carrying out research of this nature, contextual, cultural and traditional realities are vital. The westernised views of feminism often fail to fit into the African context (Biwa, 2021; Chilisaa & Ntseane, 2010). While the former assumes feminism mentality requires antagonism and competition between women and men, the latter promotes co-construction, interconnectivity, collaboration, conciliatory and complementarity between both sexes (Biwa, 2021; Cruz, 2015a; Martin, 2016). Also, western feminism theories, that have been universalised, hardly take into account African women's experiences in previously colonised and historically disadvantaged societies in which there are other social issues to address besides gender (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021) such as cultural values relating to race, class and age (Cruz, 2015a). African feminism focuses on African women's culture, historical location and response to shifting conditions (Cruz, 2015a, 2015b). The South African context is unique with multilevel discriminations among women being perpetuated. In addition to gender issues in the country, there exists racial, cultural and social segregations (Chetty & Naidoo 2017; Łaba, 2011; Hills, 2015; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021) and the experiences of women within each segment are different. Thus, studying women's skills development and career progression in the South African workplace has the potential of revealing insights not previously unveiled.

Even though gender and cultural roles are realities that affect workplace practices in Africa, limited research have focused on how they impact women's career development in Africa (Komalasari et al., 2017). Yet the African women's context is quite unique. African feminism concept describes issues that are peculiar to the African context, interrogating traditional African cultures without degrading them (Biwa, 2021; Mekgwe,

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2006) or rejecting them (Ntseane, 2011). The concept, preferably described by Chilisaa and Ntseane (2010) as “womanism” (over “feminism”) brings into perspective the importance of motherhood in the household, family and society, and acknowledges the role of family as central to the identity of African women (Cruz, 2015a). Motherly care is important, and results in positive societal benefits (Bosch, 2017) and, therefore, should not be undermined. The relational existence of humankind, more advocated in the African culture than in the western environment, should form the basis for gender-related research in Africa (Biwa, 2021; Chilisaa & Ntseane, 2010). While pursuing women’s development in the workplace, attention should also be given to the family unit to avoid handicapped and dysfunctional societies (Mekgwe, 2006; Bosch, 2017). While motherly care results in positive societal benefits, it is equally important to highlight the relevance of both parents in ensuring the well-balanced up-bringing of children (Bosch, 2017).

This study provides a framework for eliminating barriers and facilitating women’s skills development and their workplace progression, while safeguarding their reproductive, nurturing and protection roles within the family unit. It strives to offer equal opportunities to women in the workplace and help them achieve work-family balance (Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Sheridan, 1992). It also is about creating enabling atmospheres through which women can assume their professional and family roles without one being detrimental to the other. This desired environment may require customised supporting social services that help parents combine family and work responsibilities (United Nations, 1979; Institute of Development Studies, 2015). While the government provides support structures and enabling environments, the role of organisations is to support women in their dual roles. Accomplishing these conditions require careful, detailed and proper examination to

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understand the challenges women encounter in their development and progression within the workplace.

1.4.4.1. Culture and tradition (womanhood, household, family)

The role women play (as wives, producers, providers) vary with different cultures (Van der Gaag, 2014). Deeply embedded cultural beliefs and traditions constrain women's work abilities (Khalid et al., 2017). Women in South Africa are still considered primarily as care givers while men are perceived as breadwinners (Bosch, 2015; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). South African women engaged in full-time employment yet still spend more time completing housework and family-related tasks than their male partners within the family unit (Casale, Posel, 2020; Rath, Mohanty & Pradhan, 2019). Even when spouses share house chores, this equal division of labour agreement is often undermined (Gouws, 2017) leaving a greater share of the work to be completed by women. Although the majority of male and female executives rely on domestic support alternatives (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018), women still spend more time on family assignments than their partners/spouses (Gouws, 2017; Department of Statistics South Africa, 2001). Also, when families decide to rely on external help, finding trustworthy childcare is usually challenging (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019). The onus remains on women to ensure proper care for the children in the absence of domestic helpers (Mengistu, 2012) hence women are the most adversely affected when "things get tough" (Stewart, 2020). These household responsibilities leave women with limited time to engage with other work (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2013) and less time to develop their skills (Institute of Development Studies, 2015), facts which eventually affect their career progression (Athanasopoulou, Moss-Cowan, Smets, & Morris, 2017; Watts,

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Frame, Moffett, Van Hein & Hein, 2015). Women are also more likely to halt their careers for family-related motives (Bosch, 2016; Schwartz, 1989). These career breaks often result in lower mid-life earnings, health and well-being issues, marital conflict, lower performance at work and at home, and lower levels of personal satisfaction (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Reitz, Bolton & Emslie, 2020; Treas, 2010).

Despite the above reality, Mishra (2021) notes the rise in 'feminist' men. Bakalim and Tasdelen-Karckay (2017) also notice that societal and regulatory initiatives nowadays aim to encourage men to actively share family caring routines and housework, a practice that has resulted in the emergence of the terms 'involved fathers', 'working fathers' or 'new fathers'. Treas (2010) argues that men in Europe and North America complete more house work than men in other continents, yet women globally still perform a greater proportion of household and care responsibilities. Employment, marriage and parenthood, have less impact on women's housework in liberal social welfare states compared to conservative countries that have more demarcated gender roles. In South Africa, the majority of women still shoulder a greater proportion of family and household responsibilities (Coetzee, 2017; Gouws, 2017), which impacts their skills development and career progression. In addition to the stress from work-life imbalance that affects women's careers performance and well-being (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; Reitz et al., 2020), the workplace is known for its numerous facets of gender inequality (Bosch, 2015, 2017; Geldenhuys, 2011, Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2020) that are mostly culturally entrenched in society.

The African context is unique and has deep-rooted cultural and traditional values that are beneficial for society. It is important to promote the motherly duties necessary for healthy

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children and to help women balance the double burden of work and family (Horwood, Surie, Haskins, Luthuli, Hinton, Chowdhury & Rollins, 2020). Nevertheless, it is equally important to cross-examine traditional Africa cultures to eliminate discriminatory tendencies in the workplace and in the home to safeguard social values (Mekgwe, 2006) and promote the African woman's family values (Chilisaa & Ntseane, 2010). The ideal situation will be to promote family values alongside gender equality in the workplace.

1.5. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

This section presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks which anchor this study.

1.5.1. The theoretical framework

Considering the analogy of building a house, Grant and Osanloo (2014) define the theoretical framework as the blueprint for the dissertation. Derived from tested and validated theories in the literature, it guides, supports and provides structure to the researcher's philosophical, epistemological, methodological and analytical approaches to the dissertation. The theoretical framework designed for this study is presented in Figure 1 below and briefly explained in the paragraph that follows.

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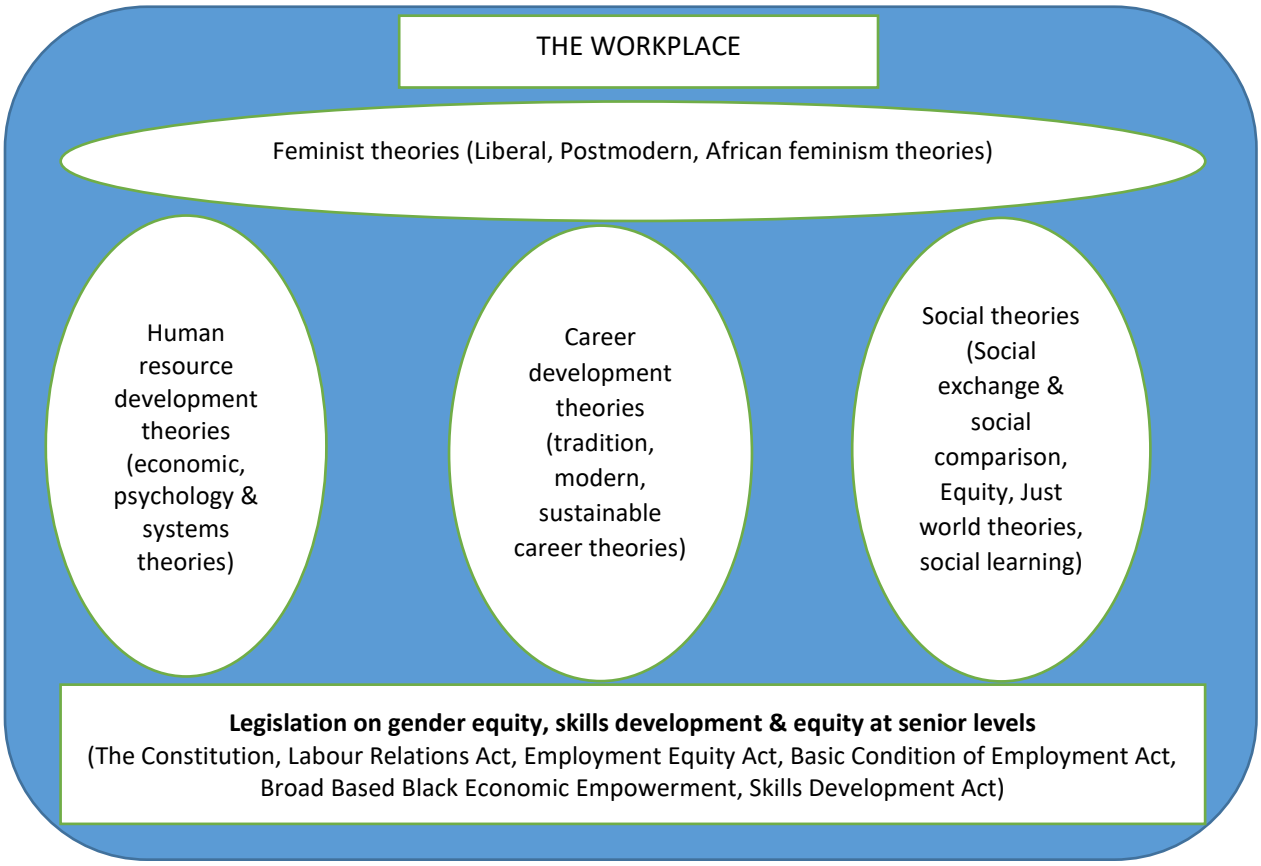
Figure 1.1: Theoretical framework



The diagram above represents the theoretical pillars on which this study was grounded. Human resource development theories considered approaches and motives behind engagements in employee development. People usually enhance their skills for the purpose of developing their careers and advancing in the workplace. Likewise, organisations expect returns on any human capital investment they make. Career theories have evolved over time from traditional career approaches to sustainable career models. The latter considers the management of various factors that could impact an individual's career (i.e., environmental factors, time, personal responsibility and the meaning attributed to one's career). To successfully manage their careers, women need to understand environmental dynamics and take responsibility for their advancement.

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There is also a need to consider social theories, which look at mutual expectations that form the basis on which human action, interactions and reactions within the workplace. These theories are considered from a feminist perspective with the aim of eliminating existing gender discriminations and promoting gender equity, as prescribed by relevant legislation. Each of these pillars have been covered extensively in literature review Chapters (Chapters 2-5).

1.5.2. The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is the floor plan of the dissertation's blueprint and contains theoretical principles, constructs, concepts and tenants of the theory (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It reveals the researcher's understanding of the research problem, as well as directions and connexions between the different variables. In SEM, the conceptual framework consists of the variables that will be tested (IBM, 2017; Ramlall, 2017) as presented below in Figure 1.2 below and briefly explained thereafter.

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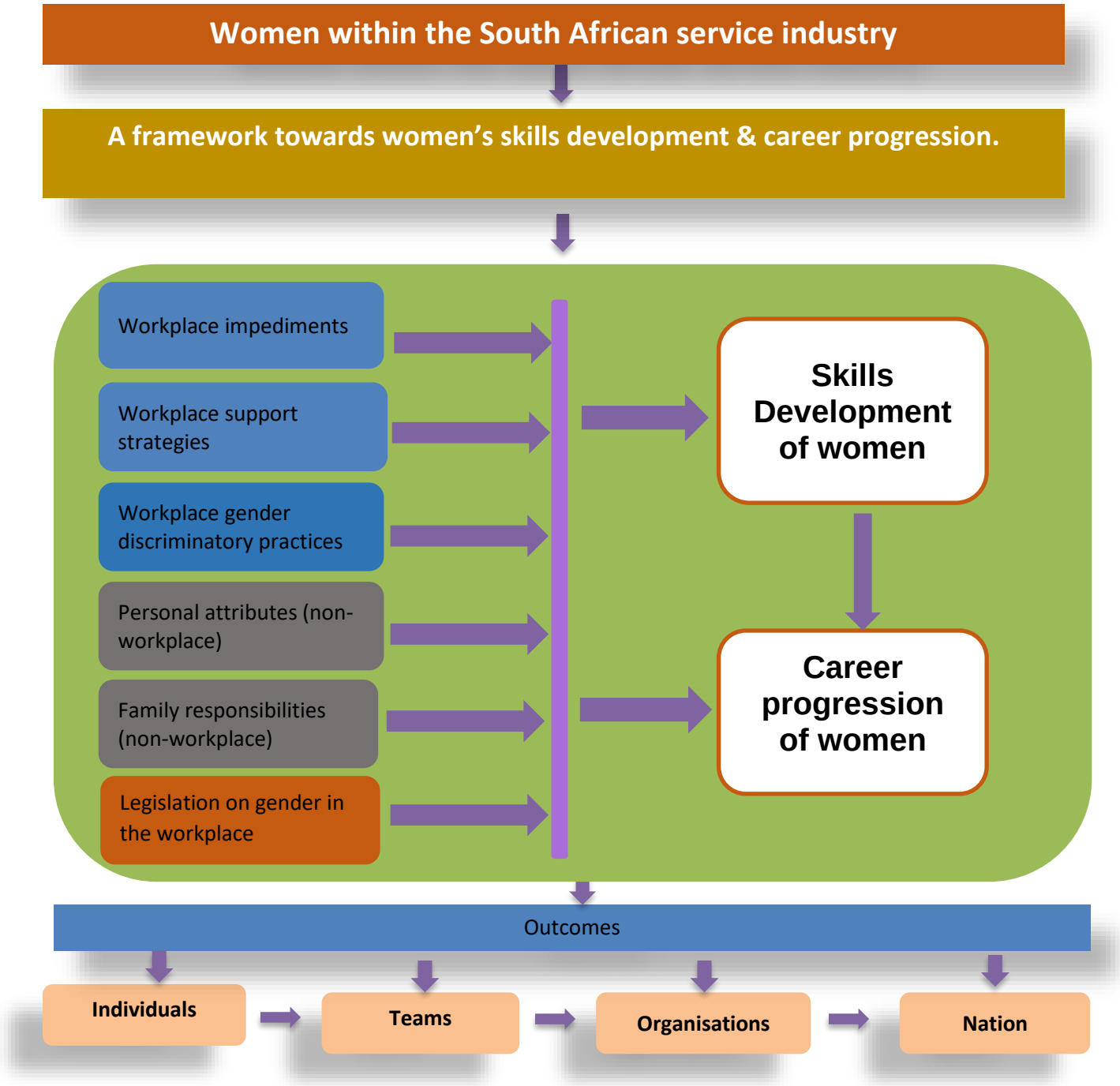
Figure 1.2: Conceptual framework



The conceptual framework presented above is based on the principles that there is a link between women's skills development and their career progression. It also rides on the premise that some factors, identified in the literature review, impact women's skills

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development and career progression. These issues include: workplace factors (i.e., support strategies, selected impediments and workplace gender discriminatory practices), non-workplace factors (selected personal factors and family factors) and related legislation (on gender equity, skills development and gender representation at senior levels). Selected factors considered under each construct were factors that appeared to be predominant during the literature review.

Within the workplace, selected support strategies considered included providing networks, leadership development programmes, learning and growth platforms, assistance with career planning, sponsorship opportunities, gender friendly organisational culture, and woman-woman support internally. Also, selected impediments within the organisation included: lack of support for formal qualifications and mentorship programmes, unfair promotion practices, existence of powerful male-dominated cycles that exclude women from top positions, lack of support for women's work-family balance and the dearth of female role models. More so, workplace gender discriminatory practices considered in this study included gender stereotypes, treating women based on culturally assigned gender roles, glass ceiling, gender bias, gender pay gap, sexual harassment, lack of gender representation in upper hierarchies, and not dealing with discriminatory practices when reported.

Outside the workplace, personal factors considered included: efforts put in to succeed, confidence about professional abilities, taking responsibility for one's career growth, being optimistic about the career and the ability to voice one's career aspirations. Similarly, factors considered under family responsibilities were: interference of family demands on career, strains on family/childcare responsibilities on career, time spent on family

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responsibilities rather than on work, and family pressures/stress on career. The legal scope covers laws on gender equity/fairness (i.e., Constitution, Labour Relations Act, Employment Equity Act, Basic Condition of Employment Act), skills development (i.e., Skills Development Act), and gender representation at senior levels (i.e., Employment Equity Act and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment). Investigating these variables and interconnections will enable the researcher to design a framework to assist in the skills development and career progression of women.

1.6. Research objectives and research hypothesis

The overall objective of this research study is to design a framework for the promotion of women's skills development and their career progression within organisations. This framework seeks to guide managers, employers, human resource practitioners and policy makers on initiatives needed to address the existing challenges women face and facilitate the skills development and career progression of women within the service industry in South Africa. Secondary research objectives are presented in Table 1.1

Hypotheses are educated guesses of solutions to a problem or expectations about a group (or groups) that can be tested empirically (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Hypotheses can also be defined as speculative statements which provide a framework, boundary and direction to a research study (Bhome et al., 2013). Considering the research problem and research objectives, hypotheses were formulated to enable empirical testing as presented in Table 1.1.

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Table 1.1: Research objectives and hypotheses

Research objectives	Research hypotheses
• **Research objective 1 (RO1)**: To determine whether some selected workplace factors (impediments and support strategies) impact the skills development and career progression of women. This objective is divided into four (4) sub objectives: ○ **RO1a:** To determine whether selected workplace impediments impact women's skills development. ○ **RO1b**: To determine whether selected workplace impediments impact women's career progression. ○ **RO1c**: To determine whether selected workplace support strategies promote women's skills development. ○ **RO1d:** To determine whether selected workplace support strategies promote women's career progression.	• **Research hypothesis 1 (H1)**: Selected factors in the workplace impact women' skills development and their career progression. ○ **H1a:** Selected workplace impediments negatively impact women's skills development. ○ **H1b**: Selected workplace impediments negatively impact women's career progression. ○ **H1c**: Selected workplace support strategies promote women's skills development. ○ **H1d**: Selected workplace factors support strategies promote women's career progression.
• **Research objective 2 (RO2)**: To determine the link between gender discriminatory practices and women's skills development and career progression. This objective has two (2) sub objectives: ○ RO2a: To determine the link between gender discriminatory practices and women's skills development. ○ RO2b: To determine the link between gender discriminatory practices and women's career progression.	• **Research hypothesis 2 (H2)**: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's skills development and career progression. ○ H2a: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's skills development. ○ H2b: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's career progression.
• **Research objective 3 (RO3)**: To assess whether women's skills development is linked to their career progression.	• **Research hypothesis 3 (H3)**: Women's skills development is positively linked to their career progression.
• **Research objective 4** (**RO4**): To determine the extent to which selected non-workplace factors (personal factors and family responsibilities) impact women's skills development and their career progression. This objective has four (4) sub objectives: ○ RO4a: To determine the extent to which personal factors impact women's skills development. ○ RO4b: To determine the extent to which personal factors impact women's' career progression.	• **Research hypothesis 4 (H4)**: Selected non-workplace factors (personal and family) impact the skills development and career progression of women. ○ H4a: Personal factors impact women's skills development. ○ H4b: Personal factors impact women's' career progression. ○ H4c: Family/childcare responsibilities negatively impact women's skills development.

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Research objectives	Research hypotheses
○ RO4c: To determine the extent to which family/childcare responsibilities impact women's skills development. ○ RO4d: To determine the extent to which family/childcare responsibilities impact women's career progression.	○ H4d: Family/childcare responsibilities negatively impact women's career progression.
• **Research objective 5 (RO5)**: To evaluate the relationship between selected gender-related legislation and women's skills development and their career progression. This objective has two (2) sub objectives: ○ RO5a: There is a link between adherence to selected legislation and women's skills development. ○ RO5b: There is a link between adherence to selected legislation and women's career progression.	• **Research hypothesis 5 (H5)**: Adherence to legislation on gender is linked to women's skills development and their career progression. ○ H5a: There is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's skills development. ○ H5b: There is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's career progression.

The hypothesis model below presents the proposed relationships between identified research variables and women's skills development and career progression to senior positions.

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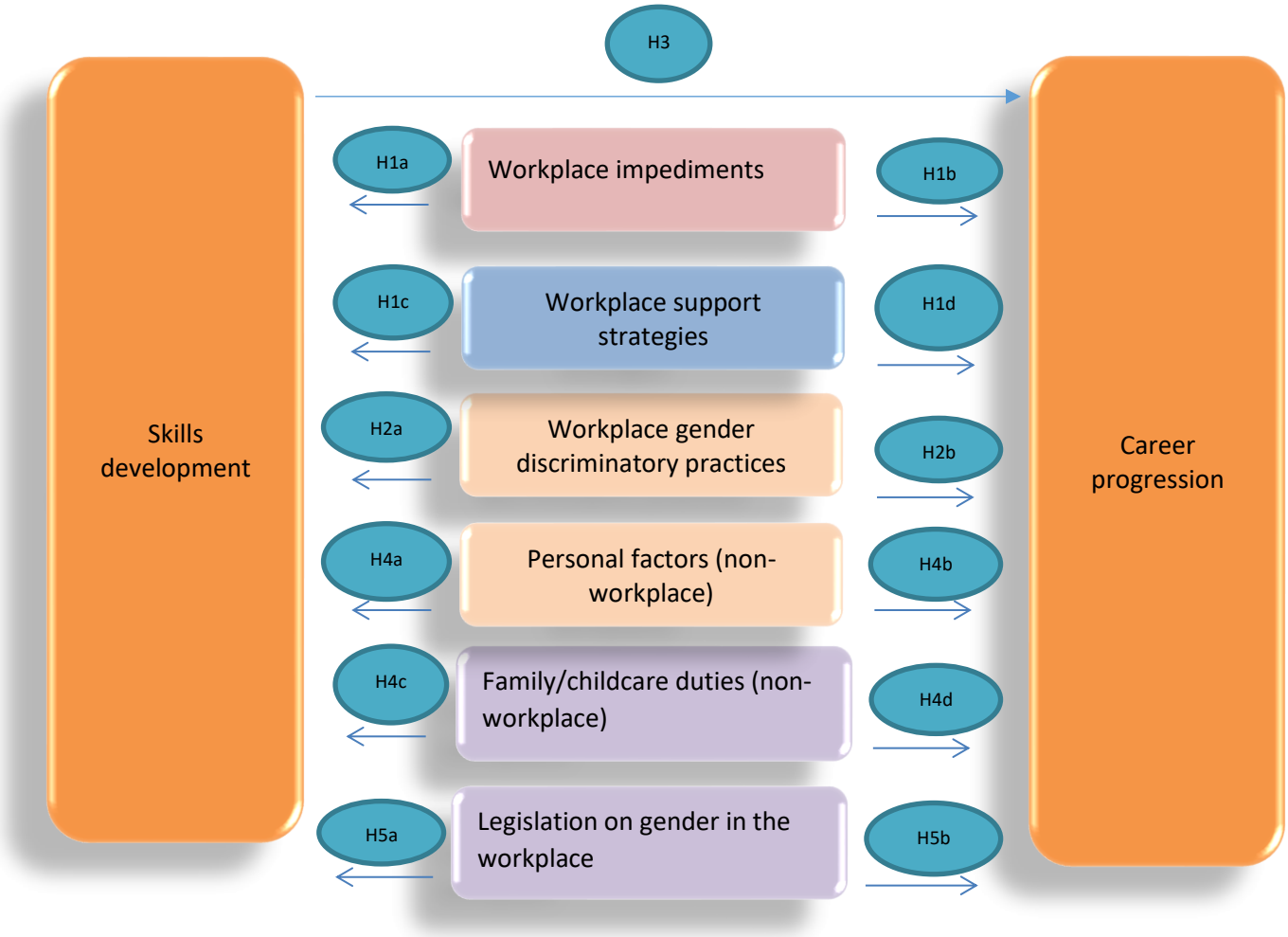
Figure 1.3: Hypotheses model



Bhome et al. (2013) reason that hypotheses are anchored on related theories and concepts found in literature regarding the relation between variables. The background and the preliminarily literature review sections in this chapter provide a view of literature from which hypotheses emanate. Subsequent literature review chapters provide extensive in-depth appraisal of related theories, concepts and variables.

1.7. Delineation of the research

The researcher is aware that there are myriads of factor within and outside of the workplace that can impact women's skills development and career progression. However,

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due to the time and resource limitations, this study only considered the most recurring factors in literature on organisational impediments, support strategies, gender discriminatory practices, personal factors and family factors that impact women's skills development and career progression. Likewise, legislation considered are those that address gender equality, skills development and gender representation in leadership positions within the workplace. In addition, the study only considered women within selected corporates in the service industry operating in Johannesburg, South Africa.

It is important also to clarify the meaning of key concepts in this research. Employee development is defined as the expansion of an employee's abilities and skills towards their overall growth (Kurniawati & Sari, 2019) while skills development is the augmentation of the skill inventory level of a worker (Hameed & Waheed, 2011). Both concepts are related to the increase in skills thus the term 'skills development' is used in this study, and refers to activities that can help employees improve their overall growth and their future marketability. Career progression means moving from a lower position to a higher position within a work-related environment (Osibanjo, Oyewunmi & Ojo, 2014). This upward movement often is accompanied by higher level job title, greater responsibilities and/or authority and salary range (Heathfield, 2019).

1.8. Motivation of the study

Although gender equality has long been emphasised in the past, the issue continues unabated, and impacts women's skills development and career progression (Jaga et al., 2017; Łaba, 2011). It is important to study barriers to women's skills development and advancement within an organisation because these 'roadblocks' affect women

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psychologically, professionally and socially (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Komalasari et al., 2017).

The role women play in their families and societies (Rath, Mohanty & Pradhan, 2019) restricts their participation in developmental activities because their time has to be shared between their different commitments. Similarly, cultural norms, values, beliefs, ideologies, social collectivism, statuses, roles and cultural integration influence the female genre, and affect their participation in skills development activities, as well as their advancement to top management position (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Łaba, 2011). These preconceptions confine women to specific roles and conditions that can hamper their careers. Likewise, due to prejudices, most women in organisations are under-utilised and limited from developing to their full potential (Chetty & Naidoo 2017). Women often face limited career opportunities resulting in their remaining in lower positions than they merit. Furthermore, issues such as women's unwillingness or inability to relocate, their marital status, family size, family composition, limited exposure to powerful networks, inadequate education, inefficacy of mentorship and/or inability to properly market themselves influence their skills development and progression to senior positions in the workplace (Eddleston, Baldridge & Veiga, 2004; San Miguel & Mikyong, 2015). Men will usually decide on the location/relocation of the family while women often choose job locations that are close to their homes and families (Institute of Development Studies, 2015). It is often easier for a man to leave his family behind and attend lengthy seminars, training and other developmental activities outside the town or country in which his family resides. Yet a woman who behaves in the same manner, prioritising work over family commitments, is considered an irresponsible mother and wife (Higgins, Duxbury & Lyons,

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2010; Sheridan, 1992). This attitude arises because women are seen as nurturers/caregivers and men as breadwinners, hence women are expected to fulfil their family responsibilities and always remain close to the family home (Higgins et al., 2010; Institute of Development Studies, 2015). This demand results in women finding it difficult not to prioritise their care-giving roles (Bosch, 2017; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). For these reasons workplace and non-workplace biases, assumptions and gendered practices are likely to affect women's skills development and progression. It becomes important, therefore, for this study to unpack and understand the challenges women face in their skills development and career progression in order to advise organisations and the government on way in which they can assist working women in this regard.

In addition, gender ideologies, family, economic and educational factors affect women's work capability differently, depending on their country of residence and their positions (Besamusca et al., 2015). Among other factors, the education level of girls, girls' access to birth control, social norms and religious beliefs influence population growth (Bosch, 2016). Even though, when compared to other continents, Africa's fertility rate is high, while global population statistics are declining (Bosch, 2017). To sustain the global population, women who choose to adapt to changing economic conditions and work while raising children need to be supported. Based on this argument, either of Du Toit's (2012) options regarding gender equality and fair treatment can be considered: women can be adamant on being treated in the same way as the dominant group (men); or the women can insist on the acknowledgment of their relevant differences with men. Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope (2018) reiterate the differences between men and women and the detrimental effect of giving equal treatment to people who are deemed to be socially unequal. Hence

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Du Toit's (2012) second option is ideal because it accommodates existing biological and reproductive differences and creates room for customised support for women. It, therefore, becomes vital to understand how working women can be supported to assume dual roles at work and home.

Moreover, regardless of existing legislation prohibiting gender discrimination and affirming women in the South African workplace, women continue to face direct and indirect discriminations, especially in core positions (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Much work still needs to be undertaken to migrate from the legislative compliance mind-sets to make workplace skills development and equitable career progression a norm for women. Several reasons can be attributed to this factor. The scope of existing laws could be ambiguous (Naudé, 2017), existing regulations could constrain women's advancement and/or there could be a lack of implementation and enforcement of gender equity laws that favour working women (Komalasari et al., 2017). In addition, organisations that abide by existing gender laws may do for the sake of compliance (Oosthuizen, Tonelli & Mayer, 2019), thus, implying there is lack of commitment to encompass change. Whether the issues lie in narrow laws, non-enforcement or lack of commitment, it is important to evaluate existing legislation to ascertain whether it is effective in addressing gender issues, women's skills development and equitable representation at senior levels.

In the same vein, other measures put in place to address gender inequality in the workplace have not delivered as expected. Sobczak (2018) argues that although women are progressively experiencing greater equality and less inequality, many forms of discrimination against women persist. Likewise, Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016) reveal that, despite, existing organisational policies designed to eradicate gendered practices,

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organisations still discriminate against women during selection and promotion processes. Hence antidiscrimination legislation does not always prevent gender bias because there are invisible barriers that block women's career paths (Nemoto, 2013). To address this phenomenon, it is necessary to carefully study and understand subtle discriminatory practices that impede women's skills development and career advancement within the workplace, together with practices that can promote women's careers.

Another motivation for conducting this study is the numerous benefits of skills development for employees (Dhar, 2015; Crawshaw, Dick & Brodbeck, 2012; Sinha & Sinha, 2012; Bishop, 2018), teams (Dong et al., 2017; Forbes India, 2017), organisations (Raheja, 2015, Getsmarter, 2019) and nations (Aroge & Hassan, 2011; PWC, 2018a; United Nations Development Programme, 2016). However, research on employee development practices and the manner in which these practices affect organisational performance are still deficient in developing countries (Zakariaa et al., 2017). Similarly, women's career progression impacts them, their organisations and, eventually, the nation (Bussin & Nienaber 2015; PWC, 2018a), hence, this topic is worth examining. More research is required on this particular subject in the African context, hence, supporting this researcher's decision to investigate women's skills development and their career progression in South Africa.

Despite the challenges women face in the workplace with regard to their skills development and progression, limited researchers have simultaneously investigated women's skills development and their career progression. Most existing studies in South Africa focus on salary gaps (Boninelli, 2015; Bosch, 2015; Bussin & Nienaber, 2015; Pienaar, 2015), general empowerment (Wittmann, 2012), women's progression in the

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workplace (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Botha, 2017; Haffajee, 2015; Mayer, Surtee & Barnard, 2015; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Nkomo, 2012), gender fairness in the workplace (Bosch, 2017; Coetzee, 2017; Gouws, 2019; Grundling & Bosch, 2011; Moleko, 2019; Naudé, 2017), and family burdens that affect women's careers (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2001; Gouws, 2017). Yet, developing women's skills and equipping them for future marketability substantially will help their chances for empowerment, equitable salaries, promotion and fair treatment at work. Hence, the rational for considering skills development as a mediating factor towards women's career progression.

1.9. Significance of the research and proposed contribution to science

This study presents a South African perspective of women's skills development and career progression. During the literature search, no research was found to have examined women's skills development and career progression simultaneously within South Africa's service industry in the manner it is approached in this study.

Likewise, the predominantly quantitative approach employed in this study, through which data was collected using questionnaires comprising closed and opened-ended questions, afforded a methodological contribution to science. Firstly, it provided in-depth empirical knowledge about the theories and concepts under investigation. Secondly it gave room for employees to voice opinions that were not captured in the structured questions. Data analysis generated knowledge that can be useful to different industries in the nation and beyond.

Similarly, this research it is multidisciplinary, thus, it brings a theoretical contribution to academia. It combines study fields such as human resource management (i.e. human

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resource development, career development and skills development), sociology, law and feminism. The convergence of these fields generates a blend that yields interesting results relevant for individuals, private sector organisations and the government. This study also contributes to validate theories on employee development and feminism within the South African workplace because it examines existing models, and suggests changes needed to promote women's skills development and their career progression.

Practically, results of this study will provide input for the development of a framework for women's skills development and career progression. This unique guide could be used to facilitate the skills development and career progression of women within the workplace by human resource management professionals, organisational development specialists and national policy makers. It also is anticipated that it will help women to better understand the role they have to play in their careers.

1.10. Outline of the Research methodology

This section presents an overview of the research methodology employed in this study. It outlines the research design, population and sample, data collection and data analysis processes – further details of which are provided in Chapter Six below.

1.10.1. Research design

A research design is the process of transforming thoughts into purposeful investigations (Gatrell, Bierly & Jensen, 2012). It provides a step-by-step blueprint or guide towards the achievement of research objectives. The researcher believes that the world shapes people's behaviour and, therefore, espouses a positivist approach to test existing theories (Creswell, 2014). A predominantly quantitative method is used to gather and analyse

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data, which was collected using a questionnaire consisting of closed and open-ended questions. The researcher seeks to describe the *status quo* and establish the link between identified variables; thus, this study is both a descriptive and correlation study (Apuke, 2017; Bryman, 2016).

1.10.2. The population and sample

A population is defined as the complete set of units or the entire group of interest from which a sample is drawn (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The initial intention was to conduct the study on women in the accounting field in Johannesburg (notably Deloitte, EY, PWC, BDO, SkX Protiviti, SNG Grant Thornton, Mazars & PKF Octagon). This choice was motivated by the growing number of women in the accounting field and the commitment to increase women's stance in this profession (Daniels & Davids, 2021; Verduyn, 2021). However limited access to firms due to COVID-19 restrictions resulted in low response rates, compelling the researcher to broaden the population to the women within the service industry in Johannesburg.

A sample is a selection of elements, from a larger population group, about which inferences are made (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The latter authors argue that sample sizes between 30 and 500 subjects are appropriate for most research studies. Hence, the appropriateness of the sample size of 412 women, with varied family responsibilities across different age groups, races, organisational positions, marital status and levels of education. The sampling method used in this study is that of convenience/non-probability sampling. Non-probability/non-random sample method is recommended "when the number of elements in a population is either unknown or cannot be individually identified"

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(Kumar, 2011, p. 206). Likewise, the convenience sampling method selects respondentss based on the convenience of access (Bryman, 2016). Due to the fact that the number of women in the service industry in Johannesburg could not be accurately determined, data was collected from accessible women within the service sector in Johannesburg and a total of 412 respondents completed the questionnaire.

1.10.3. Data collection

A Likert-scale questionnaire survey was administered online to enable easy access to the 412 targeted respondents. In consideration of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines/restrictions in existence at the time of the study, an online survey was deemed appropriate. To ensure the robustness of the unpublished questionnaire a pilot study consisting of forty respondents initially was conducted, which exceeded the ten (10) respondents recommended by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012).

1.10.4. Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was used to interpret data. Scales of measurement, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse collected data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research study sought to analyse the structural relationship between variables and latent constructs, thus, the Structural Equation Modelling approach, that combines factor analysis and multiple regressions, was used (Ramlall, 2017). Open-ended questions were analysed using a manual thematic content analysis approach (Kelly et al., 2021) in order to identify common themes within the submitted responses.

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1.11. Ethical consideration

There are a number of ethical considerations to note when carrying out studies of this calibre. Some scholars suggest moral princliples and guidelines for conducting research in an ethical manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Ethical issues in research involve respect for particpants, beneficence and informed consent (Palys & Atchison, 2014). The researcher strictly followed research ethics' rules and procedures regarding respect for respondents including voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher also offered to provide feedback (formal and/or informal) to interested respondents after completion of the study.

1.12. Summary of study content and outline of the research structure

Below is an outline of the study's structure.

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Figure 1.4: Outline of the research structure

Chapter 1	**Introduction & Background**: This chapter covers the introduction, background, problem statement, preliminary literature review, theoretical & conceptual frameworks, & delineation of the research. It also covers the motivation of the study, significance & contribution of the research, outline of research methodology & ethical guidelines.
Chapter 2	**Literature review - Feminist, social context & legislative scope:** This chapter expands on feminism theories, social theories & the workplace context. It also discusses on gender fairness & equity within the workplace & in the family setting. It goes further to unpack the legislative context against which the study is conducted.
Chapter 3	**Literature review - Human Capital Development (HCD) within organisations:** This chapter unpacks human capital development philosophies, paradigms in human capital development, human capital development & approaches within organisations, requirements & benefits of human capital development, as well as its strategic implication for organisations. It also covers learning organisation, learning theories, & approaches towards becoming a learning organisations.
Chapter 4	**Literature review - Women's career progression in the workplace**: This chapter unpacks career anchors, theories & career models, prerequisites for career progression, benefits of career progression to employees & employers, & benefits of promoting women to leadership positions.
Chapter 5	**Literature review - Challenges in women's career progression & best practices**: The chapter covers challenges women face in their career progression & approaches to address them.
Chapter 6	**Research methodology:** This chapter describes the research's philosophical paradigm, the type of study, the population, sampling method, the research instrument, data collection, data analysis, & research ethics.
Chapter 7	**Analysis and interpretation of quantitative results:** it unpacks results from descriptive statistics such as demographic distribution of respondents, central tendency measures & normality tests. It also covers results from assessment of the measurement model such as confirmatory factor analysis & Structural model analysis & ends with variance explained.
Chapter 8	**Analysis and interpretation of qualitative results:** The chapter presents & discusses research themes generated for the different constructs.
Chapter 9	**Conclusion & recommendations:** The last chapter presents a summary of the study, provides recommendations, highlights contributions of the research, & identifies research limitations & makes recommendations for further research.

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1.13. Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has provided the introduction to and background of the study. It further discussed the research problems, research objectives, delineation of the study, motivation and significance of the study. It also explained the background against which the study was conducted in the preliminary literature review section, as well as an outline of the research methodology. Ethical considerations applicable to the study were highlighted. The last section presented an overview of the thesis chapters. The next four chapters present in-depth review of existing literature on the subjects under investigation.

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CHAPTER TWO

FEMINIST AND SOCIAL THEORIES AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

A review of literature ascertains the need for the research, and ensures a thorough understanding of the theories, concepts and constructs and their relevance to the study. This chapter presents a review of the context within which this study was conducted (i.e., feminist, social and legislation contexts).

2.2. Feminist theories

History records several aspects of gender inequality mentalities that regarded women as vulnerable, weaker, second-class, less self-determined or inferior human beings with limited autonomy and legal rights (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). This study focuses on women within the workplace, reason for which it considers feminism theories. Feminist theories anchor on three principles: firstly, that women have valuable contributions to make to the world; secondly, that women are oppressed and that their potentials, rewards and participation in the society have been obstructed; lastly, that feminist research go beyond critics to embrace social transformation (Ropers-Huilman, 2002). Feminist theories aim to end women's oppression (Tong, 1998, 2009), sexism and sexist exploitations (Hooks, 2000), through gender equality by protecting women's rights (Stephens, Jacobson & King, 2010).

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Hardiman, Jackson and Griffin (2010) argue that when analysing feminist theories, it is vital to understand the causes and consequences of women's subordination and oppression. Oppression, from a feminist perspective, can be viewed from three angles i.e., individual, institutional and societal oppressions. Individual oppression is prejudice against social groups and is often reflected through personal attitudes and actions. Institutional oppression involves organisational or institutional laws, policies, rules, norms and customs that advantage one social group over another. Societal oppression relates to social norms, rituals, roles and arts that advocate for the superiority of one social group over another. The interest of this study lies in the manner in which individuals, institutions and societies attempt to eradicate women's subordination, discrimination and the effects of oppressive behaviours that affect women's skills development and career progression in the workplace.

The term feminism is complex and has different meanings and connotations depending on generation, ethnic group, sex, race, social class, sexual orientation, nationality, gender and abilities (Pasque, 2011; Pasque & Errington Nicholson, 2011). Therefore, context is critical when examining feminism. Recently, the feminist agenda in South Africa has mostly been driven by the younger generation of women who want to enforce their political and social rights, through their dedication to achieve gender equality (Gouws, 2019). South Africa has legislation in place that seeks to address different facets of gender inequalities within the workplace yet some policies and information in place do not automatically achieve transformational goals because they mostly benefit those at the lower end of the work and social hierarchy (Lwesi, 2019). More action needs to be undertaken to achieve gender equality. In response to persistent gender injustice, there

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has been an increase in the advocation of feminist principles. This fight is likely to continue until women are treated as being equal to men, at least in the workplace.

Over the years several feminist theories have emerged in literature. However, only those most relevant to this study, which are liberal feminism, postmodern feminism and African feminism, will be discussed in this section.

2.2.1. Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is a set of doctrines that advocate for gender justice in all spheres of life (Baehr, 2017; Karim, 2020). According to Tong (2009), liberal feminism is based on the ideology of democracy, autonomy, equal citizenship and universal rights. Liberal feminism purports that women and men have a common nature, and advocates for sex and gender equality through the elimination of all forms of oppressions. Liberal feminism advocates for equality, liberty and empowerment of women, giving them the freedom to choose the way they wish to live (Priyadharshini et al., 2021). It also gives women the liberty to voice their opinions and to adhere to religions of their choice (Hariharasudan, 2020). Liberal feminism seeks to afford women opportunities to excel in various fields, jobs and roles, contradicting the belief that women are naturally less intellectually and physically capable than men (Tong, 2009). Women deserve equal educational, social, legal and political rights with men (Nienaber & Moraka, 2016), and should be treated equally on social and legal levels (Khattak, 2011; Priyadharshini et al., 2021). Hence, there is a need to deal with gender barriers that confine women to specific life patterns or tasks, especially in their skills development and career progression.

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2.2.2. Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern feminism combines postmodernism and feminism. It advocates that there should be no boundary or feminist tags because such labels confine women to gender-based stereotypes, dichotomies and essentialism (Basotia & Kothari, 2020). Boundaries limit women's growth and their ability to flourish in different aspects. The concept of postmodern feminism rejects the ideology that there is only one-way to be a woman, and inculcates diversity with multiple truths, realities and gender roles (Olson, 1996). Postmodern feminism criticises the idea of a premonition about how a woman should act, behave, or live her life (gender essentialism or conformity with societal norms). Postmodern feminism does not conform to the patriarchal civilisation that has created the pressure for women to conform to specific ways of living, and time periods for certain achievements during their life cycle (such as marriage and child bearing). It also rejects restrains that prevent women from taking necessary actions to free themselves from this disguised oppression that is hidden in the essentialised civilization and social meanings attributed to life (Basotia & Kothari, 2020). Postmodern feminism argues that gender is not fixed or stable across the world. Societal evolutions and changes over the years, in response to complaints about gender discriminations, have redefined perceptions about women and their multiple roles in the family and the labour market. Some women prefer to focus on their careers and not to marry or have children. Another group of women prefers to focus on their careers for a while and raise children on their own later, when they are ready to do so. Other women want to work, get married, and raise families simultaneously. Therefore, it is important to give attention to work-life conflicts and design initiatives that enrich the work and family domain (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019) in a

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manner that fits everyone. Women should not be forced to conform to established norms, especially those that limit them from maximising their potential and achieving desired goals.

2.2.3. African feminism

African feminism considers the situation, holism, and cooperation, especially where negotiation is needed to bring awareness about gender inclusion, equality and empowerment initiatives that advance women's causes (Biwa, 2021). It promotes collective efforts rather than the competition or antagonism against men often advocated in Western feminism (Martin, 2016). African feminism is fluid in nature and rooted in activism, with room for constant and complex adaptability to changing conditions (Cruz, 2015b). The motherhood, household and family roles women occupy remain central in the African context (Chilisaa & Ntseane, 2010). African feminism highlights the importance of motherhood in households, families and societies, and acknowledges that the family unit is central to the identity of the African woman (Cruz, 2015a). Hence African feminism is about interrogating traditional African cultures without losing the essentials characteristics (Mekgwe, 2006), because the role women play in the family unit is valuable for society (Bosch, 2017).

Culture plays a critical role in national occurrences and should be considered when addressing issues concerning gender discrimination (Łaba, 2011; Hills, 2015; Wittmann, 2012). South Africa is characterised by complex racial diversity, historical White supremacy and oppression, sexism and cultural diversity (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). Within the landscape of the South African Employment Equity

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Act, gender discrimination adds to racial discrimination for previously disadvantaged groups (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010; Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Women in the nation face multifaceted challenges which require adequate interventions within the workplace. However, existing 'expert' knowledge, sources and models about gender are limited, thus, requiring critical evaluations before they can be considered (Lwesi, 2019). This study evaluates existing challenges women face to design a framework to help women in their skills development and career progression.

2.3. The social theories and the workplace context

Working women form part of a vastly diversified population and this section situates the research within a broader social context. It presents social theories and concepts significant to this study, which are: social exchange, social comparison, equity and social learning theories.

2.3.1. The social exchange theory

According to the social exchange theory, the sociological and psychological relationship between two people is formed via a cost-benefit analysis (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This negotiation often happens between two or more parties (Luthans, 2011; Maurer, Pierce, & Shore, 2002) and creates mutual expectations and obligations through a series of interactions (Emerson, 1976). Social exchange is practiced in an effort to be consistent with the other party's action; the more one party gives, the more it receives. When people notice inconsistencies in the giving–receiving relationship, they make cognitive adjustments to re-establish consistency (Moorhead & Griffin, 2014). In practical terms, a woman begins interactions with an organisation with

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the aim to maximise profit, minimise cost, seek rewards and evade punishments. Women who dedicate their time and effort to their organisations do so in exchange for promotion, development or other benefits. For women to commit to an organisation, the benefits of their interactions (e.g., skills development and/or promotion) must exceed their perceived cost thereof (e.g., efforts put in, or work sacrifices). In a like manner, employers who invest in developing women are exchanging organisational resources for increased performance. Similarly, organisations that promote women to top positions can expect approval from the general public and the subsequent improvement of their public image (Bussin & Nienaber, 2015). An understanding of the social exchange theory is vital to ensure win-win scenarios in which women fulfil organisational requirements to achieve their career goals and companies engage in mutually beneficial exchanges with women.

2.3.2. The social comparison theory

The social comparison theory supports the view that people determine their personal and social worth based on what they perceive from others, and in comparison, with others (Moorhead & Griffin, 2014). A conflict occurs when someone perceives that their output /inputs ratio, and another relevant person's output/inputs ratio is unequal (Luthans, 2011). This perception is based on objective and subjective criteria. Meaning that someone's self assessment of their inputs and outputs and their assessment of others is partially based on objective data (for example, salary) and partially on perceptions (e.g., the relevant-other's level of recognition) (Moorhead & Griffin, 2014). It can be argued, therefore, that women compare themselves with their relevant counterparts at work. When women perceive unfavourable gender disparity in development and advancement

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opportunities, it creates internal and external conflict, demotivates them and affects their work performance negatively.

2.3.3. The equity theory

The equity theory purports that people are motivated by fairness, and imbalance in their input /output ratios will result in their adjusting their input to achieve their perceived equity (Steyn & Jackson, 2015b). When employees perceive that they have equal advancement opportunity, and perceive the system to be fair, they experience career happiness, remain in the employment of their company, and are likely to recommend it to others (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This perceived differentiation may potentially lead to discrimination.

There are varied perceptions about gender-based discrimination (Steyn & Jackson, 2015b). While some people/societies consider certain practices to be discriminatory, others think they are normal. Bosch (2017) acknowledges that it is important for organisations to understand what actions women perceive as gender equity. It is equally vital for women to perceive that their organisation treats both genders equitably. Otherwise, discussions about fairness (as perceived by women), will remain vague until they are aligned to behavioural changes that are acceptable to women. Women should not feel disadvantaged in their careers just because they are women.

2.3.4. The just-world theory

The just-world theory assumes that an individual's actions (noble or evil) will result in fair and fitting consequences (Lerner, 1980). Leaning on the equity and just-world theories, Steyn and Jackson (2015b) report that individuals expect to receive what they deserve and expect others also receive what they deserve. However, Erasmus, Strydom and

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Rudansky-Kloppers (2013) argue that justice perception is influenced by the degree to which decisions are explained on rationally rather than on gender basis. Employers need to pay close attention to employees' perceptions. Erasmus and colleagues go further to reason that when employees perceive unfair situations, they are strongly motivated to correct it with adverse behaviour. Low levels of perceived organisational justice (procedural and interactional) are associated with a high occurrence of psychological distress for women and men (Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019). This stress often results in employees engaging in coping mechanisms to rectify the perceived injustice. Women's behaviour is based on how just they perceive their organisation's system to be towards them. Therefore, talent management needs to be handled with caution and truthfulness to ensure that the entire process is perceived as just, thus stimulating positive employee behaviour (Dzansi et al., 2016). This theory proposes that women are happier when they judge their organisation's management procedures to be fair. Bosch (2017) states, however, that women's perception of workplace gender fairness remains vague, and biased behaviours continue to be the norm because women repeatedly fight for fairness and equality. This author also reveals that people's perception of fairness depends on their educational exposure, religious convictions, cultural values, socialised norms, power relations and psychological predisposition, all of which are often difficult to assess.

From the four (4) social theories discussed above a few significant points can be made. Firstly, women expect fairness and consistency in their exchanges with their employers. Secondly, women adjust their inputs based on their perception of fairness with respect to the input/output ratio of others within the organisation. Thirdly, gender related actions within the organisation trigger commensurate behaviour in employees. Putting these

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issues into perspective, it is rational to deduce that as long as women perceive discrimination in the workplace, their contributions and performance cannot be optimal. Specifically, when women perceive fairness in skills development, career progression opportunities and other organisational practices, they reciprocate with correspondingly positive behaviour. Dzansi et al. (2016) confirm that when employees perceive fairness in HRM practices they are motivated to perform better. The result of such workplace equity has opened two way-communication (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) while being transparent about gender-pro-cultures will reduce perceptions of unfairness within organisations (Erasmus et al., 2013).

This section established the feminist and social context of the study. The next section provides a reflection of a woman's practical life and the social inequalities she is likely to experiences in and out of the workplace.

2.4. Reflections on a woman's life, issues of fairness and equity

Naudé (2017) reports that women deal with gender stereotypes from a tender age and continue to experience gender, social and environmental unfairness during adulthood, child bearing and menopause. These stereotypes are often mandated by social environments which partition boys and girls into separate functional and emotional stereotypes and ascribing specific characteristics or behaviour to each group. Although structural arrangements based on sexual differences appear natural and biological, they produce profound behavioural, psychological and social consequences that perpetuate gender inequalities (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender segregation promotes self-images and behaviour that reinforce cultural stereotypes about gender (Shangase &

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Gerwel Proches, 2014). At a later stage in life, many males are prioritised and given the opportunities to advance in their education over their sisters and wives, thus limiting women's potential (Ensour, 2017). Also, the existence of sex segregation in fields of study are caused by strong and persistent gender stereotypes (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). Growing up, traditional education systems genderise occupations by implicitly or explicitly orienting girls towards arts subjects (and careers) while boys are oriented towards science and technical fields (Naudé, 2017) resulting in separation in occupations (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012), with women being concentrated in low-grade and low-paid work (Hakim, 2016). Female-dominated occupations are regarded as less valuable resulting in higher pay for male-dominated occupations (Leuze & Strauß, 2016; England, 2010). This view applies to traditional systems in many developing countries mostly applies to African countries. Unfortunately, women have to find their way around diverse gender discriminatory behaviours as they join the workforce (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences between men and women that result in unique experiences that should not be ignored within the workplace such as pregnancy (Gouws, 2017), motherhood (Rath et al. 2019) and menopause (Reitz et al., 2020). The conventional woman goes through the following trajectory, which is alien to men.

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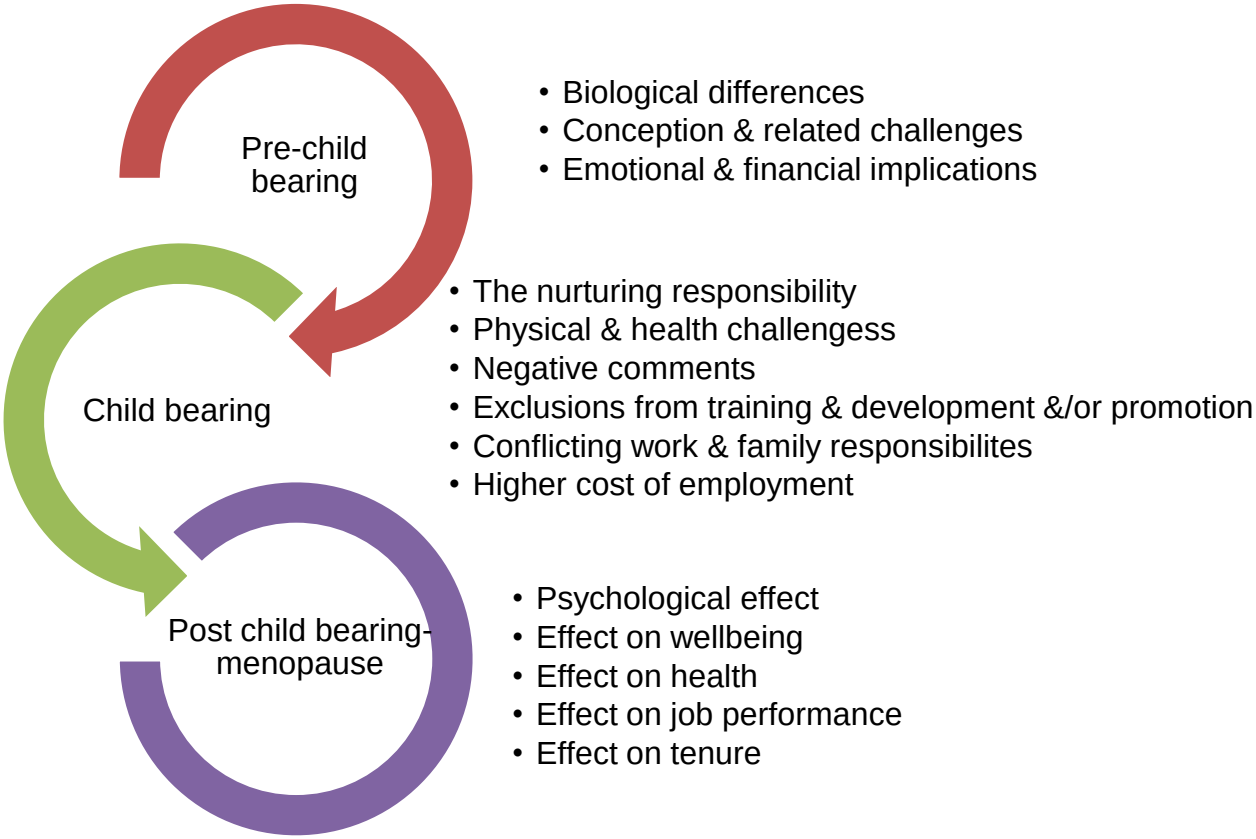
Figure 2. 1: Reflections on a woman's life trajectory



Women cannot be denied equality by being treated as men in the same situations (Bosch, 2017). While some gender challenges are man-made, others are natural. Women go through several mutations that affect her personal life and career before and after she bears children. Organisations need to differentiate between the biologically-imposed and society-imposed challenges women experienced and address them accordingly within the workplace by carefully managing the former, and seeking to eradicate the later. This section discusses the experiences of women within the workplace and the family.

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2.4.1. A woman's life in the workplace

Currently, employees are spending more time on paid work for economic and emotional rewards (Bosch, 2017). Companies expect employees to work 24 hours a day, every day for the 365 days of the year (Mukanzi, Gachunga, Ngugi & Kihoro, 2014). With these demanding work conditions and competitive cultures, overwork has become a virtue (Orgad, 2017). Men in the workplace have been turned into machines and women are measured against these unrealistic standards (Bosch, 2014). An 'ideal' worker is constructed from a male body with a masculine identity (Acker, 2012), or someone who follows masculine work-behaviour patterns to satisfy work-performance standards within an organisation (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). According to the latter authors, ideal workers work long hours because they are unencumbered and have the time to complete the work. However, most women may not be willing or able to work long hours due to their domestic responsibilities (Bosch, 2017; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Kumara, 2018). Thus, many women may not meet the criteria for the 'ideal' employee,

Kristensen et al. (2017) record that most women perform professional work during the day to earn a wage, and afterwards perform unpaid childcare and household tasks at home. Work hours are socially fabricated along gendered life cycles, with the ideal worker being a man who is not encumbered by home and family responsibilities. Long and unpredictable hours of work are more suitable for men's life patterns and most organisations feign obliviousness to women's double burdens and do not allocate women time-off for family or home responsibilities (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Even amidst the Covid-19 pandemic during which many people worked from home, women in full-time occupations, with children and a partner, reported spending more hours per week than

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men on caring tasks and completing household chores (Casale & Posel, 2020; Stewart, 2020). Time spent on unpaid work often burdens women emotionally and limits their desire and/or ability to work long hours.

Office workload has been identified as one of the main stumbling blocks to achieve work-life balance (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019). Women are expected by employers to perform equally with men (Bosch, 2014) yet the workplace has deeply entrenched gender biases that make the environment a man's world (Du Toit, 2012; Naudé, 2017). In male dominated organisations, "male" is the criterion and women are expected to model their behaviour after that of men, even though they experience more encumbrances in their careers (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Sometimes women may be required to follow male work norms by subordinating their caretaker role (Nemoto, 2013). Women are frequently faced with unfair situations in which they have to make hard choices between their career and family (Chawla & Sharma, 2016; McIntosh, McQuaid & Munro, 2014). To comply with long, unpredictable and awkward working hours some women postpone marriage or pregnancy until they have fully established their career (Carr et al., 2015) or postpone pursuing additional qualifications (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Some women even decline promotional opportunities (Nemoto, 2013) or even leave the workplace (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Other women may decide not to bear more children to accommodate their increasing career needs (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Amidst this dilemma, McKinsey and Company (2019) record that taking leave affects women's careers and finances far more than it does for men. Likewise, women feel they have work more diligently to prove their worth after returning from maternity leave. This belief results in women pushing

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themselves and working extra hard. Such self-imposed discipline allows women to “live for the job” like the “ideal worker” (Carr et al., 2015; Moalusi & Jones, 2019).

Pregnancy in the workplace is one of the most concrete types of evidence of sex difference (Du Toit, 2012; Gouws, 2017). Bosch (2016) acknowledges that pregnancy is part of the workplace and societal functioning, especially in women’s early and mid-career levels when they are at the peak of their reproductive years. Yet many women report that pregnancy limits their career. Jacobson (2014) notes that women usually enter the workplace at the prime of their fertility between 20-30 years, after which their fertility starts declining after the age of 30. Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) likewise state that women between 24 and 35 years are in their child-rearing phase, thus restricting childbearing to a specific period of a woman’s life. Yet, many women seem to have little control over when they become pregnant; some do so easily while others struggle to conceive or to carry the pregnancy to term (Boninelli, 2016). So consciously postponing pregnancy might not be to their advantage. Also, with increased stress from work some women, who want to conceive, may not be able to – a reality that becomes more pronounced as they age (Jacobson, 2014). Bosch (2014) recognizes that medical technology takes care of women’s wellbeing and fertility issues and gives them a range of career-planning possibilities. However, she acknowledges that regardless of the huge financial cost involved in such procedures, success is not always guaranteed.

During pregnancy women, especially those in managerial roles, often face discriminatory workplace practices, such as negative comments, exclusion from training and development and promotional opportunities (Boninelli, 2016). Pregnancy and paid work are realities of life for the majority of families, and the workplace needs to consider how

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to effectively manage these realities (Bosch, 2016). In addition to the fact that pregnancy is challenging and impacts women's careers, it imposes costs on employers. Pregnancy requires assistance, leniency, structural adjustments and work amendments from employers (Bosch; 2016; Karkowsky & Morris, 2016). Some of these actions include: arrangements around sitting instead of standing, remaining hydrated, frequent breaks (eating, using the restroom or resting), telecommuting, modified work schedule (length and time, time-off for pre-natal appointments) and not performing potentially hazardous activities. During the employee's pregnancy, employers experience loss of productivity, work rescheduling, maternity leave replacements and/or training of new personnel.

After child bearing, women to go through another set of challenges. After the birth of their children, women returning to work still needs flexibility (Boninelli, 2016) because even the highest-performing women need to care for their babies. Motherhood compels women to: take career breaks, reduce their time for accumulating skills, choose jobs which can accommodate their family needs over those with higher wages and often return to the job market on lower pay (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Gangl & Ziefle, 2009). Maternity leave may be lengthened by physical problems, demanding infants, child-care problems, difficult family or personal adjustments (Boninelli, 2016). Some women with promising careers may leave the company when they enter motherhood because their baby becomes their priority (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Hence, motherhood presents penalties for most women.

In addition, a woman with children is often measured as a good mother or wife while a woman without children is assessed on the basis of her work and is usually considered as an ideal worker (Bosch, 2017). Women without children usually earn more than women

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with children, indicating a motherhood penalty while fatherhood advantages increase on the same grounds because men continue to be seen as breadwinners (Bosch, 2015). Women's commitment and responsibilities vis-a-vis their homes and families encumber their advancement (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016) and when attempting to balance their work and home performance, women tend to feel frustrated because it is hard to decide which to prioritise (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018).

Nowadays women are increasingly choosing, through natural childbearing or adoption, to become single parents (Lits & Rubin, 2014). Comparative to women in stable relationships and homes, single mothers face a wider myriad of challenges because they have to assume the responsibilities of both parents. Also, women during their child-bearing age are often considered too young for leadership roles or presumed to lack experience (Duncan & Loretto, 2004). Up until 40 years of age, most women were dealing with parenting and home responsibilities and, sometimes, the negative effects of perimenopause (Brizendine, 2008). So, in spite of women's diverse choices, their careers are hampered during the child-bearing or child-rearing stages of their lives.

After motherhood, women further experience novel challenges. Sandberg (2013) argues that ageing has a threatening disruption to the self and identity. An increase in part time employment and longer life expectancy result in a high probability of people staying longer in the labour market. Thus, it is important to reconsider the effect of ageing on the workforce. On average, menopause begins at 51 years and its symptoms generally last between 4 to 8 years (Reitz et al., 2020). Chipunza and Dhlamini-Kumalo (2016) affirm that menopause usually occurs in women who are between 45-55 years, when they are still operating in the workplace. This life stage usually is characterized by symptoms that

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affect women's psychology, wellbeing, health, job performance and tenure. Reitz et al., (2020) associate menopause with mental and physical symptoms such as poor concentration, lowered confidence, lower productivity, poor memory, hoarseness and loss of voice. Women going through menopause often dread voicing their opinions and concerns for fear of being regarded as under-performing, excluded from promotion opportunities, targeted during layoffs, stereotyped, ridiculed or harassed, particularly when their manager is a younger male. Menopause can negatively impact women's work and make it difficult for them to cope with their tasks. It is still one of the strongest discriminatory taboos in many organisations, fuelled by persistently poor policies and obsolete assumptions about gender and age that make women who suffer the negative effects of this natural phenomenon feel uncomfortable about discussing their struggles and. consequently, perpetuate associated inconsideration and discrimination. Nevertheless, women in their early 50s most probably have been taught to accommodate gender inequalities and, hence, tend to accept them without objecting (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) confirm such normalisation of discrimination and add that some female leaders are accustomed to gender bias and hardly notice problems related to gender equity. However, acceptance of the *status quo* only widens existing gender gaps. Organisations need to acknowledge this challenge and adequately support women during menopause.

In addition to biologically triggered differences between men and women and their impact on women's careers, there are social gendered perceptions that cripple women's careers. Contrary to what is perceived for men, there are often false assumptions about women's career interests, aspirations and capabilities. Unrealistic assumptions that women love to

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stay at home to take care of family and household responsibilities (Bosch, 2014) do not hold in this current age. There are also unfounded beliefs that many women do not aspire to highest ranks in organisations and, therefore, exclude themselves from competing for such positions (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). In addition, organisations assume that: women do not want to travel or relocate because of family responsibilities; women cannot afford to be too involved in the workplace; women are not willing to make personal sacrifices required to move up the ladder; or that women do not have what is required for senior positions (Ames et al., 2019). Nevertheless Naudé (2017) contradicts this view and argues that women are as committed to their work, education and career aspirations as men. In agreement, McKinsey and Company (2019) reveal that most human resources personnel think women have high aspirations for management positions, or are willing to undertake what is required to achieve them. Bosch (2017) adds that women are as talented, hardworking and diligent as men, yet some organisations fail to recognize the discriminatory patterns of unequal power relations, refuse to acknowledge the societal gender obstructions and are reluctant to adapt to gender changes which are often camouflaged by false assumptions.

Fewer women (than men) perceive fairness in promotional decisions and in the allocation of opportunities to employees (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Women's aspirations for promotion are usually destabilized by those who practise masculinity within organisations and women become frustrated when they are repeatedly refused promotional opportunities (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). This situation confirms why more women leave organisations at senior levels due to non-economic reasons. Their exit is usually fuelled by exhaustion and their organisation's inability to accommodate their gender needs

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(Coetzee, 2017). Other women leave organisations because they are not appreciated enough (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Many also leave because they do not receive explicit feedback on their value, because their contributions are not verbally acknowledged, or because of the lack of open discussions about their career options (Abbott, 2012). Although this suggest that women lack self-leadership, it is not the case as Prinsloo (2022) portrays how women use self leadership in the workplace. Rather external factors cause women to retreat. For some career-committed women, or women with limited economic choice, the workplace is a place of unfairness and 'push-back' resulting in their deciding, against their will, to limit negative energy by reducing efforts towards their career and workplace progress (Bosch, 2017). Hence unfair organisational gender practices limit the upward movement of women's career.

This section considered women's experiences in terms of around work demands, pregnancy, motherhood, and unfair gender-based assumptions. It brought to light the fact that women struggle with different and sometimes simultaneous sets of challenges. It highlighted the importance of organisations acceptance of sexual differences in the workplace by cultivating internal diversity that encompasses sexual differences and redresses organisational practices that limit women within the workplace. The next section presents an overview of women's life within the family unit.

2.4.2. A woman's life within the family unit

Outside work, women spend most of their time at home (Pienaar & Kok, 2017). McKinsey and Company (2019, p.38) find that "72 percent of senior-level women have a partner who works, compared to only 37 percent of men at the same level". Also, "39 percent of

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women in dual-career relationships report doing most or all of the housework, compared to just 11 percent of men in dual-career relationships", even though younger women in similar situations undertake less housework than older women. This finding confirms that in the home, the sharing of domestic tasks between women and men is imbalanced (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014) and that when compared to their male counterparts, women carry the greater share of the family and household responsibilities (Coetzee, 2017; Gouws, 2017). Men usually prefer their wives to have simple jobs that have standard short working hours to accommodate their own 'blooming' careers (Ensour et al., 2017). Numerous male executives have confirmed helping very little with family responsibilities, relegating such tasks to other people such as their wives, grandparents, caregivers or domestic workers (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). This uneven use of time often is considered to be fair by both partners regardless of their available time, worth, skills or power.

Women tend to make more educational and professional sacrifices for their family than men (Bass, 2015; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). When difficult situations arise in families, women are more likely than men to take leave to handle these (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This practice allows the inference that within the family unit more value is attributed to the man's job than the woman's role. Likewise, the man is perceived as the mobile head while the woman is an immobile homemaker (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). The husband's job is usually regarded as more important during work relocation decisions than the wife's job, resulting in many women choosing to follow their husband in relocating, thereby prioritising the well-being of their family and children to the detriment of their careers (Bosch, 2017). A woman's physical mobility is limited by her family

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responsibilities (Bosch, 2017; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). The prospect of a woman's relocation involves her partner's career and family dynamics are if the husband is not willing to follow the wife, it usually results in the woman declining the relocation opportunity (Boninelli, 2016). This situation occurs although such expatriate experience offers women more opportunity for skills development through international work, career advancement and career competitiveness (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019). It can be concluded that women's careers are "tied" to their husbands' careers and to their families.

Even though parental leave enhances labour force participation (Reichel et al., 2022), South Africa only prescribes unpaid parental leaves. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (RSA, 1997) and its amendment (RSA, 2018) make provision for a parent to take time off work to care for their families. It prescribes unpaid child-bearing related leave. It, however, is left for organisations to decide whether or not they want to pay employees during these leave periods. Many women workiing in Africa do not benefit from four (4) months paid maternity leaves (Pienaar & Kok, 2017). The Labour Laws Amendment Act 10 of 2018 (RSA, 2018) enforced new parental leave laws effective from 1 January 2020 and stipulates that parents (fathers, adopting parents and surrogates) are entitled to ten (10) consecutive days unpaid parental leave when their children are born, or placed under their care in the case of adoption (BusinessTech, 2020; Du Toit, 2019). McKinsey and Company (2019) indicate an increase in the number of men who take paternity leave. Although paternity and parental leave is believed to increase productivity, augment the nation's human capital and reduce gender stereotypes, it is not certain whether the men who take paternity leave actually spend this time on family responsibilities or use it for other things (Pienaar & Kok, 2017). Men often take more leisure time than women

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(Glasgow & Sang, 2016) while women are more likely to use their three (3) days of family responsibility leave per annum for family responsibilities than men (Pienaar & Kok, 2017). This disproportionate use of leave usually results in family and personal relationship conflicts (Bosch, 2017) that affect emotional health.

Okin (1989) and Gouws (2017) agree that although workplace gender equality is broadly and explicitly regulated through existing labour legislation, the family setting in the home is less legislated. Yet they establish a link between gender inequity in both the home and workplace and conclude that gender equality will remain a myth until private issues are addressed (such as division of work between women and men, reproductive freedom, eradication of gender-based violence).

Issues concerning a woman's life discussed under this section reveal that women encounter different dimensions of discrimination, unfairness and injustice within and outside of the workplace. Some highlighted issues are complex and proposed solutions require careful prior investigation of the social and organisational dynamics involved. This practice requires organisations to be more open about existing gender issues and to engage women in their resolution, at least in the workplace. The legislative context below provides basic ideas upon which organisations can build a gender friendly culture void of discriminatory practices.

2.5. The Legislative context

Studies attest that women's career progress is a function of the organisational culture, anchored on the prevailing national culture (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Khapova, Brisoce & Dickman, 2016). Legislation sets acceptable ways of conduct within society. Without

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the application of basic legal requirements, organisations will engender unnecessary people-related problems (Erasmus et al., 2013). South Africa boasts a variety and ever-advancing legislation on corrective justice against gender-based discriminatory practices in the workplace (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). Cognisant of previous discriminatory practices, the South African government has instigated legislation that regulates gender equity, skills development as well as the representation of people from designated groups within senior positions. Those regulations related to this study discussed in this section include: the Constitution (RSA, 1996), Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (RSA, 1997), the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998), the Employment Equity Act (RSA, 1998, 2013), and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (RSA, 2013).

2.5.1. The constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996

The constitution of South Africa is the umbrella that anchors all other legislation in the country. It forms the basis for other legislation to deal with specific issues within the workplace. Section 9(1) stipulates that everyone is equal before the law and should enjoy equal rights. Likewise, Section 9(3) prohibits any form of unfair discrimination (direct or indirect). Forbidden discriminatory grounds covered in the constitution, which are relevant to this research, include sex, gender, pregnancy, marital status or social origins. Section 12(2) provides protection for a person's right to bodily and psychological integrity, encompassing the right to make decisions concerning their reproduction. Furthermore, Section 23(1) affirms equal rights to fair labour practices. It also prevents direct or indirect discrimination against women by mandating equality and labour rights in the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2). With multilevel discriminations witnessed during the Apartheid regime, the

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South African workplace faces more than gender discrimination. Among women there also exists racial, cultural and social segregation (Łaba, 2011; Hills, 2015; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021; Oosthuizen et al., 2019) which makes the struggle for equality extremely complex.

2.5.2. Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995

The Labour Relations Act (LRA) provides a framework to guide the manner in which organisations interact with their employees. Among others, this Act covers issues related to freedom of association, bargaining and statutory rights, organisational rights, strikes and lock-outs, collective agreements, workplace forums, communication, grievances and unfair dismissals. The LRA advocates for proper communication in cases of grievances relating to workplace matters. It establishes the role of the Commissions for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). Section 187 (1) (e) decrees that a woman's dismissal is automatically unfair if the reason for dismissal is related to her pregnancy or other gender-based discriminatory grounds. Section 186 (1) (c) forbids employers from refusing the resumption of work after maternity leave, regardless of any law, collective agreement or contract of employment entered into.

2.5.3. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997

The purpose of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BEAC) is to advance economic development, social justice and to ensure that basic conditions of employment are respected within the nation. It regulates Section 23 of the Constitution and makes provisions for issues relating to working times, leave, remuneration and deductions, as well as administrative obligations and termination of employment. Aspects that are

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important to this research include aspects relating to leave such as the allocation of maternity and family leave. The BEAC also addresses dismissals based on discriminatory grounds, which have been extensively covered in the Acts discussed above which regulate gender discriminatory practices, pregnancy, child bearing and family responsibilities. The Labour Laws Amendment Act 10 of 2018 (RSA, 2018), further addresses family responsibility leave, allowing for three days paid leave for family-related issues (for men and women) and 10 successive days unpaid leave for a new father.

The BCEA Section 25 entitles women employees to unpaid maternity leave of four months. Unless a medical specialist certifies her fitness to work, a woman may not return to work before six weeks after the birth of her child. Section 26 prohibits employers from requiring or permitting pregnant or nursing employees to perform work that is hazardous to their own or their baby's health. In cases of hazardous work, the law advises employers to provide appropriate alternative employment to the employee for a period up to six months after childbirth. The Code of Good Practice on the Protection of Employees during Pregnancy and After the Birth of a Child (Department of Labour South Africa, 1998), issued in terms of the BCEA, is promulgated to ensure that legislative polices, geared towards protecting employees during these two phases, are applied in the workplace. It provides a legislative framework for the elimination of pregnancy-related discriminations in the workplace and deals with issues around backache, morning sickness and effects of prolonged sitting or standing. It also stipulates that employers need to encourage employees to inform them of their pregnancy early enough for personalised plans, adjustments and mitigation against work-related risks that may impact them or their foetus.

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The Unemployment Insurance Fund Act No. 63 of 2001 (RSA, 2001) covers employees during pregnancy and other instances when they are willing, yet unable, to work. Part of the salary deductions go to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) scheme which the employee can claim during maternity leave (if not paid by the company), unemployment, or parental leave. Section 24 of the Act makes pay provision for maternity benefits for a maximum of 17.32 weeks (four months) from the pregnant woman's contributions. Sections 34 and 37 provide for payments of maternity benefits during the period of maternity leave. The Labour Laws Amendment Act (RSA, 2018), which came into effect on 1 November 2019 makes provision for a contributor who has a miscarriage in the third trimester or delivers a still-born child to be eligible for the full 4 consecutive months leave prescribed by law. In addition, the Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993 (RSA, 1993) obliges employers to provide safe working environment and conditions for employees, including their pregnant employees. Hence protecting vulnerable women within the workplace.

In America the average paid maternity leave is 10 (ten) weeks, while women in Europe benefit from twenty (20) weeks on average (McKinsey & Company, 2019). In a study in the Arab region with shorter maternity leaves, women argue that six weeks is not enough for some mothers and, definitely, not sufficient for babies, and conclude that women are indirectly forced to quit their jobs in order to take care of their new-born children (Ensour et al., 2017). While some companies in South Africa comply with the minimum legal requirement, progressive companies offer up to six months paid maternity leave, though sometimes with defined work conditions post-maternity (Pienaar & Sonnekus, 2016). South Africa is ahead of countries in the Arab region and America but falls short when

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compared to the time allocated for maternity leave in Europe. By making adequate provision for women to comfortably assume family roles organisations will spare mothers from being conflicted between meeting their children/family's needs and their careers.

2.5.4. The Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998

The Skills Development Act (SDA) (RSA, 1998) is set to improve the skills of South African workers. It aims to use the workplace as a learning environment in which workers are encouraged to learn. It also motivates organisations to increase their investment in education and training, thereby enabling employees to be more competitive and productive. In conjunction with the National Qualification Act No. 67 of 2008 (RSA, 2008), the SDA is linked to the Employment Equity Act (RSA, 1998) and attempts to redress past inequalities through the training and development of members of designated groups (i.e., Black South Africans, Indians and Coloureds, women and people with disabilities). The SDA funds training and development under the SDA canopy, making provisions for academic, professional and career advancement through the National Qualifications Framework. Both employees and employers can leverage the provisions of this Act to develop relevant workplace skills.

2.5.5. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) regulates gender equity in the workplace and prohibits unfair labour practices and discrimination. The Act promotes equity and equal opportunities within the workplace, and forbids discriminations based on race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibilities, age, disability, conscience, belief/religion, HIV status, political opinion and language. Section 6 of the Act

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reinstates the Constitution's guidelines against pregnancy-related discrimination and Section 6(1) prohibits unfair discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities. The Act defines family responsibility as responsibilities in relation to employee's spouse/partner, dependent children or other care/support-needing members of their immediate family. This legislation complements the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) that protects the interest of the child and promotes their best interests when deciding on any child-related matter connected to biological, adoptive and surrogate children. Section 242 (3) states that adoptive children have the same rights as biological children.

Employers are required to conduct workforce analysis and consult with unions and employees and prepare and implement employment equity plans. Chapter 3 of the Act covers affirmative action measures taken to promote equal employment opportunities and equitable representation (especially for people from designated groups) in all occupational categories and levels. This plan, including policies and practices, must be presented to the Director General of Labour or the Labour Inspector. The EEA affirms that the South African government is committed to rectify workplace racial and gender discrepancies, and to promote equity (Timothy, 2013). The EEA will continue to influence employment relations in South African organisations because it provides support structures for managing diversity and for balancing racial and gender proportions (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). However, despite the enactment of this law Black women continue to be underrepresented in management positions in the corporate sector (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). This could be due to racial reason and politics that favour some groups over others. The fact that such legislative mechanisms alone are not sufficient to achieve employment equity in South Africa could be due to poor monitoring

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and enforcement of the Act by the Department of Labour (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). Employment relations units within organisations need to commit to the effective training and development of woman as well as men (Warnich, Carell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2015) to equip them for senior roles. Special programmes to achieve organisational and societal equality, should cover all occupational levels, with targeted recruitment, mentorship and quality educational support (Nel et al., 2016). The original Act was later amended and became the Employment Equity Amendment Act of 2013 (RSA, 2013) to deal with persistent representation challenges in organisations.

2.5.6. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 46 of 2013

The mandate of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) is to increase the ownership, management control and employment of Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds in South Africa. Elements in the BBBEE code include ownership, management control, skills development, enterprise and supplier development and socio-economic development. Elements of interest to this study are: ownership, which is meant to increase the percentage of ownership of Blacks within organisations; management control aimed at increasing their powers through participation in top management decisions regarding employment, and skills development to increase the competence levels of Black employees. In the BBBEE amended notice No. 408 of 2015 (RSA, 2015), under management control elements, compliance targets have been allocated to Black women's voting rights as board members and executive directors. This ruling is to promote women to top positions. Amendments have continued from 2016 in order to deal with persistent underrepresentation of people from targeted groups in different sectors of the economy (Department of Trade and Industry, 2019). The provisions of the law

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recognises that it is vital to empower women with relevant skills that will assure their outstanding performance and, thus, qualify them for promotion to more senior levels.

The legislation discussed above have been set to prevent unfair discriminations in the workplace, promote equality, encourage the skills development of women (as part of a designated group) and ensure the participation of women at executive levels. These efforts reflect the South African government's willingness to redress past inequalities and address gender discriminations both nationally and within the workplace. Pienaar, Naidoo and Malope (2018) remark that despite South Africa's vast legal scope on gender-related discrimination, issues such as sexual harassment, pay/benefits gap and women's victimisation still exist. These authors report that the root cause of injustices is employers' failure to distinguish between equality and equity as applied to constitutional values and non-sexist agenda of the labour movement. Employers, in an attempt to fulfil their obligations, have adopted policies that appear to promote equality but fail to deal with the detrimental effect of unequal treatment on people who are considered to be socially unequal. There is a need to create arrangements for work conditions and policies that address people who simultaneously experience gender, racial and class oppression (Lwesi, 2019; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). At national levels, the Commission for Gender Equality (2014) deplores that the current lack of collaboration and co-ordination among the Ministry of Women, the Commission for Gender Equality, and other gender-related institutions in South Africa have led to overlapping functions, duplication of roles, and negligence on important areas. In this light, Moleko (2019) suggests tracking tools to monitor the national gender related legislation and the implementation of more coordinated efforts between all relevant stakeholders addressing gender-related matters,

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and persons held accountable. Legislation broadly covered under this section only provides a foundation for organisations to build upon to advance women's interests in the workplace. Employers need to adopt a proactive approach in dealing with systemic problems relating to the treatment of women, women's rights and benefits.

2.6. Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter explained the gender, social and legal context within which this study is conducted. Relevant feminist theories, social theories and laws on which the study is anchored were discussed. Historically, women have been victims of several forms of inequality within the society, including the workplace. A woman's experiences at work and at home are often full of a variety of practices that favour men. Although legislation has been promulgated to address gender issues within the workplace, it is still not always implemented and women continue to be disadvantaged, notably in their skills development and career progression. The next three chapters provide in-depth literature review on human resource development and career progression.

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CHAPTER THREE

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT (HCD) WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

3.1. Introduction to Human Capital Development

This chapter presents a review of literature on human capital development and its tenets within organisations. Human capital is the benefit that employees' attributes contribute to the growth of the organisation (Llopis, 2018). Human capital within the workplace has been considered from two different angles, namely the individuals' angle and the organisational angle (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). In the last 15 years, there has been a shift of power from institutions to focus on individuals' human capital (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). From the individuals' perspective human capital can be viewed as the sum of personal education, capabilities and experience sought by employers (Mani, 2013). Qualifications, employment status (or employment history) and recommendations from previous employers are human capital facets interviewers look into during the recruitment process (Mulders, Henkens, Liu, Schippers & Wang, 2018). Becker (1993) introduces a health dimension into the concept, and defines human capital as information, ideas, knowledge, skills, and the employee's health. Alnachef and Alhajjar (2017) consider the wellbeing of the person and define human capital as the education, training and professional initiatives geared towards enhancing workers' knowledge, competencies, skills, abilities, social assets and attributes that facilitate general well-being. Hence human capital from an individual's perspective is the sum of their employable skills and attributes, as well as their overall health and wellbeing comprising both physical and mental health.

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Human capital is an organisational resource which companies can frequently develop and invest into for long-term growth (Stacho et al., 2019). Bontis et al. (1999) define human capital as the combined expertise, intelligence and skills that give an organisation its distinctive character and ensure long-term sustainability. Human capital, thus, may be regarded as the combination of human elements within the organisation that allows individuals to learn, change, innovate and provide a creative thrust. Likewise, Thomas et al. (2013) define human capital as individuals within an organisation, their performance and their potential. Therefore, human capital, from an organisational perspective, is the sum of individuals' skills, attributes and potential that can move the organisation forward. The prominence of human capital within organisations is because market value depends more on intangible resources than on tangible resources, especially human resources (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). From the two angles from which human capital has been defined above, human capital can be described as the sum of the information, knowledge, intelligence, ideas, abilities, skills, expertise, performance and health potential possessed by an individual or an organisation. The role of human capital professionals is to develop human capital within organisations.

Human Capital Development (also called Human Resource Development) is a subfield of the Human Capital discipline (Lee, 2014; Werner, 2014). The term is defined as the procedure by which organisations equip their workers in a planned and continuous manner. The purpose of human capital development (HCD) is to help employees acquire or improve the abilities required for them to perform in their current and future roles; develop employees' skills and utilise their potential for personal and organisational development; and develop strong beneficial relationships that motivate employees and

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promote their professional well-being (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). Thus, HCD consists of investments in a broad range of activities that increase the value of the employee and the organisation.

Swanson and Holton III (2001) define HCD as a discipline that draws from many theories and can be used to label a job, a function and/or a department - it involves grooming and unleashing human expertise, through personnel training, personal development and organisational development, in order to improve performance. Wang, Werner, Sun, Gilley and Gilley (2017) view this practice as a job, and define it as a way of shaping individuals' (or groups') values and beliefs and upskilling them to support the achievement of the performance goals of the host system. Raheja (2015) similarly defines human resource development as a function of human resource management responsible for organisational activities meant to improve the performance of individuals and groups in organisations. It involves long- or short-term activities that have the potential to improve the work-based expertise, knowledge, productivity and satisfaction that benefit individuals, teams, organisations, communities, nations and humanity (Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017; Wang et al., 2017). HCD practices are programmes strategically designed to manage the development of an organisation's human resources for its overall success (Bishop, 2018; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Llopis, 2018). These practices aim to improve employees' capabilities, productivity, efficiency or work quality (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017; Haslinda, 2009) through training, performance appraisal, career development and organisational development (Yuvaraj & Mulugeta, 2013).

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3.2. Human capital development philosophies

Philosophy in HCD presents a comprehensible framework of ideas, values, beliefs and assumptions through which one can understand different experiences and the world (Korte & Mercurio, 2017). To fully understand what motivates employees to engage in developmental activities and how organisations can maximise returns on their HCD investments, one needs to consider related philosophies and theories. The economic, psychological and system components and related theories applicable to this study are discussed in the next sections.

3.2.1. The economic component

This ideology supports that expenditure on education and training are costs that command a price in the labour market (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961; Swanson, and Holton III, 2001; Sweetland, 1996). This component is mainly based on the theory of human capital, which stems from the macroeconomics development theory (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). It is anchored in the following beliefs: firstly, that expenditures on education are not just costs but investments that deserve valuable and quantifiable returns, secondly, that mutual exchanges form of the basis of interactions and, lastly, that investment in employee development is one of the most valuable tools any organisation can use to attract and retain economic value. Organisations readily invest in employees when they perceive some kind of return for their investment (Fallon & Rice, 2015; Hideg, Krstic, Trau, & Zarina, 2018; Judrups et al., 2015; Raheja, 2015). While businesses with bigger training budgts are in the growth and maturity phases, start-ups and organisations in the decline phases may not afford to invest in career development (Corporate Finance

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Institute Team, 2022). Developed women most likely will command higher fees when outsourced and contribute towards an enhanced company image and reputation. Likewise, women who engage in developmental activities probably do so for personal fulfilment, promotion, higher pay or other rewards. In addition to the economic aspect of developing employees, their psychological involvement also matters.

3.2.2. The psychological component

The psychological component arises from views that the world is full of stimuli gathered in meaningful configurations, through which behaviours emerge (Swanson & Holton III, 2001). Relevant theories under this component include the expectancy, goal setting, agency, needs and motivation theories.

According to the expectancy theory, expectations of certain outcomes stimulate and encourage individuals to take actions that will yield desired outcomes (Vroom, 1964; Mulder, 2018; Redmond, 2010). This theory explains the preference of some behaviours over others (Ismail, Abdul-Majid & Musibau, 2017; Werner & Desimone, 2009) confirming that certain actions in the workplace engender expectations (Stacho et al., 2019). When women perceive that an action (e.g., involvement in developmental activities, high performance) will lead to a desired or valuable outcome (e.g., promotion, a salary increase), they are motivated to engage in those activities. Likewise, organisations that perceive rewards (monetary and non-monetary) from developing and promoting women will be motivated to invest in these functions.

Based on the goal setting theory, motivation to improve performance arises from the aspiration and practices used to achieve set goals (Locke & Latham, 1979, 2002, 2006).

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These goals should be achievable, specific and challenging, require commitment and make provision for centralised feedback (Bennett, 2009; Ismail, Abdul-Majid & Musibau, 2017) and be amendable (Farndale, Sparrow & Scullion, 2014; Smith & Hitt, 2005). Setting personal career goals (Craig, 2018) and employee development goals (Stacho et al., 2019) are vital for success. Women who set their career goals and continuously monitor them, are more likely to address their areas of improvement and progress. Likewise, when organisations set skills development and career goals for women employees, and make provision for continuous feedback, women are more likely to achieve these goals.

The agency theory advocates that employers (principals or owners) regularly monitor the performance of employees (agents) and use incentives to direct employees towards the achievement of organisational goals (Levinthal, 1988). Firm-specific human capital is expertise that is specific to a firm, while general-purpose human capital is expertise in broad areas that will be valuable to a variety of companies (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). Principals usually promote firm-specific rather than general-purpose human capital development (Swanson & Holton III, 2001). This practice implies that employers can use investments in development and promotion as incentives for committed and high performing women. Employers also will be more willing to invest in developmental activities that are beneficial to the organisation and promote women who have skills that are of value to the company.

The psychological predisposition and needs of employees determine the extent to which incentives can affect them. Based on the needs and motivation theories, a person's motivation originates from a yearning to meet unsatisfied needs (Ismail, Abdul-Majid &

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Musibau, 2017). The needs and motivation theories related to this study are: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer's Existence Related Growth (ERG), McClelland's Needs Theory and Hertzberg's Two-Factor Theory.

Firstly, Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of needs initially classified needs in a pyramid of five needs: physiological, safety, belonging (or love), esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). At a later stage, eight needs emerged from this theory, being: physiological needs (survival), plus needs for safety (protection), belonging (love or association), self-esteem (consideration, respect), self-actualization (self-fulfilment, personal development) as well as cognitive needs (knowledge, understanding), aesthetic needs (beauty, balance appreciation) and transcendence needs (broader values) (McLeod, 2018). Although progression to a higher-level need may depend on the satisfaction of the previous wider lower-level need (Maslow, 1943, 1954; Redmond, 2010), the hierarchy is not rigid as the order of needs could be flexible depending on individual differences or external circumstances (Maslow, 1987). Secondly, Alderfer's Existence Related Growth (ERG) theory provides more flexibility of movement between need categories and allows the simultaneous pursuance of divergent needs (Alderfer, 1969; Ismail, Abdul-Majid & Musibau, 2017). In contrast to Maslow's theory, levels of needs are collapsed into three, namely: existence needs, relatedness needs and growth needs. Existence needs encompass material and physiological needs, relatedness needs relate to social relationships and external esteem needs and growth needs comprise internal esteem and self-actualisation needs. Higher order needs, such as self-esteem, self-actualization and cognitive needs, can be linked to skills development and career progression because they relate to self-fulfilment through knowledge acquisition and

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personal development. Understanding women's needs in the workplace can help employers to design appropriate measures to meet these needs and, thereby, achieve employee satisfaction.

Thirdly, McClelland's need theory recognises three categories of motivational needs that can be used to stimulate and encourage individuals, namely: achievement, authority/power and affiliation motivational needs (McClelland, 1965). This theory is relevant for this study in that it allows employers to gauge the aspects that motivate women for the purpose of stimulating them towards higher performance. Women who have the need for achievement will be motivated by skills and career development issues while those who long for power and affiliation may require a different motivation (such as promotion to positions of authority).

Lastly, Hertzberg's Two-Factor Theory postulates that an individual's job satisfaction depends either on hygiene and motivator factors (Herzberg, 1959). Hygiene factors (dissatisfiers) are factors that do not raise employee satisfaction but, if not met, can result in strong dissatisfaction because they are part of the context within which the job is performed. Motivator factors relate to aspects that can inspire employees, such as development opportunities, appreciation and responsibility (Kuijk, 2018). In relation to this study, this theory implies that the lack of gender fairness in an organisation is a hygiene factor that could negatively impact the execution of work. Similarly, development opportunities and career responsibility (such as promotion, job enlargement and job enrichment) are motivators that can enhance women's work efforts.

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While the economic component of employee development helps to explain the monetary benefits derived from women's development, the psychological component emphasises the intellectual engagement necessary for women's development. After discussing these two components, it is vital to recognise that an organisation (within which employees work) is made up of several conjunctions that form a system. Hence need to unpack the systems component of employee development.

3.2.3. The system component

The system component of HCD establishes that the world is an open system having inputs, processes and outputs with feedback loops (Rummler & Brache, 1995; Swanson & Holton III, 2001). The main theory supporting this component is the general systems theory that views organisations as systems that comprise the above components (Bertalanffy, 1968). Workplace behaviours are the result of several conjunctions, and learning in organisations exists through systemic networks (Mehta, 2019; Taulli, 2018). According to the general systems theory, HCD is a subsystem of strategic human capital development (Banyhmadana, Mualab, Al-Ghalabic & Abu Adid, 2020). The latter involving the strategic initiatives an organisation embarks upon to meet its strategic needs. When women's development and progression are part of a company's strategic agenda, organisations are more likely to address these practices. Ideally, employee development will result in women's progress and other benefits for the organisation when inputs (efforts, time, and resources) and processes (organisational practices, development initiatives and transactions) are combined with relevant feedback.

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The economic, psychological and system components of HCD discussed above reveal that organisations invest in employee development in expectation of returns, employees' behaviour results from internal and external occurrences and organisations operate as systems. Organisations that apply these models can better leverage on employee learning and development to achieve corporate performance goals. This section leads to the discussion on paradigms in employee development below.

3.3. Paradigms in human capital development

Swanson and Holton III, (2001) identify two main paradigms in the development of human capital, namely: the learning paradigm and the performance paradigm. Employee learning is the process of acquiring knowledge (Hameed & Waheed, 2011), and increasing one's abilities and competency (Arghode, Brieger, & McLean 2017). The three identified perspectives of the learning paradigm are: individual learning which is aimed at enhancing a person's learning, performance-based learning aimed at bettering individual performance through learning and systems learning which aims at increasing the performance of teams and organisations via learning (Swanson & Holton III, 2001). Learning is an integral component of HCD and is an essential aspect of organisational strategies for promoting the learning and development of employees (Austin, 2015). Organisations can more effectively leverage employees' skills by encouraging individual and organisational learning, and by creating workplace environments in which knowledge is produced, disseminated and applied (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017).

The performance paradigm focuses on the improvement of both individual and system performance (Swanson & Holton III, 2001). High performance enables employees to

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develop their careers within the company and positions them to be solicited for promotion (Nareswari, Prihatini & Setyanti, 2015) while developmental activities improve organisational performance (Banyhmadana et al., 2020). Organised training and development systems, designed for performance improvement, can assist organisations to meet their skills and performance requirements (Stacho et al., 2019; Stachová, Stacho & Vicen, 2017). Thus, human development paradigms enable organisations to appreciate the role of employee learning and development in individual and organisational performance.

3.4. Human capital development within organisations

As already established, HCD within organisations is a combination of personnel training and development that contributes towards organisational development. According to Nwaeke and Onyebuchi (2017), employee training and development focuses on individuals and connects them with the organisation. Organisational development is any process or activity that has the potential to enhance knowledge, expertise, interpersonal relationships, satisfaction, production, income and other desired outcomes for individuals, teams and organisations. Organisational development concentrates on the organisation and its associations with individuals. Although the focus of this study is not on organisational development, it is important to note that employee training and development are part of organisational development.

Even though these terms are often used interchangeably the practices of training and development differ – training is a subset of development and training activities contribute towards an employee's development (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Raheja, 2015). Training is

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defined as systematic educational activities geared towards improving the current performance of employees on-the-job, by increasing their knowledge, skills and attitudes (Bhatti & Kaur, 2010; Turaba & Casimir, 2015) and focusing on their improved performance of the task they have been hired to complete (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017). Due to its limited scope employers should look beyond training and consider employees' holistic development (Britz, 2018), and address any existing barriers (Cormier et al., 2020).

Employee development, is more diverse than training and includes aspects such as work- and non-work-related training, assessment, feedback, career planning activities, promotion and work-groups and relationships (Gibbs et al., 2015; Pierce & Maurer, 2009; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Employee development is the sum of organised efforts that contribute towards an individual's knowledge and/or skills that will enhance their personal overall growth, future jobs and roles (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Britz, 2018) for the purpose of creating long term human assets for the organisation (Mackay, 2017) or preparing employees for promotion (Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017). Such practices can take the form of formal education, mentorship, assessments and job experiences (Rahman & Nas, 2013). Employee development encompasses the improvement of an employee's skills and competencies over the long-term through diverse methods for the purpose of coaching, mentoring and succession planning (Cormier et al., 2020; Gibbs et al., 2015). This process is also referred to as employee education and involves enhancing the qualitative aspect of a workforce which often includes changes in qualifications, capability, personal potential, health or lifestyle (Stacho et al., 2019; Vnoučková et al., 2015). Swanson and Holton III (2001) refer to employee education as learning and skills

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development, and define it as personal transformational learning that results in changes in skills, through the process of identifying skill gaps, and honing and developing skills to improve performance. However, skills development often is futile if it is not embedded in a systems approach (Swanson & Holton III, 2001), that encourages employee's personal growth and development (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014), and improves organisational effectiveness (Shah et al., 2012; Stacho et al., 2019).

Setiawan and Julaeha (2020) identify two main objectives of employee development: to close the gap between current abilities and the job request, and to increase the effectiveness of employees over time. Employee development can also be used to prepare individuals for different or higher obligations within the firm. It covers personal and professional aspects that may influence an employee's current and future performance and provides relevant support for growth (Garava et al., 2011; McDowall & Saunders, 2010; Mackay, 2017). The table below summarises the differences between employee training and employee development.

Table 3.1: Differences between training and development

	Employee Training	Employee Development
Overview	It is about learning new skill or increasing one's skills and knowledge in order to perform a task or job	Is about all round growth
Time frame	Focuses on the short-term	Focuses on the long-term
Scope	Job-centred	Career-centred
Impact	Impact is specific to the job or task	General impact, usually with the aim to grow the employee into a higher position

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Performance approach	To maintain and improve current job performance	Build, improve competencies, enhance current job performance with future performance in view
Activity range	Job related activities	Range of activities include self-awareness, self-reflection, feedback, managerial support, personal development, training, promotions, staff retention, professional development and future marketability
Evaluation	Focuses on post-training results or impact of the training	Focusing on career progress
Requirements	Trainer or supervisor	Employee motivation and executive support
Sources: Compiled from: (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Bhatti & Kaur, 2010; Britz, 2018; Cormier et al., 2020; Erasmus et al., 2013; Garava et al., 2011; Gibbs et al., 2015; McDowall & Saunders, 2010; Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017; Raheja, 2015; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Stacho et al., 2019; Vnoučková et al., 2015.		

In comparison to training, employee development is more beneficial for women because it considers career requirements, skills for the future and long-term marketability. It also involves an all-round approach that improves personal and professional aspects relevant for women's career progression.

3.4.1. Employee developmental activities

The knowledge and understanding of the range of developmental activities available can help organisations to decide on the best approach to develop employees. Birdi et al. (1997) identify four employee developmental activities, namely: required training courses and work-based developmental activities during working hours, voluntary learning activities outside of working hours and career planning activities. In the same vein, Esen and Collison (2005) record that most employee development methods used by organisations encompass training (i.e., non-leadership training, cross-functional training, and leadership training) and developmental planning programmes. Setiawan and Julaeha

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(2020) and Coetzer et al. (2020) further state that employee development can happen formally or informally. Formal development occurs when organisations allocate employees to attend education or training programmes delivered by the organisation or other educational institutions. Formal learning is a well purposed (Van Ruysseveldt, Van Wiggen-Valkenburg & Van Dam, 2021) a full-scale learning event with planned courses and curricula being presented within a structured time with (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manuti, Pastore, Scardigno & Giancaspro, 2015). Generally, the content is created and delivered by expert instructional designers and trainers. Learners participating in formal learning process are often required to complete formative and summative assessments. However, with informal development, the learning initiatives are mostly unstructured and uncontrolled (Setiawan & Julaeha, 2020). Informal development provides flexibility in content creation and consumption by removing the formality of full-scale learning management systems (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manuti et al., 2015). This process involves learning by action, experience and includes courses or workshops which happen outside the institutional curricula, often without explicit learning objectives, time schedules and/or support (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Watkins & Marsick, 1992; Za et al., 2014). This informal approach to development often involves daily work activities, social interactions and workplace characteristics that stimulate the informal engagements (Cerasoli et al., 2018). Informal learning within the workplace provides opportunities for employees to develop the required knowledge, skills and competencies (Za et al., 2014) that improve their work capability and performance and assist them to adapt to environmental changes (Kyndt & Baert, 2013). The table below summarises employee developmental activities

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based on the type of activity involved, timeframe and whether compulsory, formal or informal.

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Table 3.2: Summarised categories of employee developmental activities.

		Training		Developmental activities or Learning activities		Career planning activities	
		Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
Work time	Compulsory	Compulsory formal training during work time	Compulsory informal training during work time	Compulsory work-based formal developmental activities during work time	Compulsory work-based informal developmental activities during work time	Compulsory formal career planning activities during work time	Compulsory informal career planning activities during work time
	Voluntary	Voluntary formal training during work time	Voluntary informal training during work time	Voluntary formal developmental activities during work time	Voluntary informal developmental activities during work time	Voluntary formal career planning activities during work time	Voluntary informal career planning activities during work time
Own time	Compulsory	Compulsory formal training at own time	Compulsory informal training at own time	Compulsory work-based formal developmental activities at own time	Compulsory work-based informal developmental activities at own time	Compulsory formal career planning activities at own time	Compulsory informal career planning activities at own time
	Voluntary	Voluntary formal training during own time	Voluntary informal training during own time	Voluntary formal developmental activities during own time	Voluntary informal developmental activities during own time	Voluntary formal career planning activities during own time	Voluntary informal career planning activities at own time
Source: Compiled from: (Birdi et al., 1997; Esen & Collison, 2005; Erasmus et al., 2013; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manuti, Pastore, Scardigno & Giancaspro, 2015; Raheja, 2015).							

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To ensure the effective skills development and career progression of women, it is important to consider the challenges they face (Gipson et al., 2017). Women shoulder several responsibilities in and out of the workplace (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; Penney, 2015). Vital elements to consider for their development are existing workload, time constraints, willingness (Birdi et al. 1997), personal commitment and ability to engage in developmental activities (Bosch, 2017). Women who are committed and dedicated to their careers may take the initiative to use their own time and resources to voluntarily engage in formal or informal developmental activities. However, women who are less committed to their careers and/or shoulder too many other responsibilities will need the organisation to motivate them and provide enabling platforms for them to develop themselves. Understanding different categories of developmental activities which enable organisations to develop tailored programmes that meet employees' personal needs.

3.4.2. Employee training and development methods

The South African government promulgated the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 to encourage corporates to invest in education and training, and to provide development opportunities for their employees. The aim of this Act is to redress past inequalities by developing the skills of workers, especially those from designated groups. It also promotes the use of the workplace as a learning environment and supports development through academic, professional and career advancement programmes. Development programmes could broadly happen in or outside the workplace (Erasmus et al. 2013; Raheja, 2015). External (off-the job) training and development happens away from the employee's work area. Conversely, on-the-job training and development occur within the

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workplace – employees are paired with experienced job instructors (supervisors or experts) from whom they learn by observing how to perform the task, thereby, enabling skills transfer more effectyively (Erasmus, Leodolff, Mda & Nel, 2013). Various on-the-job and off-the-job training and development methods are discussed in the next sections.

3.4.2.1. On-the- job training and development

On-the-job trainings are anchored in the social learning theory (Austin, 2015) and are the result of the employee learning by observing (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Mikołajczyk, 2021). Although knowledge can be acquired formally and informally, it is likely to be more valuable when it happens within the context within which that knowledge will be used (Jacobs, 2017). Coupled with the fact that internal learning is less costly (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022), structured on-the-job training is effective for learning complex tasks in different work settings (Jacobs, 2014a, 2014b). The on-the job development methods discussed below include apprenticeship, job shadow, job rotation, job enrichment and job enlargement, coaching, mentorship and expatriate assignments.

Apprenticeship (or internship) is an approach in which trainees work under the direct supervision of an expert for an agreed remuneration rate (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Raheja, 2015). The apprentice is often entitled to a formal qualification at the end of the programme (Erasmus et al., 2013). This method is usually used for youths in technical fields.

Job shadowing (or understudying) is aimed at increasing learning while working (Raheja, 2015). The subordinate learns and acquires hands-on experience by observing and participating in the handling of daily problems, thereby preparing themselves for more

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senior positions (Mikołajczyk, 2021). Job shadowing often is part of leadership development programmes and contributes towards career development. It is an effective way through which women's skills can be developed and, thus, groomed for senior positions.

Job rotation is the process of equipping employees with new skills by making them work in a logical work-related sequence (Raheja, 2015), through which the employee gains an awareness of the entire organisation (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022). Such a process enables employees to acquire new skills within the organisation and is a vital tool for developing continuity and ensuring that employees stay motivated (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). This approach is also effective in helping employees to learn and test their newly acquired skills (Craig, 2018). Job rotation usually is used by employers to prepare senior employees for general management positions because it equips candidates with different job-related skills and helps them to develop relationships with various groups of colleagues in different departments (Erasmus et al., 2013). Strong relationships are easily developed through this method and have proven to help women advance faster in the workplace (Ames et al., 2019).

Organisations use job enrichment and job enlargement to increase employees' responsibilities and decision-making autonomy, thereby allowing them to increase their scope of knowledge (Erasmus et al., 2013). This may lead to situations where non-committed employees may feel they are being over-worked. While job enlargement involves is about the horizontal expansion of tasks and duties across the same organisational level, job enrichment involves the vertical expansion of responsibilities, roles, activities and authority at different hierarchical levels (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022). One

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of the hindrances to women's ascension to the Chief Executive Officer position is their focus on specific areas which deepen their functional knowledge rather than broaden it for top oversight roles (Ames et al., 2019). While job enrichment is a positive practice, job enlargement offers women more opportunities to acquire different skills that will enable them to perform oversight duties in top executive positions.

Coaching is a short-term interaction between a coach and a coachee aimed at improving the coachee's leadership abilities (O'Neil, Hopkin & Bilimoria, 2015). Coaching increases self-awareness, facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, supports the coachee, provides feedback, addresses barriers to performance, enhances personal lifestyle, encourages the practice of new behaviour and promotes organisational impact (Kombarakan et al., 2008; Mikołajczyk, 2021). In addition to personal coaching there is executive coaching which aims at achieving change, learning and higher performance at personal and organisational levels (O'Neil et al., 2015). This goal makes executive coaching appropriate for leadership development programmes. Coaching has a greater influence on performance than formal training and empowerment (Zakariaa et al., 2017). Organisations often make huge investments in employees' training and development but rarely give these employees the platform to put what they have learned into practice (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Also, most employee engagement programmes fail because of the new knowledge is neither valued nor applied (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Trained women are either kept in their old positions or are performing leadership roles for which they are neither acknowledged nor rewarded accordingly (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). In such cases, coaching can fill this gap because it complements training and encourages employees to practice and develop their newly acquired skills (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022).

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Mentoring is a career-oriented developmental relationship through which an employee can receive relevant guidance to access top leadership positions (Mikołajczyk, 2021) and is vital for employees' development (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). A mentor serves as a role model who helps mentees by paying attention to both their professional and personal development, providing feedback for improvement, assisting them navigate through corporate politics and supporting them throughout this process (Schwartz, 1989; Khalid et al., 2017). Although women may feel uncomfortable with corporate politics, they need to engage in these principles in order to advance their career (Ames et al., 2019). Mentorship can assist women by helping them to successfully manage organisational politics, thereby distinguishing themselves in the eyes of their employers. Formal mentoring programmes focus on grooming individuals into leadership positions and, therefore, are an effective medium for developing women to fill leadership roles. Women-oriented mentorship programmes and other career management strategies also can minimise the stress and role conflicts women experience (Łaba, 2011). However, Gipson et al. (2017) find that men hold most of the leadership positions in organisations and women are often mentored by men, giving rise to gender and power dynamics that influence the effectiveness of the mentorship relationship. Although the role of mentorship in developing employees cannot be questioned, it will be more beneficial for high potential women to be mentored by women because they are more likely to understand the daily struggles women face than do male mentors. However, this can have unintended consequences due to queen bee syndrome (Arvate, Walczak, & Todescat, 2018; Derks, 2017; Sobczak, 2018).

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The acquisition of international experience is an asset in today's labour market. Usually, the aim of international assignments is to develop global skills or to fill a vacant position (managerial or technical) in the host country (Mendenhall, Kuhlmann, Stahl & Osland, 2002). Sometimes completing international assignments becomes an important element for career advancement and a requirement for promotion within the global environment (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). In addition to the benefits of cultural and social exposure, expatriate assignments enhance employees' professional skills and career growth (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019). Nevertheless, a low percentage of women (25%) have been assigned to international positions (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2016) as many are women are limited by their childrearing responsibilities, which prevent their pursuance of international career opportunities (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). While on-the-job development methods are vital, employees sometimes have to move outside the work environment to acquire fresh skills that are unavailable inside the organisation.

3.4.2.2. Off- the- job training and development

'Off-the-job' methods include training and development activities that happen outside the work space, usually in professional institutions (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022) and could contribute towards the professional achievement or qualifications (Mikołajczyk, 2021). Off the job training, which is mostly infomal is effective in developing employees (Erasmus, Leodolff, Mda & Nel, 2013). Among such activities are lectures, seminars, workshops, conferences, simulations and e-learning.

Lectures are traditional and direct methods of instruction in which there is verbal presentation at a formal institution (Raheja, 2015). Lectures, conferences and seminars

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attract a massive audience (Erasmus et al., 2013), a fact that often makes sessions boring, with little or no interaction between presenters and participants. However, stimulating participation from the audience can keep the ambiance vibrant (Raheja, 2015). Sessions at conferences, seminars and workshops are often geared towards solving critical problems in specific fields through panel discussions, interactions and contributions from presenters and attendees (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022). Organisations usually support their employees by financing their development and allocating them time to participate in courses at learning institutions and/or attending conferences and seminars.

Simulation or vestibule is an artificially created learning environment that is similar to the actual situation in which the learner is expected to solve real life challenges (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022). Raheja (2015) identifies four simulation techniques, namely: role playing, ‘in-basket’ training, case study and management games. In the role-playing technique, the trainee assumes a fictitious role, analyses complex real-world problems and provides solutions. Steps involved in role-play include introducing the exercise, defining its objective, choosing the context and roles, preparing the trainee, playing the role, assessing the exercise and discussing the conclusion (Raheja, 2015). The ultimate goal of role-play is to analyse interpersonal problems and to cultivate human relationship skills (Erasmus et al., 2013). With in-basket or in-tray training the learner is given a number of business contexts (e.g., e-mails, short message services, reports and memos) and asked to prioritise actions in terms of decisions that need to be made immediately and those that can be deferred (Raheja, 2015). In case-study activities, the evaluator describes an organisational problem to an employee who is expected to analyse the situation, identify

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the problem, develop solutions and make recommendations (Erasmus et al., 2013) using critical thinking skills (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022). According to Deterding, Dixon, Khaled and Nacke (2011), management games are games used to practically equip potential managers with management attribues. For middle managers and functional heads this method it is often used to ingrain analytical, logical and innovative thinking that sharpens teamwork, time management, decision-making, communication and leadership skills. Game-based learning involves stand-alone interactive learning experiences, and gamification is the application of game design in non-game contexts. Gamification involves incorporating game elements into the training methodology or content. It is a relatively new concept in employee training and development (Armstrong & Landers, 2018) and has become a frequent alternative to more traditional training options (Denny, 2013). Gamification is usually introduced to improve training outcomes when training results fall below expectations and can also be used as a springboard when learners lack the desire and drive to take part in learning and development exercises (Bishop, 2018). The gamification of training, utilising points, badges, leader boards, narratives, challenge and immersion, are often used to positively affect learning outcomes (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke, 2011). Although simulation and related approaches may appear abstract and theatrical, they integrate work and have the potential to transform learning sessions into fun activities without losing their essential purpose, hence their relevance in employees' skills development.

E-learning is a web-based learning approach which facilitates virtual learning through computerised modules, interactive sessions, satellite broadcasts or other technological means (Erasmus et al., 2013). The role of e-learning in contemporary professional

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development cannot be underestimated (Anton & Shikov, 2018; LinkedIn Learning, 2018). Web based learning is cost-saving, time-effective and provides a virtual platform that allows employees to learn anywhere at any time (Erasmus et al., 2013). The advent of the internet, technology and technological devices have provided opportunities for formal learning to rely extensively on e-learning and information technology systems (Judrups et al., 2015). Digital and mobile learning have also gained ground in the learning environment recently (Bishop, 2018). Employers need to provide employees with flexible and mobile learning and development options that take cognizance of their personal circumstances (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016). The COVID -19 pandemic has seen the evolution of from face-to-face training to webinars, and videoconferences in many industries (Mikołajczyk, 2021). Through access to e-learning, employees (including women) can develop themselves anywhere at any time.

All employee's development requirements and circumstances differ (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016). Hence it is management's duty to identify differences in employees' capabilities and to develop these to ensure the employee's knowledge and skills meet job requirements (Obeidat et al., 2018) using either on-the-job or off-the-job development methods. As mentioned previously, on-the-job training methods equip employees with practical skills, while off-the-job development methods are mostly theoretical and effective follow-up interventions need to happen to ensure that acquired skills are applied at work. However, external training courses often result in certificates that testify to the employee's development, which are relevant requirements for job applications for senior roles. Thus on-the job and off-the-job training and development methods could both be beneficial to women's career progression; on-the-job can help them progress through the

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implementaton of the practical skills acquired. Off-the-job-training can ease women's access to senior level posts through formal qualifications. Forward-looking organisations focus on proactive employee development for their female staff that entails planning, developing and grooming women for progression into leadership positions (Islam et al., 2018; Walsh, Fleming & Enz, 2016).

3.5. Human capital development approaches used by organisations

Different HCD approaches are used to develop employees' competencies. Competencies are observable and measurable skills, abilities, knowledge and behaviour needed by individuals to perform their functions successfully (Muiruri, Kahuthia & Muraguri, 2019). Competencies are suitable criteria for describing employees' aptitudes, for evaluating their professional abilities and assessing their potential (Judrups et al., 2015). One of the main challenges organisations encounter when attempting to develop their employees' competencies is that employees' performance evaluations do not provide sufficient information for their personal development (Judrups et al., 2015). In addition to insufficient information, organisations are expected to balance cost, time and resource expenditure (London & Smither, 1999) with anticipated returns on professional investments (Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Fallon & Rice, 2015), consequently, it is these returns that inform the approach selected for staff development. Companies often have to choose between less expensive universal (or mass development) and more costly personalised employee development and/or adjusted development appoaches.

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3.5.1. Universal or mass development approach

According to Judrups et al. (2015) group development (i.e., the universal or mass development approach) is the practice of combining individuals with similar needs and offering them the same set of developmental activities. Due to its time and cost saving benefits, this approach is often prioritised over personalised development plans, making it difficult for organisations to fully leverage on the individual employee's knowledge in order to achieve its strategic objectives and gain competitive advantage. Unfortunately, mass corporate training is rarely effective and does not allow the combination of the company's goals and the employee's interests (Anton & Shikov, 2018). Women in the workplace often face a different set of challenges from men and other women (Herman, 2015; Moalusi & Jones, 2019) Therefore, providing a universal approach to their development may not address specific needs. Hence, mass development plans are not always the best option for organisations that are keen to develop their female personnel.

3.5.2. Personalised development approach

Awasthi and Kumar (2016) reason that designing mass learning programmes is obsolete and a personalised development approach is more beneficial in contemporary society. The personalised employee development approach identifies individual's skills shortages and customises solutions to bridge skills gaps and address developmental needs through a personalised development plan (Raheja, 2015). Personalised Employee Development should be based on the employee's career goals, strengths and aspired growth opportunities within the organisation (Craig, 2018). Companies, together with each employee, need to develop a personal competency profile that matches the employee's

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skills requirements for career growth against existing skills, and design strategies to fill the gaps (Anton & Shikov, 2018). When designing personalised development programmes, employee's experience, performance, work environment and technological fluency should be considered to ensure relevance (Bishop, 2018). Personalised development plans are ideal for women because they take their individual career needs and life context into consideration. Although personal development plans drive higher and uniform performance levels, they are time consuming, resource demanding and impossible without process automation and support (Judrups et al., 2015) – all reasons why many organisations resort to group development or adjusted development plans.

3.5.3. Adjusted development approach

Adjusted development plans are a combination of universal mass development and personalised employee development (Judrups et al., 2015). Here, individuals with similar developmental needs are grouped using automated systems and, if required, individual development programmes are designed to suit personal development needs.

South African workplaces have to consider issues regarding gender, race (Bosch, 2017), socio-economic status (Lwesi, 2019), and culture (Erasmus et al., 2013; Łaba, 2011). The acquisition of knowledge, skills and qualifications require financial resources (Hills, 2015), and social class often determines the financial state of an individual. The Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998) is evidence that some races have less skills than others. It is also known that culture and gender are linked, with certain cultures more prone to gender issues than others (Hills, 2015). Therefore, in addition to responsibilities women shoulder in their homes, their development can be influenced by their race, class and

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culture. Consequenly, personalised development plans are ideal for women in the workplace. The formally structured and the one-size-fits-all learning programmes do not work anymore (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016). Organisations need to identify knowledge and skills needed to execute the strategic plan, evaluate current skills levels of their employees, identify skills development needs and select development solutions (Judrups et al., 2015; Speculand, 2014). In developing women, organisations should employ a competence-based personalised development approach, which is linked to the organisation's objectives.

3.6. Organisational and personal requirements for human capital development

Stacho et al. (2019) identify three levels of training and development within organisations, namely: organisational, team (or group) and individual levels. They argue that organisational education and training are most effective, while team (or group) methods are less effective, and individual interventions are the least effective. To achieve organisational success, employee development should be initiated at organisational level and funnelled down to groups and individuals. As discussed below, employee development depends on the organisational commitment and development resources available and the employee's commitment to personal development.

3.6.1. Organisational requirements for human capital development

Organisations have the social responsibility to invest in their staff, cater for their professional development (Vnoučková et al., 2015), enhance their capabilities, equip them to deliver during crises and prepare them to face future challenges (Inayatullah, 2012; London & Smither, 1999; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014).

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Employee development should be part of the organisation's strategic development goals and, thus, embedded in its values, plans and operations (Stacho et al., 2019). Forward-looking organisations support employee development, performance and competencies improvement, reinforce employees' motivation and facilitate their career development (Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Vnoučková et al., 2015).

Organisational support in the form of resources (e.g., finance, human capacity and time) and opportunities are fundamental for development (Coetzee, 2017; De Braine, 2011). Organisations can facilitate employees' self-development in various ways: providing performance feedback, rewarding desired learning behaviours and self-initiated learning as well as encouraging employees to seek feedback regarding their development progress (Craig, 2018; London & Smither, 1999). Firms can also provide employees with opportunities to participate in decision making and empower them through information sharing and rewards, thereby stimulating employee self-development (Dong et al., 2017). For firms to effectively contribute towards women's development, they need to factor-in the diverse experiences and contexts that shape women's work and personal-life experiences when designing developmental plans and activities. With the help of these tailored development programmes (London & Smither, 1999) that consider the race and gender complexities within South Africa (Łaba, 2011), employees can participate in the planning and execution of their personal and career development (Roe, 2015).

3.6.2. Personal requirements for human capital development

The complexity of the contemporary career environment necessitates personal responsibility in career management (Rapuano, 2020). Employees must be willing to

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develop themselves and to contribute the required effort (Bosch, 2017; Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Łaba, 2011). The self-determination theory is a critical philosophy for HCD because it reflects the motivation to achieve goals and the willingness to participate in workplace engagements (Gagné, Deci & Ryan, 2017; Ismail et al., 2017). Personal commitment is required in setting self-development goals, taking the initiative to participate in developmental activities, seeking feedback and utilising it for tracking one's progress and making improvements (Kuvaas & Dysnik, 2010). Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter (2011), as cited in Van der Walt (2018), reason that a positive psychological state of development is characterised by self-efficacy, optimism, perseverance and resilience. The willingness to improve is a significant element in the development process because motivation, to an undeniable degree, influences the outcome of learning and development (Vnoučková et al., 2015).

Personal drive, career planning and management and consistently high work performance (coupled with confidence, adaptability, optimism, perseverance and resilience) are essential success factors for women who wish to ascend organisational ladders (Ames et al., 2019). Unfortunately, as cited in Stacho et al. (2019), organisations do not often provide employees with sufficient stimuli and motivation for further development, thus employees often educate and develop themselves based on their own decisions (Hoole & Hotz, 2016; Schlechter, Hung & Bussin, 2014; Tansley, Hafermalz & Dery, 2016). Women need opportunities to 'take the steering wheel' and drive their own development by being committed to their professional development and empowerment and by taking active ownership to acquire knowledge (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016) that will boost their career.

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Employees who are more likely to engage in education and development are those who see potential for advancement and are willing to grow, those who are part of a talent programme within an organisation and fully understand the reason behind such interventions, and those who are motivated regarding their self-development and take responsibility to search for development opportunities (Vnoučková et al., 2015). This set of employees are enthusiastic about acquiring new knowledge and the firms that employ them have a competitive advantage over their competitors. The graphic representation below portrays the standard elements needed for effective employee development within an organisation as discussed above.

Figure 3.1: Personal and organisational requirements for employee development

In conclusion, organisations often invest in employee development because they perceive beneficial returns (Bosch, 2015; Chetty & Naidoo 2017; Fallon & Rice, 2015; Raheja, 2015) and it makes economic sense for them to take steps to ensure maximum return on their investments. While the responsibility to satisfy the employee is critical for a healthy employer-employee rapport, it is vital for both parties to benefit from the development of the employee (Kedziora, Piotrowicz, & Kolasinska-Morawska, 2018). Employees also

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need to leverage on resources and opportunities provided by the organisation so as to maximize their personal benefits (Coetzee, 2017). A perceived lack of benefit for either party will impact the quality of the development outcome.

3.7. Benefits of human capital development

HCD is well known for its benefits to individuals, groups, organisations and nations.

3.7.1. Benefits of human capital development to individuals

Employee development addresses employee's need for growth, development and achievement (Erasmus et al. 2013) Developmental initiatives enhance employees' morale (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Chen et al., 2019), boost employees' confidence (Muiruri et al., 2019), bring professional fulfilment (Raheja, 2015; Naong, 2016), and minimise chances of stress and eventual burnout (Bedawy et al. 2017). As mentioned previously, employee development positively impacts employee dedication and improves performance (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016) resulting in greater job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2019).

Employee development also increases the value of the employee-employer relationship (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009) and provides a win-win scenario in which both parties can benefit. Moreover, it equips employees with required knowledge, skills and abilities, thus enabling them to perform their job successfully (Chen et al., 2019). This HR dimension also helps individuals to improve on their skills and enables them to update their knowledge by learning new work techniques, skills and procedures (Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Nguyen & Shao, 2019; Raheja, 2015). This aspect of human capital increases the employee's probability of promotion and is a determinant of performance

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(Naong, 2016). Employee development could help address issues around improper execution of one's function and performance gaps (Judrups et al., 2015). When appropriately developed and implemented, personal development plans result in higher uniform performance levels (Raheja, 2015), increased pay levels and more career opportunities both within and outside of the organisation (Crawshaw et al., 2012; Dhar, 2015; Sinha & Sinha, 2012). Employee development makes it possible for employees to meet their social and psychological needs (Vnoučková et al., 2015), thus, providing a business case for organisations to encourage and support the skills growth of their employees.

3.7.2. Benefits of employee development to teams

Teamwork is the norm in most organisations and the overall success of projects depends on individual and team performances. It has been noted that mixed teams engender more creative solutions (Forbes India, 2017) and as such one can be sure of consistent and improved team performance with a well-trained and developed team in diverse areas (Raheja, 2015). Developing employees' knowledge and skills stirs creativity and fosters information sharing among team members (Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Dong et al., 2017). Furthermore, team members' development reduces the need for supervision because the employee becomes self-reliant and can work independently within the group (Dong et al., 2017) resulting in greater team efficiency and effectiveness.

3.7.3. Benefits of employee development to organisations

Organisations with ample financial resources, 'state-of-the-art' infrastructure, up-to-date technology and effective business strategies cannot be efficient without skilled, talented

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and developed staff (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016). The main aim of employee development is to ensure that the organisation has knowledgeable, skilled and committed employees whose potential the organisation can use to achieve its goals (Vnoučková et al., 2015). Managers have the responsibility to transform these essential assets into abilities (Muiruri, Kahuthia & Muraguri, 2019).

Although previously considered as a costly activity, employee development has now become an employee retention strategy (GetSmarter, 2019; Naong, 2016). Among the myriad of benefits derived from training and development is its undeniable affect on employees' organisational commitment (Birdi et al., 1997; Kooij et al., 2010; Noang, 2016). Also, as employees become more devoted to their work (Vnoučková et al., 2015) organisational performance also increases (Dobre, 2013; Muiruri, Kahuthia & Muraguri, 2019). Employee development also contributes towards work-role flexibility (Nguyen & Shao, 2019), thus, enhancing organisational effectiveness, performance and success (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Shah et al., 2012; Visagie & Kruger, 2011). Employees who perceive that their employers pay attention to their development are constantly willing to learn and are proactive in their work, thus, impacting organisational output. Likewise, employee development inspires high achievement and successful organisational transformation (Stacho et al., 2019). This human resource component reduces organisational costs by reducing defects, limiting work repetition, minimising resource wastage, decreasing time spent on the task and, reducing consequences of poor performance (Raheja, 2015). Improved skills and current knowledge imply increased efficiency and productivity, thus, contributing towards organisational development and creating a smarter, problem-solving workforce which can deliver uniform, consistent and

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reliable results (Raheja, 2015) in a professional manner (Adhikari, 2020). Such practices mean that customers know what to expect during each transaction, leading to repeated purchases and higher customer satisfaction. Hence, employee development empowers employees to provide hassle-free services thereby protecting and promoting good relationships with customers (Chen et al., 2019).

Moreover, better human capital positively influences financial performance. Employee training and development fosters engagement (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017), which is critical for the financial performance of the organisation (Bishop, 2018; Getsmarter, 2019) and its overall market performance (Chen et al., 2019). Engaging in employee development can increase sales and even double profits for workgroups (Gallup, 2017).

The increased emphasis on performance analysis and learning, as tools for business enhancement, has compelled several companies to factor-in sustainability in their training programmes (Awasthi & Kumar, 2016). As companies embrace relevant learning approaches and new skills, they are more prepared to evolve, innovate for the future and adapt to the demands of emerging markets (Bishop, 2018; GetSmarter, 2019), thereby increasing company competitiveness (Caloghirou et al., 2017; Carucci, 2018; Malik, Pereira & Tarba, 2017; Tung Le, 2020) and creating long-term human assets for the organisation (Mackay, 2017). In addition, employee development empowers employees (Bishop, 2018) thereby helping the organisation to develop future leaders (GetSmarter, 2019) and to remain competitive (Bulut & Culha, 2010, Leadership Resources, 2019) in domestic and international markets (Naong, 2010). Organisations which will remain competitive in the industry are those with employees who are committed to self-

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development, are willing to grow, and become involved in development programmes both within and outside of the workplace (Vnoučková et al., 2015).

Investment in employee development increases employee tenure (Bishop, 2018; LinkedIn Learning, 2018, Naong, 2016). Employee development can increase the perceived empowerment and growth mind-set of workers, thus, reducing turnover intention (Kurniawati & Sari, 2019). Research indicates that 94% of employees would work for a longer period at a specific company if it invested in their career development (LinkedIn Learning, 2018). Even good employees will feel dissatisfied and trapped within their current positon if there is no continuous professional development and will probably leave, an action that will incur considerable expense for the company because employee replacement costs are often more than employee retention costs (Craig, 2018; Rigoni & Nelson, 2016). Specifically, women who participate in developmental activities offered by their company are less likely to leave (Nguyen & Shao, 2019). Training, as one of employee development practices, can prevent women from historically underrepresented groups and women who are working for the first-time, from leaving soon after they have been hired (Chen et al., 2019). This fact is especially true when training is conducted by experienced trainers who focus on job-specific skills and other skills needed to survive at work, such as basic work-readiness, self-presentation, interpersonal communication, work–life issues and self-reliance skills (Ranganatha, 2018). All these merits confirm that employee development is critical for the growth and stability of an organisation (Achanya & Cinjel, 2022; Broadhurst, 2012). Unfortunately, despite its benefits, employee development continues to be associated with high costs and an increased risk of losing employees who, through development, now have access to other opportunities outside

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the organisation (Vnoučková et al., 2015). However, organisations should realise that its benefits outweigh its cost. Especially as returns accrue from investments in employee development (Banyhmadana et al., 2020; Leadership Resources, 2019).

3.7.4. Benefits of employee development to nations

Human development is one of the factors used to classify national development levels (Shuaibu & Oladayo, 2016; United Nations Development Programme, 2016; United Nations Women, 2017). It goes beyond individuals and organisations to be an agent of social and national development (Swanson & Holton III, 2001) because employees are the most powerful resources of a country (Husin et al., 2018). HCD creates a flexible and agile workforce capable of rapidly adjusting to changing environments (Aroge & Hassan, 2011; World Economic Forum, 2016). The skills development of individuals and groups within a country impacts the nation's talent pool (Nkomo, 2012; PWC, 2018a) and facilitates the creation of opportunities and jobs (Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009; United Nations Development Programme, 2016) necessary for economic growth and global competiveness. In addition to competitiveness, this component of HCD enhances profitability, ensures the health and well-being of citizens, facilitates learning and development, improves problem solving, increases effectiveness, initiates and/or manages change, strengthens systems, improves processes, and supports adaptability to change (Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017) thereby stimulating national and cultural changes. The South African government promulgated the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998) in order to offer funding incentives for organisations to develop staff, especially those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

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While women's development benefits them, it also benefits their co-workers and boosts national skills levels. The nation, organisations, groups and individuals and groups stand to gain when all employees are developed adequately. Hence the development of women should not be neglected.

3.8. Human capital development and its strategic implication for organisations

Every organisation needs human capital to execute its strategy (Muiruri, Kahuthia & Muraguri, 2019) and the role people play in organisations can never be over emphasised. Naong (2016) agrees that HCD should form part of organisation's strategic agenda. Likewise, Chen et al. (2019) assert that talent development and talent retention are already strategic priorities for many firms. Forward-looking organisations consider education, development, knowledge management, talent management and career development as strategic themes and discuss them often (Vnoučková et al., 2015). Research reveals the strategic importance of HCD within organisations. The combined value of the human capital pool, and the manner in which human capabilities are managed through human resource processes, become evident when aligned to the strategic aim of the organisation (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017). Likewise, business-focussed HCD activities emphasise returns on investments, and the impact of developmental activities on organisational goals (Banyhmadana et al., 2020).

The South African Board of People Practices (SABPP), the paramount HR professional body in South Africa, proposes a Human Resource Management System Model containing 13 standard elements fited in a quality assurance model entailing planning, implementation, review and improvement (SABPP, n.d, SABPP, 2017). Planning is about

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strategic HRM, talent management and HR risk management. The implementation envolves workforce planning, learning and development, performance management, reward and recognition, employee wellness, employment relations, organisation development, HR service delivery and HR technology. HR Measurement are about reviews. This model is important in that it considers a wholistic HR as a strategic imperative for organisations to succeed (De Bruyn, 2020). The model is all encompassing and highlights elements which are of essence in this study, being learning and development, performance management and reward and recognition. This section links HCD to two key strategic imperatives: the balanced scorecard, and returns on human capital investments.

3.8.1. Human capital development and the balanced scorecard

Performance scorecards used by many organisations in making decisions often ignore the human element (Swanson & Holton III, 2001). Most organisations focus on short term financial performance and give little or no attention to other aspects of the firm. Kaplan and Norton (1996, 2008) prescribe a comprehensive scorecard for organisations to strategically plan and evaluate their activities; that consists of the customer, financial, internal processes and learning and growth perspectives. The customer pillar addresses the satisfaction of customer's needs, the financial pillar deals with revenue generation and finance management while internal processes address the procedures and systems than enable the organisation to function optimally.

The learning and growth pillar is specifically of interest to this study because it deals with the development of critical skills, knowledge management and the alignment of individual

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and corporate goals (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Effective employee development takes into consideration both personal and organisational priorities (Antonacopoulou, 2000). It, therefore, is imperative that organisations link the following aspects: strategy to people, people to performance, people's performance to development targets and performance and development to rewards (Becker, Huselid & Ulrich, 2001; London & Smither, 1999). Linking employees' roles and daily activities to organisational success enables them to understand how their individual contributions impact the overall success of the organisation (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014).

When planning, organisations need to seek alignment between training and development and their business objectives (Taulli, 2018). They need to carefully consider the competencies and skills needed to execute strategy and adequately equip staff with these skills. When linked to strategic goals, competencies help employees to understand their contribution towards organisational success (Campion et al. 2011). An effective approach for tracking learning and growth is to connect individual performance on strategic jobs (i.e., strategy-execution-dependant jobs) to the four strategy perspectives prescribed by Kaplan and Norton (2008). Popov (2015) deplores that most organisational training programmes do not strategically focus on skills that are the most critical to the business' stage of development. Training and development within organisations are usually unsustainable and short-sighted, resulting in external recruitments and little internal succession planning (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Organisations need to institute training and development programmes that are strategic, sustainable and long-term orientated. Investments in employee development yield the most when they address strategic learning need of employees, or address factors that may hamper their success (Carucci,

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2018). Thus, the training and development of women must have a strategic focus, should be sustainable, be future-oriented and consider women's individual learning needs.

The learning and growth pillar, similarly to the other three perspectives, needs to be expressed in terms of strategic objectives and initiatives, performance targets and key performance indicators (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). To achieve desired results these elements need to be implemented and monitored through periodic performance assessments and reviews. Crafting a strategy is good but implementing, monitoring, reviewing and providing relevant resources needed for its execution are imperative (Speculand, 2014). Organisations spend too little time on strategy implementation, thus, many training efforts are worthless (Popov, 2015). Ideally, development efforts should be aligned to strategic plans for organisations to achieve outstanding performance.

Employee development is an effective tool in achieving organisational strategic goals (Chen et al., 2019). When aligned to strategic goals, human capital development activities could affect the present and future performance of employees and organisations (Banyhmadana et. al., 2020). Employee training is a strategic task that can drive innovation, increase work performance, create an interaction and knowledge-sharing culture and boost organisational outcomes (Stacho et al., 2019). Employee development practices (such as training, empowerment and coaching) have significant positive impact on organisational performance (which reflects on customers, employees, finance and internal processes) (Zakariaa et al., 2017). Hence, there is a link between employee development initiatives and organisational performance. This fact is specifically true when development efforts are interesting and useful to the employee and when they are allowed to help plan their development (Popov, 2015).

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Although strategic skills can be acquired through training and other HR development methods, most organisation's leadership lack them (Speculand, 2014). For an organisation to perform optimally, its leadership needs to possess strategy skills. During strategic planning sessions, it is important for management to consider the development of employees and the critical skills needed for the effective execution of strategy. Firms that are committed to gender equality in skills development and career progression should take steps to set strategic objectives for the development of their women, design strategic initiatives, set performance targets and decide on key performance indicators. Thereafter, they need to track and evaluate performance in terms these objectives, and report on them periodically.

3.8.2. Human capital development and returns on investments

The direct and indirect investment costs of development need to be factored in the resource requirement planning for strategy execution and the returns thereof need to be profitable (Fallon & Rice, 2015). HR development costs include extra supervisory time, finance, knowledge sharing, time off-work, and learning mistakes. In a capitalist society, organisations need to generate returns from their investments in people development, which could take the form of longer tenure, higher performance, greater responsibility, better work quality, increased productivity, knowledge sharing and agility (Arguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Judrups et al., 2015; Raheja, 2015). Oosthuizen et al. (2019) argue that even though organisations spend exorbitant sums of money on training and development, they rarely receive adequate returns on their investments because employees are rarely given the opportunity to practice their acquired skills or increase their chances of moving up the organisational ladder. This deficiency could be because the organisation spends

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time, effort and money on the training of skills that are not strategic, skills that are not relevant to the organisation, or because of operational gaps that fail to engage in post-training evaluation. Yet, Halvarsson Lundkvist and Gustavsson (2018) discovered that interweaving competency development programmes at work with daily work activities stimulates learning and innovation. While organisations are encouraged to invest in women, they need to actively seek a return on their investments. Companies should create effective and useful plans to invest in different aspects of human capital so that the firm can achieve greater performance, remain competitive and sustainable (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017).

In conclusion, developing human resource strategies requires strategic thinking reflected through vision-orientation, innovation and systematic thinking (Banyhmadana et al., 2020). Employees are the most important assets within an organisation (Muiruri, Kahuthia & Muraguri, 2019) and need to be managed strategically. Also, investment in people is among the most valuable form of investment (Alnachef & Alhajjar, 2017) and should yield a substantial return. HCD within an organisation should be aligned to its strategic plan and investments in employee development should match perceived benefits.

3.9. Learning organisation

Learning plays a vital role in human capital development (Arghode, Brieger & McLean, 2017). Continuous learning cultures promote the application and rewarding of learning, provide enabling resources for development, foster knowledge sharing and manage existing knowledge (Judrups et al., 2015). This kind of culture creates, accumulates, develops and transfers knowledge via the movement of ideas and information through

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efficient systems. This section discuses learning theories and learning within the workplace.

3.9.1. Learning theories

Adult learning theories relevant to workplace learning include behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism and social learning theories. Behaviorism is one of the most prominent learning theories (Arghode, Brieger & McLean, 2017) in which the learning process occurs via observations of stimulus and response in the form of behavioural change (Austin, 2015). With this approach, learning is a product of environmental events and little importance is given to internal cognitive processes. It focuses on knowledge acquisition rather than knowledge conceptualisation; thus, employees learn by observing.

Cognitivism focuses on how information is stored, processed and retrieved by the mind (Biniecki & Conceigao, 2016). Austin (2015) suggests that individuals play an active role in shaping their environment through their thinking process. The three key perspectives in this theory include: contextual views (which considers the context), information processing (the development of information) and constructivism (how information is built up over time). Constructivism is about constructing knowledge through experience (Arghode, Brieger & McLean, 2017). It associates knowledge with its context and is anchored in the belief that people attribute personal meaning and situate their experiences within a specific context.

With the social learning theory, individuals learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling (Austin, 2015; Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2006). This theory focuses on interactions between environmental and cognitive factors that impact human

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behaviour and learning (Ismail et al., 2017). Emerging women can learn, imitate and follow women who have succeeded in their career path. Common to these three theories is that they involve mental effort and social interactions, depicting internal and external interconnections that result in adult learning. They also speak of the relevance of favourable environments within which employees, including women, can learn, imitate and grow.

3.9.2. Becoming learning organisations

Senge (1990) who popularised the concept of learning organisations describes learning organisations as those within which: new and expansive thinking patterns are nurtured, people persistently expand their capacity to create the results they desire, collective aspiration is promoted and people continually learn how to learn together. In addition, a learning organisation is one that recognizes the importance of continuous performance-related development, and provides organisation-wide learning systems through which employees can expand their learning (London & Smither, 1999). A learning organisation operates like an organism in which there is interdependence, communication and in which decision-making happens in a fluidic and multi-directional manner, resulting in the transformation of the entire system (Mehta, 2019). Without a systemic network that facilitates the creation of knowledge and the collection of information, an organisation will not be able to learn. Similarly, without an organised development system, which captures skills inventory and relevant educational programmes for performance improvement purposes, organisations will fail to systematically meet their present and future skills requirements that are needed to deliver continuously high performance in the current ever-changing business and social environment (Stacho et al., 2019; Stachová et al.,

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2017). The concept of a career nowadays compels companies to provide a continuously accessible development environment that facilitates employees' skills transformation, and systematically invests in the knowledge expansion and skills acquisition of its employees (Mikołajczyk, 2021). Hence, companies need to adopt a culture of constant skills development and put in place the internal business systems required for continuous learning (Taulli, 2018). These internal systems need to support desired learning behaviours as well as the constant change required to adapt in the new world (Carucci, 2018). The development of such systems assists organisations to tract employee development and its impact on organisational outcome. It also enables firms to identify areas of improvement and blockages that hinder the company from benefiting from its investments in employee development, such as knowledge mismanagement.

The free exchange of knowledge among employees is often embedded in the knowledge management policy adopted by the company (Judrups et al., 2015). Organisational knowledge sharing is reflected through knowledge management programmes, practice communities and support. Knowledge management, when jointly used with knowledge sharing, creates a learning culture (Dong et al., 2017). Knowledge sharing environments are enabled by training programmes which create platforms for interactions (Pervaiz et al., 2016). Such platforms motivate employees to share their experience, help employees to generate new knowledge, and create avenues for employees to utilise acquired knowledge for business growth (Aragon et al., 2014). Information sharing also helps workers to develop their knowledge and skills (Khandakar & Pangil, 2019). Hence, information sharing and extensive training are vital in enhancing informal workplace learning (Chahal, Jyoti & Rani, 2016). Moreover, work engagements, characterised by

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physical vigour, emotional dedication and cognitive absorption, enhance employee knowledge sharing and innovative behaviour towards work (Kim & Park, 2017). Innovation and employee learning are most likely to occur when development programmes are matched against work activities (Halvarsson, Lundkvist & Gustavsson, 2018).

Continuous learning is vital for the competitiveness of the organisation (Caudill, 2015; Pantouvakis & Bouranta, 2013). Continuously learning organisations develop core competencies, remain competitive and develop their employees to be agile. Moreover, competency development and facilitated learning create sound competitive platforms for employees and organisations (Carucci, 2018). Organisations which consider, evaluate and overcome contemporary challenges faster than others will succeed and maintain competitive, while those that learn too slowly will eventually fail (Stacho et al., 2019). Hence organisational learning ensures enterprise sustainability and coordinated learning guarantees an economically-sound future for firms and their employees.

A learning environment cannot be solely achieved by employers without employees' involvement. When combined with employee participation, continuous learning is key in achieving strategic congruence and organisational goals (Chen et al., 2019). Although organisations have a role to play, the continuity of people's careers can only be secured through life-long learning and proactive personal career management, rather than relying on loyalty to an employer (Rapuano, 2020). The business environment is continuously changing and technology is advancing, therefore, professionally effective employees should make it a habit to constantly update their knowledge, competences and potentials (Britz, 2018). Lifelong learning has become important and employees need to take

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responsibility in driving their own careers and overcome development barriers during challenging times (Cormier et al., 2020).

The above discussion notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of organisations to stimulate transformation in employees, and to help them become a better version of themselves. Transforming organisations are learning organisations that create conducive learning environments by providing opportunities for development, promoting employees' skills improvement, fostering innovation, promoting ownership and enhancing organisational competitiveness (Nyhan, 1998). Organisations should promote a continuous learning culture by motivating individuals to train their thoughts to learn and to take responsibility for their own learning by planning and executing their career goals (London & Smither, 1999). Also, organisations should engage in selective hiring strategies through which candidates are selected based on their willingness to be involved in learning through daily activities, knowledge exchange and self-experimentation (Khandakar & Pangil, 2019). It is also vital for employees to be given opportunities for continuous learning through on-the-job and off-the-job training such as job enlargement, job enrichment and job rotation to encourage personal and holistic growth of the body, mind and spirit (Van der Walt, 2018). While learning organisations need to ensure that they receive a return on their investment in training and development initiatives, they are also catalysts for the development of women's skills development and their advancement in the workplace. The ideal organisational culture should promote organisational learning and knowledge sharing, have adequate systemic networks, organised development programmes, sound competitive platforms and reward learning.

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3.10. Chapter summary and conclusion

The strategic implication of HCD for organisations provide a business case for research in this field. HCD philosophies and paradigms provide the background against which organisations develop employees. Organisations often use on-the job and off-the-job development methods to address employee development needs, resulting in several benefits for individuals, teams, organisations and nations. When HCD is personalised to cater for each employee's career development needs, companies are able to address the unique challenges individual women face in their development. Although the responsibility for developing human capital lies with the organisation, employees are required to drive their own careers and play a key role in their development. When organisations and employees cooperate, the organisation matures into a learning organisation which is competitive and sustainable. The next chapter presents a literature review on career women's progression within the workplace.

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CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE

4.1. Introduction

A career is a sequence of activities related to a person's work experience, values, behaviours and aspirations spread over their lifetime (Komalasari et al., 2017). A career can also be viewed as a series of steps of ascension in one's profession, and helps to identify competency development, relationship construction and leadership development that contribute towards an individual's career capital (Veloso, Trevisan, da Silva & Dutra, 2018). People are expected to progress in their careers over time.

Career progression (also called promotion or career advancement) is the vertical or horizontal advancement of employees from one position to a higher position with increased responsibilities and authority within or outside an organisation (Osibanjo et al., 2014; Prossack, 2018). Promotion is often associated with a higher job title, greater salary range, management responsibilities, oversight duties, decision-making authority, enhanced status, more accountability and greater output expectations (Heathfield, 2019). Afande (2015) reveals that career progression often happens through career development. Career development is the sum of organised and planned efforts between an employee and an organisation with structured activities and processes along the career path. This chapter starts by presenting a literature review of the most relevant career progression career theories and models applicable to this study, followed by the benefits of promotion, after which motivations for promoting women in leadership positions are discussed.

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4.2. Career anchors, theories and career models

Career theories help to answer existing questions about careers and models explain theories. Before examining relevant theories and models, it is important to unpack the anchors upon which careers are built.

4.2.1. Career anchors

On average, a worker entering the workforce within the past decade will change positions almost twice as frequently within their first five years of work than those who entered the workforce 30 years ago (Berger, 2017). People at all levels within the workplace now move more fluidly and frequently between jobs, not only to meet their compensation needs but also to find fulfilling work that more appropriately fits their ever-changing values, needs and lifestyle (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). In this regard, Schein (1996), as cited in Veloso et al. (2018), identifies and describes eight career anchors that can help to explain the different value anchors that shape professions, namely: technical competence, managerial competence, autonomy, security, entrepreneurial creativity, service, pure challenge and lifestyle anchors. People with the technical (or functional) competence anchor prefer solving technical challenges. Individuals with the general managerial competence anchor focus on results and organisational impact. Professionals with the autonomy/independence anchor value flexibility. People with the security/stability anchor seek guaranteed professional employment. Individuals with the entrepreneurial creativity anchor seek opportunities and love taking risks. Workers with the service/dedication anchor seek professions that provide them with a sense of accomplishment. Employees with the pure challenge anchor are competitive and love

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thought-provoking obstacles. Lastly, professionals with the lifestyle anchor seek to integrate all the elements of their life by pursuing balance between their professional, personal and family lives. These anchors reveal that every employee seeks to fulfil inner needs and desires. Career anchors reveal people's potential strengths, motivation and the rational for the career choices they make (Saif, 2020). Although developed more than 40 years ago, when careers were relatively stable, people's focus on internal values and personal needs keep them relevant in contemporary career debates (Bravo, Seibert, Kraimer, Wayne & Liden 2015). Therefore, organisations that understand women's personal values, linked to their career anchors, can better identify suitable jobs and career paths that enable them to grow.

4.2.2. Career theories

Career theories mostly originate from the field of psychology. Applicable theories discussed here include: the theory of work-adjustment, the career motivation theory and the social cognitive career theory.

4.2.2.1. Theory of Work-Adjustment

The theory of work-adjustment (TWA), which combines over five decades of research, was developed by Dawis and Lofquist (1984). These authors perceive TWA as an interactive and reciprocal process between individuals and their work environment. It combines the activities individuals carry out to achieve congruence between themselves and their work environment (Strauser et al., 2021). Individuals often perform specific labour tasks within their work environment in exchange for financial, social and psychological advantages provided by their work environment. TWA provides a

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framework to predict the outcomes between the worker and the work environment as well as the work adjustment process between them (Eggerth, 2008; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969; Strauser et al., 2021). Workers try to modify their work environment or adopt certain personal behaviour to increase the compatibility between their abilities and the job's requirements (Van Ruysseveldt et al., 2021). Also, workers' satisfaction impacts their behaviour and is often a function of the correspondence between workers and their work environment (Dawis, 1996). In terms of this study's context, when the firm provides a conducive environment for women's career development and growth, women are more inclined to adjust to behaviours that will favour the firm. Also, when organisations understand workers' needs and values, they can use organisational actions to reinforce employee behaviour. Nevertheless, the model is criticised for it deceptive simplicity (Hesketh & Griffin, 2005) and its negligence of the need for 'person-environment' fit and the social justice required for adjustments to happen (Armitage & Nassor Amar, 2021). The work environment is dynamic and complex with different key players. The state of the work environment is critical because workers need to 'fit-in' and perceive some level of organisational justice towards them and their colleagues. The failure of the TWA's simplistic approach to deal with the above issues makes room for other theories.

4.2.2.2. The career motivation theory

Issues that motivate individual career choice and development are either intrinsic or external and are often interwoven personal and social realities (Richardson & Watt, 2018). A person's career motivation mind-set is an important driver for engaging in activities that will enhance one's career (e.g., skills development). In a recent study, Min (2020) identifies the following career motivation categories experienced by women: low interest

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in childcare and household chores, family-related motives, financial needs, elevated need for achievement, job satisfaction that will result in self-actualization and promoting the positive perception of working women. Likewise, Bezzina et al. (2013) examine women's career motivation and identify major motivations to be ability utilization, achievement, vocational development, career awareness, creativity, social class improvement, self-esteem, responsibility, meeting people and/or making friends, economic independence, meeting basic life expenses, and economic stability. Motivators, such as the drive for career recognition and advancement, determine the effort a woman expends on her career.

London's (1983) career motivation theory is a three-dimensional construct comprising career resilience (adaptability and persistence), career insight (knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses) and career identity (how individuals define themselves by their career). This theory serves as a framework to understand and enhance the impact of situational conditions on career decisions and behaviour (London & Noe, 1997). In the current changing business environment, resilience and adaptability have become essential for career development. Unless women have a clear knowledge of their professional strengths and areas of improvement, they may not be able to leverage or address them to benefit their careers.

4.2.2.3. Social cognitive career theory

The social cognitive career theory is linked to beliefs concerning self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994, 2000). According to Lent (2005), self-efficacy is the individual's personal belief regarding their ability to perform or behave

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as required. Self-efficacy is a dynamic concept and often specific to a particular domain, while outcome expectations involve understanding the consequences of performing certain behaviours. Personal goals refer to the intention to engage in an activity at a performance certain level. The theory incorporates a number of concepts such as interests, values, abilities and environmental factors that affect career development through cognitive and motivational processes (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000). This theory focuses on career interests and choices, performance, well-being, career self-management over time and the achievement of career success (Brown & Lent, 2019; Byars-Winston & Rogers, 2019). From a gender stance, the social cognitive career theory could reveal prerequisites for women to develop confidence in their professional abilities, the implication of their behaviour on their careers, as well as their commitment to set career-related goals and pursue them successfully within their workplace.

The three career theories discussed above confirm that career development depends on internal and external factors, follows a process and happens over time. External counterparts and organisations provide the environment within which careers can blossom; however, careers primarily require personal responsibility and engagement. Hence women need to take control of and actively pursue their career development.

4.2.3. Career models

Career models have developed over the years into three broad categories, namely: the traditional, modern and sustainable approaches. While the traditional approach is rigid, the modern approach is more flexible and considers the contextual setting, and the sustainable approach is futuristic and dynamic.

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4.2.3.1. Traditional careers

A traditional organisational career is the sum of mutually profitable interactions between a person and the organisation they work for over time (Arthur, 2014; Schein, 1978). This type of career represents the ideology of traditional theories that someone obtains a job and retains it for life (Arthur, 2014). Traditional career models are characterised by bureaucracy, vertical progression and rigidity that assume full-time employment and uninterrupted careers (Herman, 2015). This belief gives little consideration to the multifaceted challenges working women face and ignores the demands and expectations placed on women, thereby forcing them to adapt to criteria dictated by men (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Du Toit, 2012; Naudé, 2017). The number of women in the workplace has increased, many of whom neither want to neglect their careers in favour of their family lives nor leave the workplace completely in order to fulfil family responsibilities. Some women may take temporary career breaks to start families or raise children. Others may decide to work for limited hours in order to attend to their family commitments. Despite fluctuating times, changes within the workforce involving novel and more appropriate career models, most organisations still continue to use traditional ones (Baruch & Reis, 2015; Broadbridge, 2015) that usually fail to meet the working woman's complex needs.

4.2.3.2. Modern careers

Contrary to traditional career models, modern career models recognise the complexity of career environments characterised by multiple breaks, nonlinearity (Duberley, Carmichael & Szmigin, 2014), horizontal movements across organisations, periodic unemployment, increased instability, high mobility and enlarged personal initiatives

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(Rapuano, 2020). The most prominent modern career models are protean careers, kaleidoscope careers, boundaryless careers (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) and intelligent careers (Veloso, Trevisan, da Silva & Dutra, 2018).

The protean career model represents the process in which the person is managed using psychological success as the leading impulse (Hall, 2002; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Veloso et al., 2018). This career type acknowledges the economic, geographic, social, technological or political changes that occur throughout an employee's professional life (Hall, Yip & Doiron, 2018). Although influenced by the external environment, employees are the primary agents of their career development and are driven by their personal needs, goals and values (Rapuano, 2020). Hence, depicting the women's responsibility to drive their careers.

The Kaleidoscope career model acknowledges a person's need to work with meaning and purpose (i.e., authenticity), to balance work and other aspects of life and to have stimulating career engagements (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). These needs arise with different intensities across one's career lifespan. The Kaleidoscope career model makes provision for workers to balance their careers and 'other-life' activities for greater fulfilment, hence its relevance to women.

The Boundaryless career approach involves less vertical harmonisation and less stability because individuals are no longer bound to a particular company (Arthur & Rousseu, 1996, 2001). This model transcends organisational boundaries and promotes career mobility across different employers through professional networks, job market information and intentional search for new knowledge. A boundaryless career involves physical and

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psychological mobility that break traditional assumptions regarding organisational hierarchy and career advancement (Arthur, 2014) by offering endless choices and career opportunities that can be rejected for personal reasons (e.g., family).

Intelligent careers are based on Quinn's (1992) ideology of intelligent enterprises, that are guided by knowledge and the need to develop cultural skills, know-how and networking skills. The accumulation of competencies is not subordinated to employers and intelligent careerists need to personally ensure that they maximise their competencies (Arthur, Claman & DeFillipi, 1995). Job training and life experiences are vital in accumulating competencies and building career capital (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999). Career capital is the sum of different meta competencies and other resources that facilitate people's successful navigation through their career path (Rapuano, 2020). Investments in career capital make it possible for professionals to adapt to volatile and unforeseen scenarios in the new borderless world (Veloso et al, 2018). Women, therefore, can advance their careers by developing and accumulating competencies required for positions they aspire towards within their workplace.

In summary, women need to take personal responsibility for increasing their career capital and make decisions that assist them to balance their careers with the rest of their life commitments for greater fulfilment. However, research relating to modern careers lacks context, giving rise to the need for a more comprehensive and systemic approach to careers that considers the manifold contexts within which careers unfold, rather than isolated private contexts (Rapuano, 2020) thus, creating a need for the sustainable career model discussed below.

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4.2.3.3. Sustainable careers

The momentum for sustainability in careers has grown in recent years in response to changing socioeconomic, demographic, technological and business contexts (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2017; McDonald & Hite, 2018; Valcour, 2015). Organisations now focus on short-term financial gains, increased delayering, less employer-driven career management programmes and a more externalised workforce through contract positions (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Careers in the 21st century are less predictable with high mobility rates, thereby imposing more responsibility on individuals to manage their careers (Rapuano, 2020; Valcour, 2015).

The notion of sustainable careers considers social space, time, agency and meaning (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015). Social space denotes the multiple contexts that influence a person's career trajectory (McDonald & Hite, 2018) such as work-related context, the labour market, family, leisure, community and the economy. The time component involves career continuity over the years (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015; Rapuano, 2020) and considers changing personal needs throughout one's life cycle (De Vos et al., 2018). This model depicts the reality experienced by most women who temporarily cease to work (e.g., for maternity leave) and may experience changing personal needs as a result of family responsibilities and fluctuating life circumstances. The sustainable career model views a career as the changing interplay between a person and their contexts over time (De Vos et al., 2018). The aspect of time also focuses on building resilient career systems in which all career actors and stakeholders will satisfy their needs, while considering the long-term implications of each career decision (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2017). Lastly, the component meaning relates to the people's perception of their career success, usually

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entrenched in their values and aspects that matter most. There are instances in which for personal reasons employees may be happy with their jobs and not want greater responsibility and/or authority (Heathfield, 2019). This position is true for women who place more value on their family lives than their careers (Howson et al., 2018) and may not want to jeopardize this for advancement in the workplace. Thus, the right organisational action to reward this group of women may not necessarily be added the responsibility associated with promotion because they prefer to keep minimal work responsibilities and devote more time to family responsibilities. Thus, the concept of meaning may extend beyond increased remuneration and promotion (Rapuano, 2020) to the consideration of other aspects such as personal growth or career satisfaction (De Vos, Dujardin, Gielens & Meyers, 2016).

The sustainable careers approach encompasses renewability (rejuvenation), flexibility and adaptability (through continuous learning) and integrity (meaning and alignment between values and actions) (Rapuano, 2020). Workers are increasingly facing long and complex careers and, hence, need to secure their long-term employability, while building careers that favour their health and long-term success (Akkermans, De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2016). The role of organisations in the development of sustainable careers is to enhance employees' future employability by providing learning and development opportunities (Rapuano, 2020). Employees personally cannot achieve career sustainability, therefore, organisations need to construct resilient career systems that are geared towards employee development (Adhikari, 2020) and individual career needs, while providing organisations with the flexibility to respond to changing market requirements (De Vos & Cambre, 2016; De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2017). Organisations

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have to help employees manage their non-work context (Reichel et al., 2022) by promoting their work-life balance, overall well-being and positive life-long career experiences that boast employees' performance alongside organisational effectiveness (Kossek, Valcour & Lirio, 2014).

Whereas traditional careers are rigid and not always aligned with the needs and experiences of contemporary women, modern career models recognise that women's careers are linked to their unique needs, life experiences and life contexts. Sustainable careers best suit women in that consider women's changing personal and career needs, their evolution, their personal responsibility and possible work-family conflicts, without undermining the role organisations play in facilitating the learning and development process. An understanding of the requirements for career progression, therefore, is important.

4.3. Prerequisites for career progression

Career advancement is often sought by employees and it is necessary to understand what companies expect from employees before they can be promoted. Too hasty promotion of employees involving additional responsibilities can overwhelm them, whereas the frustration of unnecessary delays can cause them to leave the organisation (Forbes Coaches Council, 2017). Vasel (2019) proposes that promotion should happen approximately every three years during employees' early career paths, while senior employees should experience a change in title once in seven years. However, this is subject to the availability of higher positions. The right time to promote an employee is determined by employees' performance and whether or not they drive their own career

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growth, seek and complete challenging assignments, possess strong people skills, show commitment to the company's purpose and demonstrate resilience (Forbes Coaches Council, 2017). The employee should be able continuously identify and resolve organisational problems and consistently demonstrate their value-adding contribution to the business. Other issues that firms consider before promoting employees include their readiness for promotion, aspirations, consistency in meeting job criteria and the benefits of the appointment to the broader team (Rohman, Onyeagoro & Bush, 2018). For fair promotion to occur, there needs to be clarity regarding promotion guidelines and requirements for each job level (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Vasel, 2019).

Even though organisations can also facilitate women's promotion by aligning their skill development to promotion opportunities (Oosthuizen et al., 2019), women, as already stated, need to play an active role in their career advancement. Women can enhance this process by improving their performance, furthering their education, networking, keeping a positive mind-set about opportunities and obtaining family support (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016).

Promotion, however, does not always happen as expected even when the obvious criteria have been met. Vasel (2019) advises that employees should not remain too long with a company in which they are not ascending the career ladder fast enough (i.e., three years for early career professionals and seven years for senior staff). The author also states that if promotion is sought but denied, employees should consider requesting work-life balance benefits (e.g., flexible work schedules) or other benefits (e.g., increased remuneration, departmental transfers and/or training).

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4.4. Benefits of career progression to employees and employers

Career progression should benefit both employees and organisations. For employees, promotion provides major job satisfaction and, when denied, can be detrimental to the employee's productivity (Vasel, 2019). Career progression improves employees' abilities and skills in line with their career development paths within the organisation (Osibanjo et al., 2014). Benefits such as increased pay, status, authority, responsibility, influence and significance (Heathfield, 2019), often motivate employees to seek advancement within companies.

From an organisational perspective, internal promotion reduces the recruitment and training costs of new employees (Osibanjo et al., 2014). Promotion is also used as a communication tool to convey to other employees the kind of behaviour, actions and values the employer would like them to exhibit (Heathfield, 2019), thereby stimulating desired behaviour in employees. In addition, placing women in senior positions is often applauded by the public (Bussin & Nienaber, 2015), resulting in the improvement of the organisation's social image. More specific reasons why many firms are keen to promote women are discussed in the next section.

4.5. Reasons for promoting women to leadership positions

Some of these reasons are discussed below.

4.5.1. Women have good ratings in leadership competencies

Research on a 360-degree performance review conducted by Zenger & Folkman (2019) revealed that women's scores were statistically significantly higher than men's on the

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majority of leadership competencies. Women excelled in taking initiatives, driving for results, acting with resilience, displaying high integrity and honesty, championing change, practicing self-development, developing, inspiring and motivating others, displaying bold leadership practices, building relationships, establishing 'stretch' goals, collaborating in teams, connecting to the outside world, communicating powerfully and prolifically, analysing and solving problems, innovating and being prompt in taking leadership decisions. Zenger and Folkman's (2019) findings revealed that women in leadership roles are perceived as equally, if not more, competent as men. Men only surpassed women in developing strategic perspective, and technical/professional expertise. In an earlier 360 degrees assessment of the strategic perspective of thousands of leaders, women also outshone men in all areas except in vision (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009). Women's inclination to short sightedness in business is validated by Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) who claim that most women leaders lack the ability to think 'outside-the-box', are subjective and engage in short term relations that end when the task is completed. However, women's high performance in other leadership domains cannot be denied.

One of the critical elements in leadership is that of managing humans and relationships. Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) describe an ideal leader as someone who is objective, fair, goal directed and possesses great listening, decision making, coaching, mentoring, team building and relationship skills. Feminine qualities such as emotional sensitivity, connectedness and empathy are vital for building lasting relationships (Nkomo, 2012). Similarly, Gipson et al. (2017) found that women leaders are rated better than their male colleagues in terms of developing subordinates, inspiring and motivating others, building relationships and working in teams. Women are more empathetic, socially

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sensitive and, therefore, good relationship builders (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). The latter authors further mentioned that working in teams and high-performance levels are fundamental for establishing good relationships. Women's general willingness to share information and power increases their ability to create a harmonious work environment, build supportive relationships, gain employees' loyalty and more achieve 'win-win' solutions than male leaders (Liu, 2013; Zhong & Ehrich, 2010). Successful female leaders tend to: prefer relationship and consensus approaches to build and motivate others, consider individual differences, promote democracy and espouse transformational leadership styles (Mythili, 2019). Thus, female leaders frequently use rational, democratic and transformational approaches that are not always practiced by their male counterparts. Women also establish the positive links with stakeholders (Birindelli, Chiappini & Savioli, 2020) that are much needed assets for organisations. Women's ability to initiate and nurture good relationships makes them effective leaders.

Communal qualities found in women include kindness, warmth, empathy and gentleness while agentic qualities associated with being a leader include confidence, aggressiveness and self-direction (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). However, women sometimes are expected to change from being 'soft and sweet' and become 'manlier and rude' (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). This kind of unfair organisational expectation places superior value on the concept of masculinity over femininity, thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes (O'Connor, O'Haggen & Brannen, 2015). Despite the negative implications of the pressure to comply with masculine norms, it has some positive inferences. It compels women to adopt both masculine and feminine leadership behaviours (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017), or to combine transactional and transformational leadership styles (Shangase

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& Gerwel Proches, 2014), thus, making women versatile and dynamic in leading diversified groups within dissimilar contexts.

4.5.2. Skills competition

Women constitute more than half of the working-age population yet fewer women than men are working, with 47,0% recorded as economically inactive and out of labour force compared to 35,6% men in South Africa (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022) and a 47% global labour force participation for women and 72% for men (ILO, 2022). The consideration of recent demographic evolutions indicates that the number of talented people in the populace is relatively limited (Vnoučková et al., 2015). In PWC's 2018 CEO Survey, 38% of CEOs mentioned that the lack of "availability of key skills" is a threat to their organisation's growth (PWC, 2018c). The strong demand and shortage of well-trained employees in certain domains require organisations to develop talent internally for the purpose of expanding their external competitiveness (Chen et al., 2019). This position creates the need for organisations to increase their pool of competitive skilled personnel by collapsing gender barriers and upskilling women's existing talents (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). With the rise in competition for skills and the increase in advocacy for gender equality in top management positions, organisations can no longer limit their potential for growth by having only male employees occupying senior and executive management positions (Izraeli & Adler, 2012). Women bring to the boardroom a diversity of skills and opinions resulting in innovation, independence and good governance (Fauzi et al., 2017) – all reasons why companies should develop women's leadership skills and place them in higher-level positions.

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4.5.3. External perceptions

In South Africa, women constitute approximately 52% of the population (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019) and it is neither morally or economically appropriate to omit women's participation in business leadership (PWC, 2018a). Organisations boost their own social licence and gain greater acceptance from stakeholders and local communities by promoting gender equality in the workforce (PWC, 2018a) because employing women in top positions currently is in vogue and applauded as modern (Bussin & Nienaber, 2015). Hence, in an attempt to satisfy gender watchdogs and please the general public, many organisations have readjusted their promotion strategies to make them more accommodating to women (Bosch, 2015).

4.5.4. The role model factor

In South Africa, women are underrepresented in five out of the eight professional clusters identified i.e., cloud computing (14%), engineering (14%), data and artificial intelligence (28%), product development (36%), sales (50%), marketing (45%), content production (56%) and people and culture (75%) (World Economic Forum, 2020). The above statistics imply that many professional clusters remain male-dominated and, as such, women in these organisations are expected to model their behaviour around that of men (Moalusi & Jones, 2019) due to the absence of female role models. The business world currently is seekng female role models whom young female professionals can emulate, especially in fields in which women are under-represented (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012; World Economic Forum, 2020). It is important for successful women leaders in the workplace to see themselves as role models for the upcoming female generation (Moorosi, Fuller & Reilly,

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2018). Women who prioritise their careers are more valuable for organisations than male leaders in that they become role models, inspire, motivate and mentor younger women with similar aspirations (De Braine, 2011). Hence, propelling women to top positions is a way of providing role models for aspiring young women.

4.5.5. Women as high performers

The fact that women are seen as high performers strengthens the business case for gender diversity in upper management (Chanland & Murphy, 2017). When rated by their managers (particularly male managers), women are often perceived to be slightly more effective than their male colleagues at all hierarchical levels and in almost every functional area, even in traditional male bastions such as information technology, operations and law (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Women who progress to higher positions are mostly high performers (Afande, 2015) a fact that strategically enables them to drive the organisation towards higher performance. Companies with a large number of women in senior leadership positions perform relatively better than those that have fewer women in these roles (Hind, 2015). Likewise, companies with more women and people from minority groups occupying senior management positions and females serving as board members perform better (Noland, Moran & Kotschwar, 2016). Such firms are more successful in terms of quality decision-making, productivity, business turnover and fraud prevention (Onley, 2016) plus exhanced financial performance (Fauzi et al., 2017; Lublin, 2015). Businesses that effectively use their female talent, are 45% more likely to report increased market share (Forbes, 2017). These statistics coincide with research from McKinsey and Company (2019) that discloses that women and minority groups, in companies with fair and inclusive cultures, are happier and more likely to perform better. This finding

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coincides with the fact that there are strong links between gender diversity, collective intelligence and team performance, because mixed teams are more creative and generate better solutions (Forbes India, 2017). Hence, economies that embrace and promote women outperform those that do not (Goldman Sachs Global Markets Institute, 2009; Word Economic Forum, 2016).

According to Fauzi et al. (2017) female CEOs (especially those with higher academic qualifications, business degrees and overseas qualifications) lowers corporate risk proxies (including debt ratio, cash ratio and free cash flows). Likewise, female chief financial officers lower the company's financial risks because women are believed to be more conservative when dealing with financial issues and are more risk adverse than men. However, Birindelli et al. (2020) argue that gender diversity on company boards only lowers risk in sound organisations and when the number of women directors does not exceed the critical mass (i.e., an absolute number of three women). The fact remains, however, that women are high performers and can drive their organisations in the desired direction.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to negate gender prejudices in terms of their professional abilities, women usually work harder and 'go the extra mile' to demonstrate their suitability for promotion, even though their efforts rarely impact promotional decisions (Ames et al., 2019; Biwa, 2021; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Nevertheless, women's hard work often translates into high performance – a valid reason for companies to promote more women to top leadership positions.

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4.5.6. Compliance with existing legislation

The strategic alignment of gender equity with business goals is essential, even if it is instituted purely for compliance (Bosch, 2011; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) and the Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995) dictate equal rights for all citizens and prohibit unfair gender-based discrimination. Likewise, organisations develop women to comply with the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998) and the Employment Equity Act (Oosthuizen et al., 2019; RSA, 1998; Timothy, 2013). Non-compliance penalties are proposed by the EEA, and, consequently, organisations need to commit to the application of this legislation (Warnich et al., 2015). Penalties are currently not hefty, resulting in the slow pace of the equity agenda in the provate sector.

Furthermore, the mandate of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (RSA, 2013) is to increase the ownership and management control of Blacks employees in organisations (Indians, Blacks and Coloureds). Compliance targets have been allocated to Black women's voting rights as board members and executive directors (under management and control elements). Ongoing amendments deal with persistent underrepresentation of people from targeted groups in different sectors (Department of Trade and Industry, 2019). For some women, ignorance about their legal and/or social rights has caused them not to make the necessary effort to tap into their allocated portions, hence depriving them of the associated benefits (Ensour et al., 2017) and resulting in their being left behind. Compliance with existing legal prescriptions is one of the reasons organisations strife to increase female representation in management positions (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). However, the urge to appear compliant with legislation

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has caused organisations to appoint technically and functionally incompetent women to senior positions (Fauzi et al., 2017; Grundling & Bosch, 2011). Although the compliance box gets 'ticked' in such cases, the poor performance of incompetent women can hinder further female appointments, jeopardise career advancement opportunities of other women and negatively impact organisational effectiveness (Birindelli et al., 2020). Ethical or legal pressures that are meant to increase gender diversity on boards may cause undesired effects on risk, particularly if female directors are not chosen based on their skills and merit. There, however, is often a presumption of the incompetence of women who are appointmented to senior positions (Padilla, 2020) that needs to be defined more specifically. In cases in which this perception is valid, it becomes vital for organisations to upskill women prior to their nomination to senior positions, rather than merely appointing them the sake of compliance because this practice is detrimental to both the organisation and the individual. Hence the need to follow due processes to appoint competent women (Dawuni & Masengu, 2019). Even though legislation on skills development and gender discrimination, representation and participation at senior level obliges organisations to appoint women in top positions, as has been previously mentioned, employers should take time to equip female candidates with the skills required for such roles. Nevertheless, legally constituted bodies such as the CCMA and Department of Labour along with other legal 'watchdogs', necessitate organisations complying with legislation governing gender equity within the workplace or facing sanctions.

4.6. Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter discussed various aspects relating to career development. Careers have multiple dimensions involving individuals, organisations and external dynamics that affect

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employees' careers. Career theories and models recognise the role of employees' personal responsibility and organisational involvement in the gradual development of sustainable careers within the work environment over time. While employees generally seek promotion, organisations often expect them to exhibit certain behaviours and attitudes to qualify for advancement. Career advancement also benefit companies; thus, they have valid business reasons for promoting women to top level positions. The next chapter unveils the challenges women face in their ascension to senior positions as well as documented best practices regarding this issue.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CHALLENGES IN WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION AND BEST PRACTICES

5.1. Introduction

The transition of women into senior positions has been a daunting task, leading to the promulgation of laws in this regard. As indicated in previous chapters, the purpose of The Employment Equity Act (EEA) (RSA, 1998) was to rectify racial and gender discrimination and to promote gender equality (Timothy, 2013) through employment equity, affirmative action (Oosthuizen et al., 2019) and organisational commitment to implement the law (Warnich, Carell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2015). The EEA works with the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE) (RSA, 2013) aimed at increasing ownership, management control and employment of Black Africans, with compliance targets allocated with regard to Black female board members and executive directors. Unfortunately, barriers to gender equality still exist despite existing legislation. There is an unacceptably skewed representation of women in the workplace across all sectors of the economy (Department of Trade and Industry, 2018), particularly in management positions (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022). Even as more women enter male-dominated fields (construction, mining and technical), fewer of them advance to upper hierarchies because of the unique challenges they face (Moalusi & Jones, 2019).

Although leadership and gender have been widely studied across different regions and settings over the last few decades, improvements have been slower than expected

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especially in Africa (World Economic Forum, 2020). There has been a rise in the number of women occupying senior positions in organisations worldwide (Ngunjiri & Madsen, 2015) but, when compared to men, women are still underrepresented at every level (McKinsey and Company, 2019) with a wider gap in leadership roles (Gipson et al., 2017; O'Neil et al., 2015; McKinsey and Company, 2019; Mythili, 2019). In general, there is low participation by women in business leadership (Kemp, Madsen & Davis, 2015), slow progress in women's career advancement globally (Burke & Richardsen, 2017) and fewer promotion and developmental opportunities for women (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Despite the fact that in the last five years companies are increasingly recognising the value of gender diversity and committing to it, more urgent efforts need to be invested to turn commitment into action (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This change can only be possible when organisations realise the benefits of employing women in top positions. This chapter discusses hindrances to women's progression into senior positions, as well as approaches that can be used to deal with women-specific challenges within the workplace.

5.2. Challenges women face in their career progression and approaches to deal with them

Scholars have sought to understand reasons behind the persistent gender disparities within the workplace. According to Pienaar, Naidoo and Malope (2018), women have not yet achieved equity in the labour market because employers have failed to adequately address existing inequalities within the workplace. This recognition is not always easy because organisational dynamics enabling gender inequalities are broad, and require interventions from different angles.

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Kumara (2018) categorises obstacles to women's career progression into individual, organisational and societal barriers. Chanland and Murphy (2017) categorise drawbacks to the ascension to senior positions of high potential women from the designated groups in lower-middle management (diverse leaders) as structural and perceptual in nature. There is further evidence that most women's struggle for career progress stalls because of organisational conditions and work-life patterns (McKie & Jyrkinen, 2017; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Wyatt & Sylvester, 2015). These views are in line with Woolnough and Redshaw (2016) and Sobczak (2018) who confirm that women's career trajectories are encumbered, resulting in fewer women advancing within organisations. Whether the nature of these challenges is personal, organisational, societal, structural or perceptual, their negative influence on women's careers needs to be addressed. Some of the challenges women face may be intertwined (Howson et al., 2018), and discussing them separately, as is the case below, should not be considered as needless repetition.

5.2.1. Cultural and societal norms

Gender roles are norms within a society that define acceptable behaviours for women and men (Alesina, Giuliano & Nunn, 2013). These norms act as barriers to women's career progression and are often based on tribal, community, religious, cultural and societal beliefs, as well as prejudices and stereotypes (Bosch, 2017; Łaba, 2011; Moalusi & Jones, 2019) that promote male supremacy and obstruct women's access to their rights (Choi & Park 2014; Hills, 2015). Gendered identities and masculinity are brought into organisations by employees who are members of communities with embedded prejudices and stereotypes regarding the meaning of being a woman or a man (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). As boys and girls develop, they are treated differently, thus, promoting self-images

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and behaviour that create gender labels (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Societal norms nurture the perception of maintaining women's submissiveness, hence invoking gender discrimination in the workplace (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). As per the social role theory, society also portrays women as the primary care-givers who are expected to focus on their families, while men assume breadwinning roles (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Higgins et al., 2010). This social expectation for girls to be 'good mothers and wives' result in women also occupying caring and supportive roles at work (Choi & Park 2014; Hills, 2015). Societal norms have led to situations in which women want to protect their social reputation and abide by existing norms, particularly in developing countries that still mirror the system of collectivism in which people are concerned about others' opinion about them (Komalasari et al., 2017). Hence societal norms have placed structural limitations on women and their careers (Bosch, 2017) because they strive to live up to cultural expectations.

The prevailing national culture is an important determinant of women's career advancement within the workplace (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Khapova et al., 2016). Also, gender outcomes as well as women's challenges are mostly related to organisational culture (McKinsey & Company, 2019; Nguyen, 2013; Zulu, 2013). This result matches findings by Chanland and Murphy (2017) who state that organisational practices can facilitate (or hinder) the propelling of diverse leaders to top positions. In the same vein, organisational culture impacts female executives' career advancement and their retention (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Sherman, 2005). Some organisational cultures exclude women from opportunities, resources and power (Choi & Park 2014; Hills, 2015). Similarly, the manner in which jobs are structured, as well as work details, organisational procedures,

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processes and structures affect women differently (often adversely) from men (Botha & Cronjé, 2015a, 2015b). These job specifics frequently are powered by conscious or unconscious practices embedded within the organisational culture that favour men. It is a fact that archaic and inflexible company policies regarding part-time, flexi-time, job-sharing and telecommuting issues hinder women's advancement (Naudé, 2017; Stacho et al., 2019).

There is further evidence that men in male dominated organisations with masculine cultures do not appreciate gender diversity so they impose suppressing strategies that disadvantage women and maintain masculine control and domination (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). When male domination happens repeatedly, it suggests that the culture is not gender-friendly and that the organisation does not value its women employees. Although some men acknowledge the existence of limitations to women's career advancement (McKinsey & Company 2019), they neither interrogate these limitations nor attempt to change them, hence, women either accept the *status quo* (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018) or leave their employment, seeking more flexible jobs (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Women do not need to make such hard choices.

A logical starting point to address gendered norms would be at the national level by offering targeted support to women entering male-dominated sectors, through the provision of incentives for employers who provide and/or widen opportunities for women (Wright, 2018). Although some organisations may not be in the position to influence the overall societal culture, they are not obliged to accept it. Firms should design supportive organisational cultures that empower women employees. Such cultures need to be carefully crafted, communicated and implemented by top leadership. This process will

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require open communication, equal workplace structures and efforts to understand the context of a woman's lifestyle (Bosch, 2017), thereby creating an environment in which women can freely voice their opinions and female leaders can pursue career goals (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). The ideal organisational culture is one that supports female leadership, successfully promotes women's advancement (Hills, 2015), encourages gender representation and deals with problems that affect women (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Companies can also promote a culture of gender equality by instituting the right policies and practices that shape behaviour, empower employees to identify and report day-to-day discrimination and hold gender-offenders accountable (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This practice needs to be cascaded to all levels of the organisation. Firms also need to identify women's unique needs, provide better working conditions for women, respect women's rights, recognise their performance, help them build empowering relationships and provide them with developmental and leadership opportunities (Coetzee, 2017). It is the organisation's responsibility to address cultural and societal prejudices that hinder women's progress by developing a gender-friendly organisational culture.

5.2.2. Organisational support

The lack of organisational support structures obstructs women's career advancement (Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Łaba, 2011; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Such support involves treating women employees fairly, prioritising their career development, building senior-level female role models, sustaining women through their professional challenges and involving them in the management of the organisation (Kurniawati & Sari, 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Walsh et al., 2016),

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Support is vital to maximise high potential women or performing talents who have the required competencies, intelligence, knowledge, experience, skills and abilities necessary for them to be developed and groomed for growth opportunities (Festing & Schafer, 2014; Ulrich, 2008). Such organisational support informs women that their work is valued, hence increasing their sense of belonging and dedication to corporate goals (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) together with their women's overall wellbeing (Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019). Managers who possess active listening skills and allocate time to engage with employees on a personal level are able to strengthen relationships in the workplace and facilitate employees' needs-based growth (Van der Walt, 2018). When such beneficial interaction does not happen, women tend to leave (Abbott, 2012).

When firms are not concerned about women's long-term career aspirations, women tend to seek better opportunities outside the organisation (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). In addition, the lack of supportive management throughout their career lifecycles can increase the likelihood of female professionals and managers engaging in unhealthy coping habits (Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019). McKinsey and Company (2019) deplore the fact that firms have more appropriate policies and practices at senior levels than at lower levels, thus, women in junior positions rarely benefit from support strategies that enable their progression to more senior roles. Unless organisations understand the kind of support women need at each level of their career, they may not be able to adequately assist them.

Assisting women begins with a supportive culture reflected through HR practices (Mathur-Helm, 2018). Sound HR practices can be used to recognise employees' contributions, and to foster sound long-term employee-employer relationships (Dzansi et al., 2016). Moreover, organisations need reward systems to encourage women who excel (Coetzee,

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2017) and/or perform additional responsibilities (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Firms also need to implement mentorship support for women, provide feedback and engage in open discussions about their available career options (Abbott, 2012). Organisations can retain women employees through proactive long-term career development opportunities that provide a pathway to top positions, such as designing support infrastructures to sustain professionals in their mid-careers and offering women work autonomy (Walsh et al., 2016). Recognising that perceived organisational support in the form of skills development is a key determinant in employees' 'stay-exit' decisions, managers should identify employees' potential and provide room for their development (Stacho et al., 2019) that will result in internal or external promotion (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). The onus remains on the company to ensure that managers have the right tools, are well trained to fully support their subordinates and have reward systems in place for managers who support their juniors (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Finally, organisations need to encourage 'woman-to-woman' support, especially from women who understand industry-specific gender challenges (Wright, 2018). All the above support tactics can positively influence women's stay-exit decisions.

5.2.3. Patriarchy and gender power dynamics

The term patriarchy refers to male-dominated power structures that insubordinates women (Chowdhury, 2015). It creates the social norms that put men in control while keeping women passive (Ranjan, 2019) and continue to obstruct women's participation in the labour market (ILO, 2018b). Patriarchy is one of the key hindrances to women's promotion into leadership positions (Islam et al., 2018). Naudé (2017) examines the persistent strength of patriarchal thinking in today's workplace and deplores the ambiguity

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in legislation, lack of communication on gender issues, unethical management and archaic HR policies and practices. Even in the South African work milieu in which discrimination against women is prohibited by law, males are still in control in upper hierarchical positions and overlook women for promotion, thereby lowering women's morale (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). The masculine control, power and bullying tactics used by men often scare women from leadership roles (Islam et al., 2018). Strategies to subject women are often utilised by individuals or groups who consciously resist the advancement of women.

There exist 'old boys' clubs, comprising powerful circles of men whose relationships and associations advance them within the organisation (Segal, 2012). Old-boys' networks still exist (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Zulu, 2013) and women are usually excluded from these clubs, not because they lack leadership skills, but because they lack the required social affiliation (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). Chetty and colleagues argue that adherence to traditions of old boys' clubs ensures men maintain control within the organisation. People chosen for membership are usually already in positions of power, thus, women are less likely to form part of such a 'club' because they often occupy lower positions. While it is difficult for women to penetrate these circles, they are indirectly penalised for not belonging to them. Male dominated organisations are typified by pervasive authoritative masculinity expressed through the marginalisation of women from upper hierarchies (Moalusi & Jones, 2019), thus, perpetuating gender inequality at all decision-making levels.

People often unconsciously ascribe management roles to the male gender (Nkomo, 2012; Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Women's authority is not easily accepted by men (Khalid et

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al., 2017) because the rejection of females' leadership is an inherited masculine tradition. Many men want to be the leader and refuse to consider a female colleague as an equal peer but instead treats her as he would his mother, sister or wife (Ensour et al., 2017). Łaba (2011) reveals that many male managers, especially those from Black African cultural backgrounds, view women as inferior beings and present negative attitudes towards the hierarchical advancement of women at work. This finding is in tandem with those of Moalusi and Jones (2019), namely that prejudice appears to be stronger amongst some social groups, alluding to the fact that some male subordinates resist taking orders from a woman 'boss'. Generally, men at the top of organisations are a reflection of power while men at lower levels of the organisation symbolise self-respect (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). This results in men often disregarding women's leadership. Even though much has changed during the past thirty years with regard to gender parity at work in South Africa, it is still difficult for men to accept women's leadership.

To deal with patriarchy and gender power dynamics, organisations should implement diversity and equity measures at all levels (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). As suggested by the EEA, these actions could include setting performance targets for both males and females and preparing women to take senior roles (RSA, 1998). Although initiatives to eliminate the vicious circles that hinder women's career development may be resisted by 'power-mongers', organisational commitment to break gender patriarchy circles is imperative.

5.2.4. Organisational diversity

Diversity in the South African workplace is complex, with increased conflicts and reduced workplace trust that are difficult to manage (Hills, 2015). During the apartheid era, the

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fight against racial discrimination overshadowed other discriminatory tendencies and women of all races could not unite to combat gender discrimination (Łaba, 2011). Also, consequences of apartheid such as the dire skill shortage in South Africa and its effect on certain groups (Naong, 2016) has imposed the diversity agenda in the workplace.

McKinsey and Company (2019) deplore the lack of gender diversity at all organisational levels, and notice that many women in senior positions and women in technical roles are usually the only women in the room, resulting in their being-micro aggressed (i.e., undermined, ignored or talked over). Their research findings also reveal that equity is hampered when diligence is been applied during junior and mid-tier appointments but not at top management level. Hence, making it difficult for gender quotas to be reached at top management levels. Also, management often perceives equity quotas as compliance issues that give little attention to skills (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). This perception impedes management's ability to manage diversity and drive gender equality constructively and professionally.

A few suggestions have been made to achieve organisational gender diversity. McKinsey and Company (2019) recommend that organisations should set and monitor yearly diversity targets, identify diversity drivers and assign champions for each driver, conduct training on unconscious bias, institutionalise group mentorship programmes, initiate diversity scorecards for managers, include more women in teams and initiate other programmes that can make the workplace more diverse. Their findings coincide with previous research such as that of De Braine (2011) who confirms the necessity to roll out company-wide diversity training programmes. Wright (2018) also agrees that to deal with diversity issues within the workplace, organisations should set targets for workforce

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diversity (i.e., women, Blacks, minority groups or disabled staff), and recruit more widely to meet these targets. Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) further emphasize the importance of appointing diversity champions to spearhead the innovative initiatives required to meet gender equity targets. They state that diversity champions should be transparent, have clear principles, be able to carry out investigations, create environments for the development of skills, involve teams, and ensure adherence to relevant labour legislation. Mathur-Helm (2018) states that firms need to have the appropriate policies in place to ensure that internal procedures and strategies confront all forms of discrimination and safeguard women against stereotypes, prejudice and bias. To address diversity issues, Preeya (2014) further recommends transformation at senior leadership level, communication, recruitment, development and promotion. Ames et al. (2019) add that, organisational leaders need to proactively encourage diverse high-performing candidates with the necessary qualifications to apply for senior positions. Overall, firms should conduct due diligence to identify areas of diversity that need improvement at different organisational levels and address them (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). The South African government also needs to amend the EEA Act to provide sectorial targets (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). The process of addressing diversity within the workplace should start with conducting diversity audits, setting diversity goals and then proceeding with appropriate measures to deal with issues that hamper the organisation from of such goals.

5.2.5. Promotion malpractices

Most organisations do not have promotion guidelines; hence women are uncertain of the reasons that encumber their career progression, neither are they aware of what actions

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they need to take to advance to top level positions (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Even women with career plans often feel confused and frustrated about their progression (Howson et al., 2018). This finding confirms that promotion processes within organisations are not always transparent (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) and development does not always guarantee promotion (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). These facts imply that opportunities for growth, self-development and competencies are often not linked to promotion. Obfuscated promotion guidelines are problematic because they make it difficult for women to align their career trajectories to their next level of seniority (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). If managers are vague about promotion requirements it often is a sign that the employee may not be promoted (Vasel, 2019). Also, if employees do not have clear information about promotion requirements, they can become dissatisfied and demotivated and, thus, not continue to develop their skills (Setiawan & Julaeha, 2020). The lack of clarity about requirements to advancement places women in positions in which their perception of the knowledge, skills and behaviour vital for promotion may be different from that of the organisation. Oosthuizen et al. (2019) confirm a mismatch between what employees perceive as critical components for promotion and what the organisation's decision-makers think. When examining candidates for promotion, managers usually focus on aspects such as achieving goals, good leadership and strong people management skills while some employees may assume their promotion requires the negotiation of internal politics and 'being liked' (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This misunderstanding can create further confusion.

Moreover, some promotion criteria are subjective, creating room for malpractices. These unaligned policies provide opportunities for 'old-boys networks (described earlier in this

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study) to influence promotion decisions (Ensour et al., 2017). Sometimes positions are not even advertised for everyone to apply (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018) while at other times, before the job is posted there are already preferred candidates short-listed for the position, thus, counteracting all transparency protocols (Rohman et al., 2018). Promotion malpractices hinder women's career advancement because they exhibit unfair practices and demotivate women from seeking advancement (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). These malpractices also create distrust in the promotion system and discourage interested and qualified prospective applicants from applying for advertised positions (Rohman et al., 2018).

However, promotion malpractices often go unnoticed because they are implemented by those in positions of power. Men mostly comprise the majority of decision makers within organisations (Zenger & Folkman, 2019) and most of the decisions they make seem to favour male employees. Corporate politics that are employed to gain power and status have influenced promotion decisions in the past (Gerber & Schlechter, 2019). Such biased workplace politics obstruct women's professional grooming and career development (Khalid et al., 2017). Although relationship-building is vital for both men and women's career advancement, some women may feel uncomfortable about engaging with corporate politics in their promotion processes and prefer to allow their work to speak for itself (Ames et al., 2019). This practice often results in women putting in extra hours and working harder to convince decision makers of their suitability for top positions (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). However, these efforts often prove futile because their advancement journey remains stunted.

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Women often are asked to undertake tasks that will not lead to promotion or career advancement (Babcock, Recalde & Vesterlund, 2018). These tasks, also termed 'donkey-work, 'housework' or 'drudge work', are mostly administrative, and do not expose women to external networks and relevant career opportunities (Angervall & Beach 2018; Heijstra et al., 2017; Howson et al., 2018). Non-promotional tasks perpetuate gender inequalities in top positions because they ease the work of those in top management positions (mainly men) without adding much value to the careers of those (mainly women) performing them.

McKinsey and Company (2019) argue that the biggest obstacle to women's advancement in organisations is not the 'glass ceiling' but the fact that there are insufficient women in the talent pipeline because the majority of women remain in lower positions and only a few advance to management positions from which they can be considered for appointments in senior management or executive roles (a situation referred to as the 'broken rung'). By failing to consider women for the more senior positions they deserve, firms dampen women's morale, hurt their career confidence, make them reluctant to contest for future promotion opportunities and give them the impression that the organisation does not value women (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). While the above comments indicate that, in general, organisational structural inequalities discourage women from aspiring for advancement, it is a fact that not all female employees want greater responsibilities (Heathfield, 2019). Some women are not willing or able to meet the demands that promotion would incur, while others feel confined to their present positions due to heavy family responsibilities and personal circumstances (Howson et al., 2018).

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One way of addressing promotion malpractices is to invest time in upskilling internal candidates for promotion rather than looking outside for suitable candidates (Heathfield, 2019). Although external candidates bring novel knowledge and experience, internal employees need to feel that there are possibilities for internal growth. Besides offering women opportunities for growth, employers should encourage qualified candidates to apply for advertised senior positions, give them feedback and also probe qualified employees who did not apply to understand their reasons for so doing (Rohman et al., 2018). Firms also need to offer women leadership development opportunities with clear career paths that continually keep them active and motivated (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Walsh et al., 2016) the same way as they do for men (Stewart, 2020). Companies also need to make provision for alternative career paths for workers who deserve the recognition and benefits of promotion but do not want to manage other employees' work (Heathfield, 2019). In addition, management could consider equitably distributing or rotating non-promotable tasks among workers (Babcock et al., 2018) to avoid burdening women's careers with such routine tasks. In summary, organisations should review their hiring and promotion approaches to eliminate all forms of unconscious bias and malpractices (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Fairness is vital to elicit positive employee behaviour and, thus, should be standard practice in all internal processes, including promotion, talent management and hiring strategies (Dzansi et al., 2016; McKinsey & Company, 2019).

5.2.6. Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are traits applied to both women and men (Tharenou, 2013). These attributes often include the employee's gender status that bases people's competences

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and abilities on their gender, usually in favour of men (Thébaud, 2015). Gender-based stereotyping shapes the way female employees are treated (Lips, 2013) and increases gender bias, particularly in male-dominated occupations (Koch et al., 2015). Bosch (2017) argues that gender stereotypes segregate people based upon aspects of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' that are entrenched from youth and later applied in the workplace to limit women's career progression. Women at work are expected to exhibit nurturing qualities such as kindness, warmth, gentleness, timidity, non-competitiveness and concern for others while men are expected to display leadership qualities such as self-direction, assertiveness, aggressiveness, competitiveness and confidence (Koch, D'Mello & Sackett, 2015; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). In addition, women are mostly viewed as sensitive, indecisive and dependant (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) while men are perceived as tough, enduring and committed (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015). Lawson et al. (2022) reveal that the language or terminologies used to describe men and women have consequences for stereotypes and career outcomes. Most male stereotypical characteristics are associated with leadership behaviours, however, women who exhibit these characteristics and act in a similar manner to successful men are usually punished economically and professionally (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Islam et al., 2018) and socially (Higgins et al., 2010; Sheridan, 1992). The male perception of an ambitious and talented women is ambivalent, usually comprising a combination of attraction, admiration, anxiety, hostility, paternalism, competition, pride, resentment and confusion (Hills, 2015). This perception makes it difficult for women to position themselves in a manner that is acceptable to society.

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Stereotypical masculine traits portray a man as the heroic and ideal worker who lives for the job, values work above everything else and does not let non-work imperatives obstruct his job performance (Acker, 2012; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Nemoto, 2013). Such ideologies make women, who have many family responsibilities, appear as less ideal candidates for promotion, thus hampering their career advancement (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Negative masculine stereotypes are in evidence if female workers are perceived as mothers and caretakers and, thus, not considered as ideal workers (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Nemoto, 2013) – a practice that hinders women's career advancement (Khalid et al., 2017). Even when women progress in the workplace, often credit is not given to their efforts, professional skills and education but rather to their sensuality (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018), and the need to fill employment equity quotas (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Thus, revealing distrust in women's professional capabilities and hindering their progression into senior roles (Komalasari et al., 2017). Firms need to eradicate gender stereotypes that advantage men in several ways and limit women's chances of advancement within the workplace.

Although gender stereotypes have steadily declined since the 1990 financial crisis, as a result of which women were required to work to help meet family budgets, companies still consider hiring a woman a riskier practice than appointing a man, thus disadvantaging women (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). As long as superiority is assigned to masculinity over femininity, gender stereotypes will be reinforced (O'Connor et al., 2015). Stereotypes die slowly and is one of the main reasons why behaviours in many companies are still rooted in gender stereotypes that disadvantage women (Lawson et al. 2022; Zenger & Folkman, 2019). To address workplace gender stereotypes, organisations should face the presence

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of gender stereotypes and refuse to submit to their debilitating practices and actively militate towards the advancement of women in the workplace (Mythili, 2019). Overall, companies need to recognise women's professional competences (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016), institutionalise interventions that address all stereotypical practices and traditional gender roles (De Braine, 2011) by educating managers regarding the pitfalls of misguided stereotyping (Bosch, 2016; Karkowsky & Morris 2016) and appointing women to senior management positions (Lawson et al., 2022). By so doing, firms can forge their way towards a stereotype-free organisation.

5.2.7. Gender bias

Workplace gender bias tendencies can emanate from religious beliefs, social constructs and social norms (Bosch, 2017; ILO, 2018b). They also can arise from expectations, organisational cultures and practices that, unintentionally, favour men over women, resulting in invisible barriers that block women's career progress (Ellemers, 2014). Gender bias also happens as a result of gender-based cultural beliefs, workplace practices and interactional patterns as well as organisational structures that advantage men over women (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). Regardless of its origin, the effects of gender bias also manifests when women are expected to emulate masculinity (Nemoto, 2013). To advance in their careers some women have to resort to being gender-biased and make men the norm by valorising and emulating masculine traits, such as aggressiveness and competitiveness (Moalusi & Jones, 2019) because they are pressured to conform to masculine standards (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

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Bias creates societal expectations about women's employment in certain professions (Schwanke, 2013), and that fact that women's domain is the home and men's domain is the workplace (Acker, 2012). This perception mirrors a structural separation and perpetuates embedded notions of femininity and masculinity that disadvantage women. Gender bias usually starts from the hiring process (Hills, 2015) and gradually progresses into promotional decisions (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). OECD (2016) deplores the existence of the "sticky floor" phenomenon that confines women to few career advancement prospects. The 'sticky floor' anchors on discriminatory hiring practices that concentrate women in lower positions (Baert, De Pauw & Deschacht, 2016). Women experience bias in terms of their skills and competence (Thébaud, 2015) because they are often perceived as less able and slower in completing tasks than men, thus, the male quota for top positions is are higher than for women (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). Gender bias is grounded also on false assumptions about women's aspirations, capabilities and/or interests and sets higher standards for women (Ames et al., 2019), especially when assessing them for promotion (Patel, 2013). McKinsey and Company (2019) affirm that women daily face micro aggressions, rooted in bias, that increase the probability of their leaving the organisation. Micro aggressions often include attitudes that challenge women's expertise, querying their competence; mistakenly assuming they hold a junior position, making disrespectful and demeaning remarks or overlooking them in terms of promotion. Women's contributions in management meetings are often unacknowledged, while the same contributions made by men are considered viable (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Gender bias debases women and their potential within the workplace.

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Gender bias is a historically widespread phenomenon (Bilimoria and Xiangfen, 2011) yet many employees hardly recognise biased behaviour or complain when they become its victims (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This fact either could be because they see nothing wrong with such behaviour and, thus, do not deem it necessary to oppose or that previous attempts to deal with gender bias have been futile. Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) confirm that some female leaders are so used to gender bias that they scarcely notice related problems, implying that gender biased behaviours have become a norm. Ely, Ibarra & Kolb (2011) argue that the form of gender bias has now become second generation gender bias – invisible yet powerful barriers that obstruct the advancement of women throughout society. This newer form of prejudice is one of the structural challenges women and minority groups encounter in their ascension to leadership positions (Chanland & Murphy, 2017). Second generation gender bias comprises practices that appear neutral and natural but in reality, are discriminatory towards women because they reflect the values of their male instigators (Trefault et al., 2011) who often hold most of the leadership and decision-making positions (Islam et al., 2018) within leading organisations, such as government and industry. Nevertheless, such gender bias needs to be confronted and eliminated to allow women to freely access top positions.

Gender bias can be eradicated through the implementation of wider in-depth and systematic changes in structures, workplace processes and practices, and mental models that promulgate gender equity at work (Bilimoria & Xiangfen, 2011). Managers need to contest biased behaviours so that employees can perceive a sense of respect, safety and inclusion towards all staff (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Also, organisations should educate their staff regarding gender bias and investigate its practice within the workplace

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(Carter, 2011) and deal with it accordingly. Organisations should also favour diversity when hiring and promoting staff (McKinsey & Company, 2019). For key roles, companies need to implement structured assessments that focus on the expertise, capabilities and leadership skills required to execute the role (Ames et al., 2019) rather than subjective assessments that are prone to bias. When dealing with grey areas, ethical practices and innovative HR practices should become prominent (Naudé, 2017). The removal of gender biasedness needs to be spearheaded from the top of the organisation through the introduction of training courses that create an awareness of gender bias and how to prevent it, encouraging candid conversations around this topic and putting measures in place to address existing bias.

5.2.8. The glass ceiling

The ‘glass ceiling’ is an invisible, unofficial, attitudinal and systemic barrier that prevents women from ascending to senior leadership (Aeran, 2014; Hills, 2015; Kumara, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2019). Lewis and Beauregard (2018) confirm that most women are only promoted to mid-level leadership after which stage, they encounter the “glass ceiling”. This experience is true for women in core positions (Moalusi & Jones, 2019), as well as female middle and junior leaders (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Sadly, regardless of their potential and positive contributions towards organisational goals it is difficult for women to ‘crack’ the glass ceiling (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

The identified causes of the glass ceiling effect are numerous: organisational and supervisory obstacles (Kumar & Lenka, 2016), career breaks, career plateau, work allocation, performance criteria (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012) and social roles expectations

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(Birgit, 2007; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Ames et al. (2019) argue that within the workplace, higher standards are set for women than for men while McKinsey and Company (2019) confirm that women are often judged by different standards than men. This phenomenon is emphasized further by Rath, Mohanty and Pradhan (2019) who introduced what they called the 'glass cliff' and 'glass escalator'. The glass cliff is the situation in which women find themselves when they are placed in extremely challenging positions that make them prone to failure, while glass escalator refers to situations when men are placed in favourable environments that enhance their performance. These kinds of work dynamics advantage men and disadvantage women.

Although there seem to be improvements in glass ceiling perceptions in South Africa (Haffajee, 2015), the phenomenon still persists (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). To break the glass ceiling, organisations need to review and change their hiring and promotion procedures to eliminate all forms of bias (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Companies also need to set gender targets for recruitment and promotions at different hierarchical levels and ensure that these targets are met within a certain period. Audits and periodic assessments will allow firms to intentionally deal with obstacles that may prevent women from progressing to the top management levels. This process may require upskilling women to meet promotional requirements (Heathfield, 2019), encouraging qualified women to apply for senior positions (Rohman et al., 2018), having fair internal processes (McKinsey & Company, 2019) and giving women leadership opportunities that will help them develop relevant skills for progress (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Stewart, 2020). These tactics will progressively help to break the lass ceiling and propel more women into positions of power.

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5.2.9. Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the ratio of a woman's wage to that of a man in the same position (World Economic Forum, 2020). Globally women earn approximately 50 US cents for every US dollar earned by men, and in South Africa women earn 60 SA cents for every rand earned by their male counterparts (PWC, 2018a). South Africa ranks 121st out of 153 states surveyed globally and has a score of 0.537 over 1 for gender wage equality for similar work (World Economic Forum, 2020). Boninelli (2015) also attests that a pay gap exists in the nation and women performing the same job/role as men are paid lower salaries (Afande, 2015; Bosch, 2011; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). Pay disparity usually begins at the career entry point (Carter & Silva, 2010; Ensour et al., 2017) making it difficult for women to achieve equal pay as they progress. The gender pay gap is one of the most obvious gender inequalities in the workplace (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018), has negative psychological effects on women (Auspurg, Hinz, & Sauer, 2017; Tharenou, 2013) and demotivates women who covet leadership positions (Bosch, 2015). It is, therefore, important to understand pay disparity.

The creation of an equal pay scale is a complex and subjective exercise that considers a variety of elements, including: education, length of service, performance, job location, role, career history, special skills, job stability, wage negotiations abilities, collective bargaining, talent pipelines emerging from schools as well as other factors necessary to determine equivalent pay for equal work (Addabbo, Favaro & Margrini, 2012; Bosch, 2015). The equal pay philosophy considers basic pay, total pay (basic pay plus benefits) and total package (basic pay plus benefits plus incentives) in comparison with internal organisational statistics and external market data (Boninelli, 2015). However, Pienaar,

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Naidoo & Malope (2018) lament that the traditional job evaluation methods used to determine pay are designed based of male-dominated jobs, and do not support gender pay equity that makes it difficult to achieve gender pay equity.

Nevertheless, equal gender pay has many benefits. In South Africa, the estimated economic benefits of equal gender pay and female representation in the labour market is about 10%, with "economic growth spin-offs of additional 3.2% in GDP growth and a 6.5% reduction in the number of unemployed job seekers" (PWCa, 2018, p. 3). Gender pay determines the quality of life and access to future opportunities (Bosch 2015). It also increases productivity, economic status, financial independence while, at the same time, it reduces gender stereotypes, poverty and child labour (Bussin & Nienaber, 2015). Disparities between salary and benefits between employees of similar ranks invoke employees' displeasure with the organisation's HRM practices (Dzansi et al., 2016). It, therefore, is advantageous for organisations to seek pay parity.

The causes of the gender pay gap are uncertain. Even though women with higher educational achievements tend to experience gender pay disparities less often than their peers with lower educational achievements, their pay is still lower than that of men fulfilling a similar position (Addabbo et al., 2012; Mani, 2013). This fact supports the view that equal levels of education do not always guarantee equal pay levels for both genders (Leuze & Strauß, 2016). Meaning that acquiring more educational qualifications may not always eliminate the gender pay gap for women. Likewise, promotion, that is usually associated with increased remuneration, is often based on relationships rather than knowledge (Carter & Silva, 2010; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). In addition to the job requirements being met, women need to engage in the appropriate relationships to move

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forward and, consequently, enjoy a pay increase. The attainment of this requirement may not be that easy because building relationships with the men who mostly occupy positions of power (Islam et al., 2018) can be difficult since they may have different interpretations of such relationships, such as sexual connotations (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Weak bargaining power (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018) is also identified as one of the causes of gender pay disparity. McKinsey and Company (2019) dispute the fact that women have been negotiating for equivalent salary rates to men, while Mathur-Helm (2018) reveals that women are often reluctant to negotiate for a raise, due to the lack of confidence in their own productivity within the workplace. Women's failure to adequately negotiate their salary results in qualified women earning lower salaries than men fulfilling the same position. Another possible reason for pay disparity is occupational segregation (Stockdale & Nadler, 2013). Female-dominated interactive occupations such as human resources, public relations, marketing, finance, communications and quality assurance are attributed lesser value (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Schwanke, 2013; Wirth- Dominicé, 2015) and, thus, are awarded lower pay than male-dominated occupations (Leuze & Strauß, 2016). This fact implies that women in female-dominated professions will be subjected to lower pay. Low level jobs that have lower pay and are dominated by women often have limited improvement prospects (ILO, 2022), a fact that is detrimental to women's careers. Moreover, pregnancy and child rearing responsibilities broaden gender pay gaps (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). When women take time off work to start and care for their families, they lose the pay increases that accompany tenure and years of work experience. By the time they return to work, men have benefited from pay rises that will result in their experiencing an even greater gender

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wage gap. Furthermore, women have historically been perceived as secondary family income earners and tend to rely mostly on their male 'breadwinner' for financial security (Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Schwartz, 1989). This view confers work superiority upon men and caregiver inferiority upon women – this implying they have lesser compensation needs than men. Also, men are often advantaged over women during recruitment processes because a female is expected to marry and find somebody to take care of her financial needs (Ensour et al., 2017). However, the reason behind such discriminations is no longer valid. Many women nowadays are single parents (Lits & Rubin, 2014; Rapuano, 2020) and have to play the dual roles of breadwinner and primary care giver. Irrespective of whether the choice to take on these duties is voluntary or involuntary, the assumption that women have limited responsibilities and lower financial needs is outdated. Moreover, skills development requires money. Thus, the fact that women receive lower pay than men (Bosch 2011; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; ILO, 2022) limits the availability of finances for women to acquire the relevant skills and qualifications needed for their career progression (Hills, 2015). When women are not optimistic about increased pay and opportunities that may accrue from their skills development, they may feel reluctant to invest in their careers. Chetty and Naidoo (2017) and Schwartz (1989) reveal that some women may fail to perceive the benefit of pursuing skills development and progression, and may remain content with what they earn, especially if they receive financial support from a male breadwinner. In addition, men are considered to have greater financial growth prospects than women, causing young couples to lay more importance on the man's career advancement over the woman's (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018), thus, perpetuating gender pay disparity. Again,

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new technologies are a major reason for increase in income inequalities (Rapuano, 2020) because they change the labour market landscape by devaluating (or revaluating) skills, and creating new skills and jobs (Keeley, 2015). Unless organisations understand the rapid technology-driven change of the 4IR they may not be able to leverage on opportunities to boost women's potential (Barclay, 2018). Equipping women with the required digital and managerial skills (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021) could contribute towards keeping their pay in line with that of their male counterparts. Budworth and Mann (2010) and Chetty and Naidoo (2017) ascribe the causes of gender disparity to gender stereotypes, glass ceilings and gender bias, that have resulted in women occupying lower positions with lower pay, even though they have the same abilities as men.

Bosch (2017) and Tong (2009) confirm that women are as intellectually capable, talented, and diligent as men while Naudé (2017) affirms that women are equally committed to their work and have the same career aspirations as men. If women are as professionally fit as men, then pay disparity between them could purely be gender-based. However, justifications for gender pay differences are usually wide and complicated to contest due to the subjective nature of proof (Pienaar, 2015). The fact that pay is determined by an array of elements, makes it difficult to gather evidence that the existing pay disparity is based on gender factors entirely or on other criteria. Organisations, therefore, should not refute the existence of gender pay disparities. As Lips (2013) states, ignorance about gender pay disparity feeds individually-held beliefs that negate its impact on women's careers. It, therefore, is vital to develop an awareness of gender pay gaps, understand their impact on women's careers and seek to address them.

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To solve gender pay disparities, employers need to conduct companywide job evaluations and assess the value of male-dominated and female-dominated jobs/tasks, in order to determine whether jobs have been rightly valued and classified (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). This process should be void of gender stereotypes and prejudice, and mainly consider qualifications, responsibilities, effort and work conditions. Furthermore, new technologies should be used to increase the influx of women into previously male-dominated sectors, to upskill women and employ them in positions in which they will earn equal pay to their male colleagues (Barclay, 2018). It should be remembered that salaries are often considered a confidential issue and women may not always know what their male colleagues earn. Therefore, it is the responsibility of HR managers to ensure gender pay equity (Mathur-Helm, 2018) through wage transparency (ILO, 2022). This goal can be achieved through communication, helping women to develop competencies necessary for equitable pay, and adhering to skill requirements for each occupational level.

5.2.10. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment refers to perceived unwelcome verbal or non-verbal sexual advances (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Such advances make women uncomfortable at work, especially when they have to work with the person who commits the sexual advances. Women in leadership positions and women in technical roles are more likely to experience sexual harassment in the form of sexist jokes, being touched in sexually inappropriate ways and unwanted persistent attempts to form intimate relationships (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Although sexist jokes are often taken for humour, they reinforce negative gender perceptions and present women as inferior beings, yet such behaviour is sometimes difficult to challenge (Sang & Powell, 2012). Women are often unsure that

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reporting sexual harassment will result in effective investigations and sanctions (McKinsey & Company, 2019) because even when reported, sexual harassment often is insufficiently addressed (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015) and sometimes victims are intimidated (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). While some victims remain silent for fear of being discredited and victimised, others may take the risk of reporting incidents of sexual harassment, hence jeopardising their careers, especially if the perpetrator is their senior or manager.

Sexual harassment places pressure on women's professional credibility and their career advancement opportunities (Williams, Muller & Kilanski, 2012). When sexual harassment happens against women, it becomes difficult to assess whether their career advancement is a reward for their professional performance or is awarded as a result of, or in anticipation of, sexual favours. Jáuregui and Olivos (2018) and Wang and Shirmohammadi (2016) reveal that women's progress is often attributed to their sensuality rather than their professional expertise. As women move up the organisational ladder, they often receive criticism regarding their social interactions with the opposite sex (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Suspicions about the nature of female-male relationships cloud perceptions about women's professional abilities. From the findings provided by various reviewed research studies, few measures have proven to combat this vice within the workplace.

Du Toit (2012) postulates that workplace sexual harassment can be countered by equivalently valuating each sex. Pienaar, Naidoo and Malope (2018) suggest that employers should strengthen sexual harassment policies and design interventions to identify and address them. Firms should also raise awareness about sexual harassment

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behaviour, educate employees about their rights and be more receptive and accessible to related complaints. Firms also have to foster change in men's attitudes towards women, make men aware of gender issues, provide training aimed at eliminating sexual harassment, review gender policies and stand firm against the marginalisation of women within the workplace. Besides enumerated interventions, it is important for employers to identify different forms of sexual harassment and deal with root causes to avoid reoccurrence. When companies openly and strongly stand against sexual harassment, women employees in particular perceive their workplace to be an ethical and safe environment (McKinsey & Company, 2019).

5.2.11. Mentorship

Mentorship refers to the relationship between a mentor and a mentee in which the mentor provides professional guidance – the purpose is to help mentees to acquire professional and interpersonal skills relevant for their career progress, aid mentees to familiarise themselves with organisational matters, and guide mentees on how to conduct their work (Khalid et al., 2017). Mentorship is particularly vital for the development of equity employees (Oosthuizen et al., 2019) and provides women with the help required for their professional development within the company.

Although mentorship plays a vital role in women's career advancement, women find it hard to secure mentors (Kilian, Hukai & McCarty, 2005; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). In male-dominated labour market structures, the minority of women holding managerial positions struggle to locate suitable mentors for consultation and support (Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019). Moreover, with a majority of organisational mentors being males, most

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women have their immediate male supervisors as their main career mentors (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016), many of whom neither understand their challenges, nor have the power to influence decisions regarding their promotion. Likewise, during mentorship, men are often groomed for management (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018) while women are rarely groomed for leadership positions (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). This disparity implies that despite the critical role mentors play in women's career progression, securing the right mentor for their career elevation is often a challenge. Hence firms should take greater care to assist women in this regard.

To facilitate the career advancement of junior women into senior positions, organisations should provide them with extra support in the form of career pathing and planning as well as career, psychological and health counselling (Afande, 2015). Firms should also encourage senior executives to support, groom and mentor women and less experienced employees into leadership roles through organisational mentorship programmes (Ames et al., 2019; Gipson et al., 2017; Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). Assigning mentors to junior women, as well as conducting periodic assessments and reviews, could positively impact women's careers. Although mentors help to develop women's work abilities, they also need to use their influence with other top executives to actively advocate for their mentees' promotion through sponsorship programmes (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Women need both mentors for their professional development and sponsors to facilitate their ascension to top level positions.

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5.2.12. Sponsorship

Sponsors are influential senior executives who have the power to present their protégés to other executives for career advancement, ensure that they are considered for challenging projects and opportunities, influence their promotion and protect them from damaging their reputation (Chanland & Murphy, 2017). Even though the significance of finding a sponsor is critical for women's career advancement (Kumara, 2018), women do not receive as much sponsorship as men (McKinsey & Company, 2019) and there are usually limited sponsors for women in the workplace (Ames et al., 2019; Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2010; Nkomo, 2012). Some women may have the right skills for more senior posts but without the right exposure they may remain in junior positions for a long period. Sponsorship, especially by senior male leaders, is the most important external factor to boost women's career progress (Ames et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the fact that high potential women are usually over mentored and under sponsored is the major reason they do not advance as fast as their male colleagues (Ames et al., 2019; Ibarra et al., 2010). Without sponsorship even the highest performing women are likely to be overlooked for promotion (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Even when women hold core positions, their further advancement is subjected to fierce competition from men, hence sponsorship is more important than mentorship at mid-career levels (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Through their visible support, sponsors can control unconscious bias against women and expand their networks of relationships that can propel them forward in the workplace (Ames et al. 2019). Hence the relevance of sponsorship to women's careers.

As best practice, companies should provide sufficient support, opportunities and sponsorships to accelerate women's career advancement (McKinsey & Company, 2019).

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Corporates should find ways to facilitate sponsorship for women such as encouraging women leaders to sponsor other women, motivating women to leave their 'comfort zones' and aggressively pursue the vital experiences needed for their next career level (Ames et al., 2019), otherwise women may still remain in lower positions despite the organisation's desire to promote them.

5.2.13. Role models

A role model is among the determinants and propellers of women's career success (Chanland & Murphy 2017). Yet female role models remain rare (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017) and many diversified leaders from marginalised groups lack role models (Chanland & Murphy 2017). Women lament the lack of female role models in work milieus with masculine cultures (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). This fact also appears to be true for certain fields of study and careers, for example, fewer girls pass mathematics, physical science and technology subjects at the National Senior Certificate Examination level. As a result, women mostly enrol at higher institutions of learning in business/commerce and humanities courses while men enrol in science, engineering and technology, and business and commerce programmes (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). Girls's choices of subjects to study at school explain the gap in female representation in certain fields. In occupations in which women are underrepresented it is difficult for girls who are making career choices to find role models, resulting in their exclusion from these fields (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012), thus, creating even a wider gender gap in these professions. In some cases, witnessing senior women working hard for excessive hours can make junior women fear the increased personal responsibility involved in career growth (Howson et al., 2018). Such proficient female executives

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provide women and their organisations distinct role model benefits (Walsh et al., 2016). Junior women are often inspired by and learn from the career development experiences of highly professional and successful women (Khalid et al., 2017). Thus, successful women create a mental picture of the possibilities for women to grow within the organisation. Internal role models also encourage women to build their careers in-house rather than searching for external employment (Walsh et al., 2016). The manner in which organisations develop female role models within the workplace has a direct influence upon how they want aspiring young women to perceive the organisation.

To ensure succession in fields in which women are underrepresented organisations can sensitise and orient young schoolgirls towards attaining qualifications in scare skills (Boshoff & Bosch, 2012; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). This process could happen through career exhibitions that inform students about the career opportunities available for women within certain fields. Successful women also could present motivational talks targeted at aspiring younger women, while women leaders likewise should be encouraged to mentor younger women (Faniko et al., 2017). By facilitating the influence of successful women on other ambitious women and pairing and/or forming groups for such women the organisation can initiate their synergy.

5.2.14. The queen bee syndrome

The ‘queen bee’ syndrome is the term given to tendency of women, who have invested in their career success, to be more critical towards junior female colleagues and, thus, unwilling to endorse measures that support women’s advancement (Faniko et al., 2017). The three main behavioural characteristics of the queen bee syndrome are that

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successful women distance themselves from junior women, assimilate men's groups and legitimise the gender-related *status quo* (Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2016; Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, & Raghoe, 2015). These queen bees express negative perceptions of women's commitment to their careers, are less supportive of the advancement of women, as well as of equal opportunity programmes being provided for this purpose by organisations (Derks, 2017; Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers & De Groot, 2011). They do not believe in their fellow women's capabilities and, hence fail to support them (Ensour et al., 2017). Queen bees believe they have made huge personal sacrifices to overcome several workplace barriers in order to have achieved their current status and, therefore, expect other women to do the same (Derks, 2017; Faniko et al., 2017). Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) report that many women in leadership positions tend to look down on other women and most women will prefer female leaders to male leaders only if these women respect and empower them. By failing to support other women, queen bees make it impossible for men to empathise with women (Derks, 2017; Sobczak, 2018). A few women (especially Black Africans) who are promoted to top positions emulate men's oppression of women (Derks, 2017; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). In order to protect their unique position, queen bees will not allow other women to experience similar career success (Ellemers, 2014) thereby hampering younger women's self-confidence, ability, professional development and success (Derks, Laar & Ellemers 2016; Sobczak, 2018). Queen bees are meaner, less tolerant and more critical of their female subordinates (Arvate, Walczak, & Todescat, 2018). Queen bees do not only refuse to support other women but consciously militate against them and delight in subordinating and obstructing their rise to higher roles.

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Furthermore, women often compete with their occupational and cultural peers and may resent the advancement of other women (Hills, 2015) resulting in their downplaying or combatting other women's progress. Sheppard and Aquino (2017) affirm that as women make sacrifices in order to progress in their careers, they often begin to compete and conflict with each other women, thus, developing the queen bee attitude. Such conflicts often intensify if the organisation does not provide support for conflict resolution, or if it has a culture of silence, resulting in junior women leaving the organisation. Even though men also engage in competition and conflict, such practices are often accepted, whereas the same behaviour among women is considered dysfunctional (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). This situation implies that competition is normal practice at work for both men and women. This assertion supports the discovery by Gerber and Schlechter (2019) that women are supportive towards each other's' career progression and the queen bee syndrome is just a myth and a scapegoat for sexism that is often used as an excuse by men who practice gender discrimination in the workplace. These findings are in synch with Heggie (2017) who discovered that the appointment of women to most senior or top management roles within an organisation increased the likelihood of other women being similarly promoted. Conversely the appointment of a woman to a senior role, but with a man holding the top management position, decreased the likelihood of other women ascending to senior positions by more than 50%. Although these arguments may imply that queen bee experiences are isolated cases, this type of behaviour is the cause and consequence of gender discrimination within the social context, and promotes the under-representation of women in leadership positions (Derks et al., 2011; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). From this discussion it is evident that the queen bee syndrome is

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complex and, as such, organisations need to become aware of its possible existence and deal with it timeously and constructively.

To ease the career advancement of junior women into high-ranking executive level ('c-suite'), organisations should create awareness about the possible existence of the queen bee syndrome, develop personal relationships and build support networks that address women-to-woman conflicts (Hurst et al., 2018). Firms should encourage senior women to support, sponsor and mentor their junior peers (Ames et al., 2019). Top women leaders should be incentivised to encourage, rather than discourage other women's advancement within the company that might result in their seeking work elsewhere (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Reward systems specifically designed to encourage women's career progress would be advantageous. These hints provide the basis on which organisations can design and implement strategies to deal with the queen bee syndrome within the workplace.

5.2.15. Networking

Networking is the collection of multifunctional developmental relationships that contribute towards positive career outcomes (Gipson et al., 2017). When compared to their male counterparts, women often lack the right networking opportunities (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017), have limited access to both organisational and informal networks (Athanasopoulou et al. 2017; Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Liu, 2013), or are excluded from them (Ames et al., 2019). Frequently women are not invited to social activities (e.g., golf or football leagues) and excluded from informal networks that could positively impact their career advancement. Many organisations also have strong masculine cultures that translate into

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structural arrangements that segregate women from formal and informal networks (Ensour et al., 2017). There is little evidence of structured initiatives among firms to develop informal networks and social capital during work hours (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). This failure makes it difficult for women to develop work relationships the way men do because most women have other responsibilities to attend to after work. Women's family responsibilities undermine their ability to engage in informal networks because women have limited time to engage in such activities, especially when these occur outside working hours (Kumara, 2018). Also, even when women want to socialise within the work context, some of these activities – drinking alcohol or visiting male colleagues in their homes may put women at risk of unfavourable sexual allegations (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Hence, the risk of such a response may discourage women from engaging in social activities outside of the workplace during which critical organisational decisions often are initiated or influenced.

Yet, networking opportunities are important for women's career development and advancement (Gipson et al., 2017; Kumara, 2018). The elevation of women to top management positions is closely associated with their involvement in an extensive array of networks and social activities (Ames et al., 2019; Lam, McGuinness & Vieito, 2013). Likewise, promotional decisions are often based on association and networks rather than professional competence (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). Leaders who decide about the advancement of employees, often will prefer employees they trust or know at a more personal level (Ames et al., 2019). Hence relationships and interdependencies are important for women's upward career progression (Howson et al., 2018) because these give women the opportunity to build beneficial work relationships. Networking develops

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business opportunities, increases an employee's social capital and visibility to relevant people (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) and provides opportunities for promotion (Liu, 2013). Networks also expose employees to work assignments and professional recognition and credibility (Gipson et al., 2017). Through their engagement in networking activities women can help to 'fast-track' their careers (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016) and, therefore, organisations need to facilitate appropriate networking activities for women.

Researcher have been made various suggestions for facilitating and leveraging networks for women. Chanland and Murphy (2017) propose that organisations should purposefully initiate developmental networks that will facilitate women's ascension to senior positions through subscriptions with professional bodies and industry associations. Kumara (2018) adds that firms should provide pathways for women to form informal networks that will help them access new opportunities and ensure that women can attend such events during office hours. More importantly, women need to recognise that they are agents of their own career development (Rapuano, 2020), and should take responsibility for developing beneficial career networks. Building and leveraging networks require time and effort from women and their employers – hence the need for patience during this process.

5.2.16. Work-life balance (WLB)

Work-life balance is the equilibrium between paid employment, unpaid care work and the broader aspects of life (Glasgow & Sang, 2016) and comprises the balance between work, family, community, recreation and personal life (Husin et al., 2018). The term 'life' in work-life balance refers to anything outside work (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017) and the clash between the different dimensions of an employees' 'life' and their work

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commitments is referred to as 'work-life conflict' (Glasgow & Sang, 2016). Work-life balance does not necessarily mean working less but rather having control and flexibility over aspects of work, such as how, when, and where employees work (Husin et al., 2018). It concerns offering employees the flexibility to manage different aspects of their lives.

Work often interferes with family responsibilities and vice versa (Kumara, 2018). Work-family conflicts happen when work requirements affect family demands and family-work conflicts happen when family demands affect work performance (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; Łaba, 2011). Office workload and family responsibilities are the main contributors to work-life conflict because usually both have to be performed simultaneously (Malek et al., 2019). Family priorities, obligations and responsibilities are the most influential elements in women's career development (Dizaho et al., 2016; Ensour et al., 2017; Khalid et al., 2017). Family responsibilities are the main challenge female executives, who are parents, face in their career advancement because these can negatively impact their professional experience, educational attainment, physical mobility, informal networks (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) and their ability to leverage international career opportunities (Boninelli, 2016). Hence the importance of their being able to strike a balance between work and family life.

There has been an increase in women's participation in the labour market over the last 40 years resulting in work-life strain being experienced by women (Glasgow & Sang, 2016). There has also been an increase in the demand for unpaid family-related work (Valcour, 2015) that has led to full-time women employees assuming multiple demanding roles in the workplace, home and community (Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019). Women's participation in the labour market has not relieved them of their family responsibilities.

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Women remain primary caretakers of children, making it difficult for women to balance the different aspects of their lives and giving rise to work-family conflicts that negatively impact their time and behaviour (Dizaho et al., 2016). Moreover, developments in the labour market and wider environment affect work-life balance (Husin et al., 2018). The recent introduction of technological devices into the workplace provides a constant connection to work that put a 'thin' boundary between their private and work life, thereby increasing work overloads that resulting in higher stress levels (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014) and distort employees' work-life balance (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Rapuano, 2020). The digital workplace with its accompanying flexibility and telecommuting (Lee & Sirgy, 2019) often is associated with stress and anxiety because employees try to switch between personal and work matters. It also creates uneasiness, irritability and guilt due to limited peer support and feedback (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2020) as well as work intensification triggered by the pressure to comply with work requests outside normal working hours (Armitage & Nassor Amar, 2021; Hoornweg, Peters, & Van der Heijden, 2016). Career progression requires long working hours, that men are often more able and willing to perform than women (Bosch, 2017) and the cost of progression to the top is sometimes too high for mid-career women (Howson et al., 2018). Long working hours and heavy office workload significantly influence work-life balance (Kumara, 2018) especially when there is limited support from spouse and family (Malek et al., 2019). Similarly, irregular work patterns and changing work demands require constant life adjustments that often result in work-life conflicts. Yet many employees seek balance between their personal, professional and family lives (Veloso et al., 2018) but, unfortunately, is difficult for many to achieve. Women's nurturing and care-giving

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experiences such as pregnancy (Gouws, 2017), marriage and motherhood (Rath et al. 2019) limit the time they can participate in the labour market. In addition to the challenges women face during pregnancy, the duration of maternity leave sometimes is unpredictable and may need to be extended due to problems that may arise for the mother, child or other factors (Boninelli, 2016). Some women even exit the labour market altogether when they start bearing children (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Women who choose to return to work after maternity leave, usually have to alter their child's breastfeeding routine (Horwood et al., 2020). These women may also experience motherhood penalties such as multiple career breaks, truncated work experience, delayed development, reduced wages and the challenge of securing employment with 'family-friendly' policies (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Moreover, caring for children can be a time-consuming process, especially for children who are seven years old or younger (Stewart, 2020). Hence working parents with young children experience more work-family conflict than those with older children (Malek et al., 2019). During the Covid-19 pandemic, many young mothers of children under 12 years resigned and others reduced their work hours to care for their children when they were not attending school (Carlson et al., 2021; Casale & Posel, 2020). Stewart (2020) affirms that women working full-time jobs from home (who have partners and children) spend on average 20 hours more a week than men caring for children and elderly family members and performing household chores. The World Economic Forum (2020) also confirms this fact and claims that no country has achieved gender equity in this regard. Yet work-life balance is moderated by national culture (Haar et al., 2014), personal expectations, organisational context (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018) and organisational cultures (Islam et al., 2018).

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The challenge of assuming dual roles is not experienced by most men (Moalusi & Jones, 2019), and is a consequence of the imbalanced sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). Existing socio-cultural circumstances give men an advantage over women. Even when chores are unanimously divided between women and their male partners, men rarely fulfil their obligations (Gouws, 2017) and some families employ external help to ease this imbalance. Men tend to relax due to the presence of external help, while women are still left to perform the majority of family-related tasks (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). In the absence of alternative care services for children, women often are obliged to resign from work to take care of their children (Mengistu, 2012).

Yet, Hayman and Rasmussen (2013) argue that men experience greater challenges in balancing their work-lives than women, the reason being that professional men usually transfer their share of the family load to their wives and devote themselves to their work. Wives of male executives often leave formal employment and create their own businesses to ensure harmony between family and work (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) – one of the reasons for women being over-represented in informal employment in underdeveloped nations (ILO, 2018b). In this regard, Ensour et al. (2017) assert that a woman's life centres on her family and children, while a man's life centres on himself. As stated above, women usually spend more time rearing children and caring for family members and performing their household responsibilities than men (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). Thus, men record more leisure time women (Glasgow & Sang, 2016). This stressful imbalance burdens women's career progress. The fact that women assume numerous family-related responsibilities (Higgins

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et al., 2010; Jaga et al., 2017) coupled with the emotional sensitivity and vulnerability of women (Nkomo, 2012) make them more prone to work-life stress than men. Such stress exerts physical, psychological and/or social forces that place real or perceived demands on the body, emotions, mind or spirit, hence affecting women's health, well-being and performance at home and at work (Łaba, 2011; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Reitz et al., 2020). Lewis and Beauregard (2018) reveal that stress levels increase with work responsibilities and seniority, therefore women who cannot handle stress underperform, hence hampering their career progression. The mental, physical, physiological and social health of employees is vital for their all-round well-being (Beisser, Peters, Thacker, 2014). Thus, organisations need to developed work-life balance programmes to assist women. Many companies offer formal or informal work-life balance programmes, such as flexible work arrangements that include day-care facilities, laundry facilities, gymnasiums, canteen facilities, part time work, working at home (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Mukanzi et al., 2014), flexible-work hours and workdays, term-time work, job-sharing, home-working, condensed hours, shift swapping and career breaks (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). However, many women are concerned about the penalty of flexible programmes and work-life balance opportunities offered to them (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Reichel et al. (2022) note that social policies such as paid parental leave and external childcare services negatively affect the provision of HCD for women but not for men. This disparity is due to gender biased organisational decision makers who tend to disregard women who benefit from such flexible programmes when deciding on development opportunities. Although flexible working practices give employees greater choices and freedom, they can prevent them from achieving work-life balance (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015).

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Flexibility is usually associated with work intensification reflected through greater work effort, longer work hours, fewer networking opportunities and professional isolation – employees who practice flexibility are often seen as lacking commitment, thus, reducing their prospects for career advancement and further increasing their work-family conflict (Allen et al., 2013; Leslie, Manchester, Park & Mehng, 2012). Moreover, taking family-related leave often damages women's careers and finances (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Even when organisations institute paid leave and other flexible social initiatives to support families, these practices interrupt work activities, hence affecting women's work negatively (Reichel, 2022). More so, women who take family leave are perceived as women who do not want to work and, therefore, are penalised with delayed promotion (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Women who take time off from work to care for their families stall their career progress compared to women without children or their male peers (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017). Nevertheless, women need work-life balance programmes, thus, organisations that employ a high percentage of women need to become more involved in implementing and tracking the impact of work-life balance policies (Wang & Verma, 2012). Although current efforts in this direction are insufficient, more companies now offer some kind of flexibility than in the past (McKinsey & Company, 2019), however, when organisations try to accommodate women and mothers, the practices are still less advantageous than those offered to men and women without family or child care responsibilities.

It is often difficult for women to decide whether to prioritise their work or family (Chawla & Sharma, 2016; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; McIntosh et al., 2014) and some women prefer being homemakers to being part of the workforce (Geldenhuys, 2011; Rath et al., 2019).

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In instances in which women have not been able to achieve work-life balance, many tend to neglect their work and prioritise their family (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Mengistu, 2012), especially when they are nursing young children (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Hence the inability of some women to achieve work-life balance has halted their career advancement (Fernando Amaratunga & Haigh, 2014; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Watts et al., 2015). However, because women are better at multitasking than men (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017) many prefer stay in the workplace and assume dual roles (ILO, 2022), thus, limiting their chances of excelling in either sphere.

Okin (1989) and Stewart (2020) depict a direct link between gender equity at home and at work yet deplore the lack of polices relating to gender roles at home. Family structures have become more diverse with a rise in single-parenting, dual-earner households and households that provide elderly care (Rapuano, 2020). Hence support outside the workplace is vital for women to cope with their dual roles (Gouws, 2017). Parents, spouses, siblings and grandparents are main contributors to life's success (Gerber & Schlechter, 2019). The presence of a supportive husband is critical for women who seek promotion into leadership positions (Islam et al., 2018). When fathers undertake a greater portion of childcare work within the family, mothers are less likely to suffer from negative employment outcomes (Carlson et al., 2021). Women with stronger support structures (spouses, partners, relatives etc.) can advance faster in the corporate world than women without such support systems (Geldenhuys, 2011; Rath et al., 2019). Khalid et al. (2017) argue that few women receive support from their families in their career development, however, they recognise that times have changed and culture has become more supportive of women than it was in the past. Many women nowadays allow care-givers,

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spouses and relatives raise their children (Łaba, 2011) and most homes now have helpers, giving women more time to focus on their jobs (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014).

There are several benefits to achieving work-life balance. For employees work-life balance impacts job satisfaction, wellbeing, marital satisfaction, life satisfaction (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2019) and minimises possibilities of health-related problems (Husin et al., 2018). However, employees usually have to comply with organisational rules without any guarantee of a positive overall life quality (Husin et al., 2018). For organisations, work-life balance policies and practices increase performance and turnover, reduce absenteeism (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Husin et al., 2018), decrease stress and job burnout (Mukanzi et al., 2014), increase tenure (Penney, 2015), increase employee's organisational commitment (Husin et al., 2018) and enhance organisational competitiveness (Walsh et al., 2016).

Even if some studies claim that women are not resigning at a higher rate than men (McKinsey & Company, 2019) and others perceive that women sometimes use their responsibilities to shy away from their work commitments (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017), women's career trajectories are encumbered, resulting in fewer women advancing and/or remaining in organisations (Woolnough & Redshaw, 2016). Women who want to remain at work sometimes prefer to stay in lower ranks that allow them to balance their work and family obligations (Kumara, 2018). Therefore, the onus is, to a large extent, on organisations to assist women to balance their work and personal lives.

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Balancing employees' lives starts with understanding the phenomenon of work-life balance. Firms need to understand how work-family conflicts occur (Dizaho et al., 2016; Khalid et al., 2017) and acknowledge the inhibiting effects of traditional gender roles in homes (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). They also need to create flexible and humanistic human resources management practices to resolve work-life conflicts (Greenhaus and Kossek, 2014; Mahadevan & Mayer, 2017), increase organisational effectiveness, and yield positive life-long career experiences for employees (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Kossek et al., 2014). Firms should also provide unbiased solutions that systematically cater for women (De Braine, 2011; Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018), promote women's career advancement, support pregnant women and working-mothers, allow sufficient parental leave (Karkowsky & Morris, 2016; PWC, 2018b; Working Mothers, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2020), and implement work practices to assist women during menopause (Chipunza & Dhlamini-Kumalo, 2016; Reitz et al., 2020). These strategies need to be cemented by ethical and innovative HR practices that promote work-life balance (Naudé, 2017) through institutional support structures (Walsh et al., 2016), and managerial support (Khalid et al., 2017; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Mukanzi et al., 2014). Firms should also encourage women to seek external support when needed (Islam et al., 2018). If possible, the government needs to put in place more stringent legislation to rebalance the household and care duty burdens within families (Carlson et al., 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020) by encouraging cultural changes around the allocation of household chores (Stewart, 2020) and prescribe paid parental leave (Reichel et al., 2022). In conclusion, organisations and the state should work together to enforce initiatives to eliminate all gender disparities,

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except for child-bearing (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018), thereby, enabling women to equitable compete with men within the workplace.

5.2.17. Education, skills and expertise for advancement

Education, competency development and training are propellers of women's careers (Afande, 2015; Rath et al., 2019). Appropriate professional skills and intellectual abilities are vital capabilities needed to enhance women's careers and achieve their career goals (Khalid et al., 2017). Sobczak (2018) reveals that even though women are achieving higher education qualifications than in the past, others researchers report that, when compared to men, women still tend to have limited opportunities for education (Joshi et al., 2015) and work training (Morley, 2014). Women usually lack the relevant functional and practical skills required to progress and succeed in top management positions (Choi & Park 2014; Hills, 2015) or are less skilled and experienced than their male counterparts (Grundling & Bosch, 2011; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014), thus, they remain in lower or middle leadership positions. Women also have limited engagements at work and less travel experiences, both of which are needed to ascend to top-level positions (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Moreover, women are more likely than men to accept inferior positions with less development opportunities (Ensour et al., 2017) and daunting administrative tasks that do not develop their skills nor expose them to growth (Babcock et al., 2018). This behaviour makes it harder for women to progress to leadership positions because jobs requiring specific leadership experience is inaccessible to them due to previous discriminations that limited them to lower positions (Chetty & Naidoo 2017). Despite the relevance of skills development for women's careers, women continue to fail to attain the required skills for progression.

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Although Moleko (2018) describes a close link between education and employment and argue that lack of education is the reason for few women working in certain fields, Oosthuizen et al. (2019) contradict this opinion and assert that for employees from disadvantaged groups, learning opportunities and additional qualifications, do not increase their probability of moving upwards, even when financed (or supported) by their employer. Chetty and Naidoo (2017) confirm that only women who began their Master's in Business Administration studies while in middle management positions advanced at the same speed as men because they argue that more experience is required for women's career progress than it is for men. Moalusi and Jones (2019) agree that women have to first prove themselves before education is regarded as beneficial to their career progression. Likewise, Lewis and Beauregard (2018) add that whereas men are considered to be natural leaders, women have to demonstrate leadership qualities before being promoted to leadership positions. The mentality of wanting women to prove themselves has resulted in many women being deprived of the benefits of career advancement normally associated with educational qualifications, hence many women's careers stagnate at lower organisational levels.

To support the above argument that education does not guarantee promotion, Mythili, (2019) notices the lack of leadership preparation for women that discourages them from assuming leadership roles because they often perceive themselves, or are presumed by those in authority, to be incompetent (Padilla, 2020). Ames et al. (2019) confirm that only 2% of institutional leadership development programmes are relevant for women's career achievements and women receive fewer development opportunities that prepare them for senior positions than their male colleagues. These findings are in synch with Lewis and

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Beauregard (2018) who reveal that, due to limited leadership training for women, they have to learn on-the-job with limited support from upper management. These arguments confirm that women are not properly groomed for leadership positions (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) and are often isolated from the developmental assignments used to groom men for senior leadership positions (Ensour et al., 2017; Lerback & Hanson, 2017). Fewer women perceive that they have the same development, growth, and advancement opportunities as men (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2019). As a result, many women still remain at the bottom of the power hierarchy with little influence within organisations (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Men hold the majority of upper positions (Islam et al., 2018) such as Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, President and Chairman (Wirth-Dominicé, 2015) while women's representation in such positions is generally low (Grant Thornton, 2016). Regardless of whether women's lack of skills is real or perceived, this assumption hinders women's ascension of the corporate 'ladder'.

The pursuit of qualifications and developing skills demands effort, time and expense that often have negative repercussions on marriages and families, especially for female executives (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) and many women may not want to bear this high cost. Women's career breaks for child-bearing, nurturing and other family responsibilities often interrupt their skills and career development (Bosch, 2016; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Jaga et al., 2017), educational attainment and professional opportunities and experiences (Bass, 2015; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019). Career breaks also affect company turnover and increase organisational cost (Bosch, 2017), facts that make organisations reluctant to invest in women's development.

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Disparity in gender education starts early for girls (Hills, 2015). PWC (2018a) reveals that fewer girls than boys choose maths and statistics (ratio 4:5), technology and ICT (ratio 2:5), as well as manufacturing, engineering and construction (ratio 3:10) as study subjects. Even though currently there are more female graduates, men outnumber women in skilled jobs partly due to the 'leaky pipeline', caused by women's career exit, often after motherhood. Even with the filed segregation of women enrolling in humanities and business and commerce and men in science related courses, and more women enrolling at institutions of higher learning, women often stop their studies below Master's level while men take over at Master's and Doctoral levels (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). This practice results in differences in the type of employment available to men and women in certain fields and, due to their lower educational qualifications, women usually access jobs at lower levels (Choi & Park 2014). Barclay (2018) confirms that female blue-collar workers are marginalised and predominantly uneducated. This means that the choosing of subjects that happens during early senior school years, together with the level of study achieved, plays a significant role in future career opportunities. Hence, finding women with the suitable qualifications and experience for high profile jobs often is challenging (Moalusi & Jones, 2019), thus, resulting in occupational segregation.

Even when gender occupational segregation happens within the same industry it deprives women of their chances of reaching the top and compels them to remain in lower roles within departments (Kumara, 2018). Ames et al. (2019) reveal that many women prefer to ascend within functional or technical roles although these do not lead them to the CEO position. Early commitment to specific functional role limits women's chance of occupying

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executive roles later in their career. However, risky profit and loss (P & L) roles can broaden women's chances of becoming CEOs because they often involve oversight tasks that equip women for the top-level management posts. However, in order to comply with legislation and increase their BBBEE score, companies sometimes appoint technically and functionally under-skilled women to senior positions (Grundling & Bosch, 2011). Unfortunately, these women's inability to effectively perform these roles negatively impacts future female appointments and jeopardises the fight against gender inequality.

To address the gender skills gaps, Moleko (2018) and PWC (2018a) suggest that schools and higher institutions of learning should make science, technology, engineering and maths subjects compulsory for girls. The educational system also needs to celebrate counter-stereotypical female role models in technical fields. South Africa should encourage TVET college-private sector partnerships to absorb and retain women in technical fields (Moleko, 2018). Career counselling during education and job orientation can also help women become aware of untapped opportunities (Khalid et al., 2017). Work-experience and training opportunities, supported by financial bursaries, can also help workers build their CVs and prepare them to enter previously neglected fields (Wright, 2018). Barclay (2018) suggests that organisations enable women employees to attain the skills needed for their career progress. In order to encourage and sustain such programmes, organisations should incentivise workers with growth potentials with skills development benefits such as work involvement, further training, rewards and welfare schemes (Mathur-Helm, 2018). Moreover, mentoring, coaching and empowerment (Afande, 2015) can be useful tools in enhancing academically qualified women's career progression (Ebrahim & Singh, 2017). Organisations should be transparent regarding

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development opportunities and implement legislation on skills development and gender equity at all levels (Walsh et al., 2016). Firms also need to assign accountability for the women's leadership development to certain people or departments (KPMG International, 2014). Corporates should be more proactive about developing women for the purpose of appointing them to leadership positions (Islam et al., 2018).

5.2.18. Self-confidence required at senior levels

Given the multiple challenges women face in their careers, their internal predisposition for success is vital. However, women usually lack the confidence to overcome obstacles to their career advancement (Hills, 2015). Women are perceived to be less confident about their abilities (Afande, 2015; Ensour et al., 2017; Kay & Shipman, 2014; Sturm et al., 2014) and are more prone to doubt their productivity than men (Mathur-Helm, 2018). Women are also less self-compassionate, more critical of themselves and more prone to use negative self-talk than their male counterparts (Yarnell et al., 2015). Women have a low sense of self confidence and hesitate to lead (Franze, 2011). Women feel underqualified for senior positions (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017) and, due to their low self-confidence, women devalue their capabilities while men overate themselves (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Some women feel intimidated when competing for a position with a man (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). This situation implies there are internal issues that need to be addressed.

In addition to women undermining themselves, others also perceive them as less effective leaders, usually because of women's low self-confidence or gender stereotypes. As stated previously, women also have less confidence in other women, prefer male leaders

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and/or only support women leaders for gender balance purposes (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). Many people consider female leadership styles to be inefficient, weak and non-assertive and both genders usually prefer male leaders (Islam et al., 2018) because they consider men to be the more effective leaders (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Zenger & Folkman, 2019). The combination of gender and racial stereotypes jeopardises the recognition of women's knowledge, abilities, and achievements, and decreases their sense of self-worth and self-confidence (Oosthuizen et al., 2019).

Despite women's lack of confidence described above, self-confidence is an expression of impressive leadership (O'Neil et al., 2015) and has proven to impact one's relationship with others (Hurst et al., 2018). Women who are confident, adaptable, optimistic, perseverant and resilient have succeeded in moving upwards in their organisations (Ames et al., 2019). Also, Lewis and Beauregard (2018) affirm that climbing the organisational ladder boosts female leaders' confidence. This fact is true even in organisations with masculine cultures in which women's confidence is constantly dampened by men who undermine their contributions and marginalise their voices (Moalusi & Jones, 2019). Contrarily, lack of confidence makes women hesitant to take professional risks that could move their careers forward, such as applying for leadership jobs (Islam et al., 2018). Most women are caught between the fear of success (which is the yearning to achieve something) and the negative consequences of success (such as the loss of social-esteem, loss of femininity and social rejection), hence they become discouraged from competing for advancement, thereby negatively affecting their career development (Komalasari et al., 2017). Therefore, women's low self-confidence, or the lack thereof, needs to be addressed. – a situation that requires both personal and

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corporate efforts. Women can mitigate their low self-confidence by practicing self-evaluation processes to identify areas for improvement and proactively dealing with these (Hurst et al., 2018). Some initiatives to consider include the following: self-affirmation exercises (Ivona & Lance, 2014), applying for senior positions (Franze, 2011) and taking well considered career risks (Kumara, 2018). Corporates should also encourage women to plan their careers, set career goals in line with their personal values, and help them to overcome challenges related to their fear of success (Komalasari et al., 2017), provide women with more opportunities to develop skills that will boost their confidence (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014), encourage women to pursue promotional opportunities early in their careers (Rohman et al., 2018; Zenger & Folkman, 2019) and to apply for senior positions even if they do not feel that they meet all requirements for the role (Ames et al., 2019). Firms should also design targeted programmes to improve women's relational skills, build their self-confidence, address negative self-talk and discuss women's gender-based expectations (Hurst et al., 2018). Finally, it is recommended that companies and governments should design employment policies that reflect understanding and tolerance of woman's psychological barriers (Komalasari et al., 2017) with the aim of developing women's self-confidence and helping them address related challenges.

5.2.19. Ownership towards one's career development

For women leaders to succeed, they need to aspire to ascend to leadership positions (Grant Thornton, 2016). They also need to consistently work hard and be determined to achieve their professional objectives (Khalid et al., 2017). Women who take active ownership of their leadership development and make the required personal sacrifices

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succeed (Faniko et al., 2017). However, some women are unwilling to expend the effort required to ascend (Ames et al., 2019), neglect to display assertiveness and fail to negotiate for higher positions (Hills, 2015), thus, remaining in their existing jobs.

Gender inequalities still persist in the workplace and organisations need to instigate women-tailored policies to address such bias (ILO, 2018b). Likewise, women need to pursue personal career advancement initiatives such as: applying for jobs (Ames et al., 2019; Franze, 2011), seeking mentors (Kilian et al., 2005; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019), negotiating salaries (Hills, 2015; Kray, Kennedy & Van Zant, 2014) and leveraging networking opportunities (Gipson et al., 2017; Prossack, 2018; Schipani et al., 2009). As already discussed, it is also important for women to have a value-based career roadmap, set goals and timelines, seek periodic 360 reviews, share their career aspirations with management and indicate their availability for opportunities, tasks, assignments, or promotions. Although the role of personal ownership in career advancement cannot be denied, family situations, gendered and professionalised identities and structural inequalities may limit the extent to which women can influence their own career progress (Howson et al., 2018). Hence organisational commitment to design strategies to eliminate gender barriers for career-committed women is vital.

5.3. Chapter summary and conclusion

Women of all races experience discrimination within the workplace (Bosch, 2017; Łaba, 2011) and reaching gender parity within the highest ranks may take many more decades, if it ever happens (McKinsey & Company, 2019). This chapter covered the challenges women face in their career progression as well as documented best practices to address

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these challenges. Some challenges are obvious while others are subtle and more difficult to address. Achieving gender equality in the South African workplace requires personal effort (Faniko et al., 2017) as well as commitment from government, employers, society, and developmental agencies (ILO, 2018a).

The above section ends the literature review chapters. The next chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study.

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CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1. Introduction

This chapter proceeds to discuss the methods and methodology followed in the course of this research. It discusses the philosophical view, concepts and variables, research design, data collection, data analysis and research ethics of the study.

6.2. Philosophical paradigm

Creswell and Creswell (2018) point out that a philosophical paradigm is inclusive of research worldview, research methodologies or epistemology and ontology. Johnson and Christensen (2014) differentiate between the three terms, by stating that methodologies relate to the practical ways in which humans understand the world and includes the identification and justification of chosen research methods. Epistemology is how people arrived at the knowledge they know. Ontology is the discovery of the nature of reality or truth. The epistemological and ontological views of this research study have been presented in the conceptual framework (Grant and Osanloo, 2014) in Chapter One (Section 1.5.2). The research methodology and paradigms linked to the ontology and epistemology of this study (Scotland, 2012) will be discussed in this chapter.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that although philosophical paradigms are hidden in social research, they influence the execution of all research and need to be clearly stated in every study. Two main research paradigms exist: the interpretivism paradigm that anchored on the belief that individuals shape society (qualitative approach) while the

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positivist paradigm holds that social realities shape individuals (quantitative approach) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The latter approach has a greater probability of revealing the truth to social scientists (Palys & Atchison, 2014), especially during situations in which they are testing existing theories (Creswell, 2014). Paradigms explain why the researcher choses either a quantitative or qualitative method or combines both approaches.

Kumar (2015) argues that the positivist paradigm fails to consider human reasoning, interpretation and experiences by establishing generalities while leaving out the context, resulting in unrealistic, too objective and flexible knowledge. For these reasons, positivism has lately been replaced with post-positivism that is a combination of theories of knowledge (epistemologies), and theories of the nature of reality (ontologies). Creswell & Creswell (2018) define post-positivism as the emerging thinking arising from positivism that challenges the conventional idea of knowing the complete truth, and recognises that no one can be absolutely certain about their knowledge when studying human actions and behaviours. Creswell and his colleague identify four main views on which post positivism holds. Firstly, there is a high probability that cause determines effect (outcomes). Secondly, ideas can be reduced into small and discrete sets of tests, such as variables, that encompass research hypotheses and questions. Thirdly, knowledge is developed through empirical observations and measurements. Lastly, in order to understand the world, theory needs to be tested and refined. This research study is based on the belief that certain variables (within and outside organisations) impact women's skills development and career progression. Also, its research hypotheses and questions have been formulated from existing theories and tested using statistical tools. In

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recognising that the absolute truth/knowledge about humans cannot be known using statistical tools, open-ended questions were added after each section in the questionnaire to capture knowledge/reality not captured in the questions. Hence, this research study espoused a post-positivist philosophical worldview.

Kumar (2015) classifies feminist research as research designed for studies that explore women's viewpoints and experiences that seek to understand and change gender inequalities in societies. Feminist research calls attention to facets of social life not considered by other paradigms by focusing on sex-role differences, women's oppression, limitations placed on women and the unequal treatment women experience in society from women's point of view (Babbie, 2013). This study has a feminist facet in that it seeks to investigate barriers to, and strategies for, the skills development and career progression of women. It also examines inequalities women face, the support they receive in and out of the workplace, and the impact these factors have on their skills development and career progression. However, this study lies in the discipline of human resource management, and women are just the chosen sample, hence the study does not explicitly use a feminist methodological approach.

6.3. Research design

A research design or strategy of enquiry is a detailed blueprint that guides the researcher towards achieving research objectives (Malhotra, Nunan & Birks, 2017) and involves every step in the research project, the topic, the population and research methods employed (Babbie, 2013).

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6.3.1. Type of study

Research studies usually follow either a qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods design. Qualitative research provides non-numerical insight on opinions while quantitative methods meet research objectives through numerical measurement and analysis (Palys & Atchison, 2014). The latter authors recommend that investigations of mature theories should use quantitative methods through surveys and statistical inferences. Based on literature presented in the literature review chapters above, there is evidence that research on gender, employee development and women's progression have advanced over the years and related theories can be considered as fully evolved. Therefore, this research primarily follows a quantitative method using questionnaires to collect data and statistical tools to analyse data. Most previous investigations relating to women's position in the workplace were qualitative in nature, using interviews, further motivating the decision to espouse a quantitative approach to test existing knowledge. Although the quantitative approach is cost and time effective, Bryman (2016) cautions researchers about its limitations such as: failure to recognise the uniqueness of people and institutions; untested assumptions about the measurement of constructs; high reliance on the research instrument; procedures that hinder connection with real life; and the static view created by the analysis of relationships. However, to capture personal opinions, reasoning, interpretations, experiences and context flexibility, open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire (Kumar, 2015) and analysed separately using a thematic approach.

The choice of the ideal quantitative approach (descriptive or correlation) depends on the objectives of the study (Mishra & Alok, 2017). On one hand, descriptive studies provide

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information about a situation or problem by gathering information on the present condition without necessarily judging or interpreting (Fabe, 2012; Kumar, 2015) – most such studies are primarily descriptive in nature (Babbie, 2013). On the other hand, correlation studies test empirical relationships between two variables in such a way that deviations in one variable are associated with deviations in the other variable, and some attributes of one variable are associated with the same attributes of the other (Babbie, 2013). Correlation studies seek to establish the systematic link or independence between aspects or situations (Kumar, 2015). This research investigates factors that affect women's skills development and their workplace progression. It also examines how these phenomena are linked to selected organisational factors, personal attributes, family factors and legislation. Hence, this study is both descriptive and correlational in nature (Apuke, 2017).

Bryman (2016) describes two main types of research approach, namely inductive and deductive. The purpose of an inductive approach is to develop a theory while the deductive method tests an existing theory. Inductive reasoning draws from specific observations to make generalisations and deductive reasoning leans on generalisations to describe specific cases. Even though this study was predominantly deductive in nature, it also used an inductive approach to interpret individual responses from open-ended questions.

The study made use of a survey research design that provides a numerical description of opinions, attitudes and trends of a population by examining a sample of that population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Types of survey research includes longitudinal studies and cross-sectional studies. Longitudinal studies gather data across time while cross-sectional (one-time research) designs collect data about variables at a given point in time

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to detect patters of association in a sample (Mishra & Alok, 2017). This study uses a survey design to primarily collect quantifiable data (using questionnaires) at a single point in time, on more than two variables to determine their association, hence it is a cross-sectional study. Although longitudinal studies take longer to execute, they assure some level of consistency. Conversely, cross-sectional studies provide findings that can be used to infer concepts about a population within a shorter period (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), however, this study can be replicated to test the consistency of is findings over time, thus motivating the researcher's choice of a cross-sectional design.

6.3.2. The study population

A study population is the complete set of units or the entire group of interest from which a sample is drawn (Mishra & Alok, 2017; Babbie, 2013). The research population of this study comprises women with different levels of family responsibilities (varying numbers of children and other dependents) across different age groups, races, organisational levels/positions, marital status and levels of education. Initially, the population was women from selected accounting firms in Johannesburg (i.e., Deloitte, EY, PWC, BDO, SkX Protiviti, SNG Grant Thornton, Mazars, PKF Octagon & others) but this group was further extended to cover the service industry within Johannesburg because of the limited access to women in accounting firms and a low response rate from them.

6.3.3. Sampling

A sample is a selection of elements, from a larger population group, about which inferences are made (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggest sample sizes between 30 and 500 for most research studies. In line with this

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recommendation the sample size for this research was 412, after considering data collection costs.

A non-probability sample (non-random sample) is a sample in which individuals are not selected randomly (Mishra & Alok, 2017). This type of design is recommended when it is not possible to individually identify the number of elements in a population or when the population size is unknown (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). The total number of women in the service industry in Johannesburg was not readily available, warranting the use of a non-probability sampling method. Furthermore, the researcher had to rely on respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study. Bryman (2016) argues that although findings from non-probability samples may not be representative of the total population and, thus, may not be generalizable, the cost and time implications, as well as the difficulty in obtaining probability samples, make this particular approach widely acceptable among researchers. In support the non-probability sampling system, the same research methodologist reveals that even with the use of probability sampling, findings can only be generalised to the population. Further research always needs to be conducted by other researchers to validate, extend and generalise findings where necessary. Given the above reasons, a non-probability sample was used for this study.

Bryman (2016) further distinguishes three types of non-probability sampling: purposive, quota and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling involves choosing data sources that meet the purpose of the research. Pandey and Pandey (2015) describe quota sampling as sampling that sets the basis of the quota and ensures proportionate representation of respondents' categories. Convenience sampling is sampling in which people are sampled based on the fact that they are convenient sources of the data

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required by the researcher (Mishra & Alok, 2017). The frame for this study could not be accurately estimated and the sample quotas could not be calculated. Also relying on the researcher's judgement for purposive sampling could have been subjective and biased. Hence the sampling method used in this study was the convenient non-probability sampling method. While convenient sampling is reasonably fast, inexpensive and easy to conduct, it may not represent the entire population, hence, making generalisations of the research results difficult (Bhome et al., 2013). The cross-validation method – comparing the findings of one half of the data with the other half – is an efficient way to analyse convenience sampling data representation. A conveniently available pool of women from firms within the service industry in Johannesburg with different characteristics (family responsibilities, age groups, races, hierarchies, marital status and levels of education) were approached to participate in the study until the target of 412 respondents was reached.

6.3.4. Data

When conducting research, the research needs to clearly describe the research equipment and procedures used so as to make it easy for other researchers to replicate and extend the study in other settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This section presents details about the research instrument and procedures followed in this study.

6.3.4.1. Research concepts and data requirements for questionnaire

Concepts are building blocks to theory and can be fluctuating variables (Bryman, 2016). As presented in Table 6.1 below, the dependent variable is of interest to the researcher, the independent variable affects the dependent variable (Babbie, 2013) and the mediating variable explains the relationship between the independent and dependent variable

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(Creswell, 2014). An intervening or mediating variable (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) transmits the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and allows the researcher to answer questions about an existing bivariate link between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The understanding of research variables helps the researcher to craft the research instrument in such a way that it collects the information necessary to meet research objectives and validate (or refute) research hypotheses.

A valid questionnaire design necessitates a data requirement plan, especially when using unpublished instruments, as it was the case in this study (Thompson, 1994). A data requirement table (see Table 6.1 below) ensures that essential data is collected to answer the research questions and achieve the intended research objectives (Saunders et al., 2012). To compile a data requirement table, the research needs to ask investigative questions that clarify whether the interest is on respondents' behaviour, attributes or opinions. Investigative questions need to be answered in order to satisfactorily meet each research objective (Mishra & Alok, 2017). The research constructs and their nature, operational definitions and investigative questions that guided the drafting of the questionnaire are presented in Table 6.1.

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Table 6. 1: Data requirement table

Construct (nature of the variable)	Operational definition of the Concept/variable	Research Objectives (RO)	Hypotheses (H)	Investigative questions
Selected impediments) (Independent variable)	These are selected factors within the organisation that negatively impact women's skills development and their career progression. Impediments considered in this research include: no support for formal qualifications, lack of mentorship programmes, promotion malpractices, powerful male domination, lack of support for "work-family" balance, and the absence of successful female role models in the organisational.	RO1: To determine whether some selected workplace factors impact the skills development and career progression of women	**H1a:** Selected workplace impediments negatively affect women's skills development.	To what extent do selected workplace impediments negatively impact the skills development of women?
			H1b: Selected workplace impediments negatively affect women's career progression.	To what extent do selected workplace impediments negatively impact the career progression of women?
Selected support initiatives (Independent variable)	These are selected factors within the organisation that positively impact women's skills development and their career progression. Support strategies considered include: network development, learning and growth platforms, leadership development programmes, career planning/career management, sponsorship, gender-friendly organisational culture, and women-women support.		**H1c:** Selected workplace support strategies promote women's skills development.	To what extent do selected workplace support promote the skills development of women?
			H1d: Selected workplace support strategies promote women's career progression.	To what extent do selected workplace factors positively impact the career progression of women?
Gender discrimination	These are gender related discriminatory behaviours against women. Those explored in this study include: preconceptions about women's attributes; culturally bias; unfavourable	RO2: To determine whether gender discriminatory practices impact women's skills	**H2a:** Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's skills development.	To what extent do discriminatory practices inside the organisation impact women's skills development?

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Construct (nature of the variable)	Operational definition of the Concept/variable	Research Objectives (RO)	Hypotheses (H)	Investigative questions
	perceptions when assessed for promotion; glass ceiling; gender lower pay; sexual harassment; unfair women representation at senior levels; and little or no effort in addressing discriminatory gender practices.	development and career progression.	**H2b:** Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's career progression.	To what extent do discriminatory practices inside the organisation impact women's career progression?
Skills development (Dependent variable, mediating factor to career progression)	Skills development involes initiatives aimed at improving a person's skills and competence	RO3: To assess whether women skills development is related to their career progression	**H3**: Women's skills development is positively linked to their career progression.	To what extent does women's skill development affect their career progression in the workplace?
Career progression (Dependent variable)	Career progression implies moving from one career level to a higher level or ascending from one position to a higher position.			
Personal attributes (independent variable)	These are personal attitudes and behaviours towards one's skills development and career advancement. Those considered in this study include: investing effort to succeed; confidence about professional abilities; taking responsibility of one's career growth; being optimistic about one's career future; and expressing one's career plans/aspirations to manager	RO4: To determine whether selected non-workplace factors (personal and family/child care responsibilities) impact the skills development and career progression of women.	**H4a:** Personal factors impact women's skills development.	To what extent do personal factors affect women's skills development?
			H4b: Personal factors impact women's' career progression.	To what extent do personal factors affect women's career progression?
Family responsibilities (independent variable)	These are family-related factors that impact women's skills development and career progression. Factors explored include: interference of the demands of family responsibilities on career; strains		**H4c:** Family/childcare responsibilities impact women's skills development.	To what extent does family/childcare responsibilities impact women's skills development?

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Construct (nature of the variable)	Operational definition of the Concept/variable	Research Objectives (RO)	Hypotheses (H)	Investigative questions
	of family responsibilities on career ambitions; time spent on family responsibilities impacting time spent on career development; and pressures from family affecting career.		**H4d:** Family /childcare responsibilities impact women's career progression.	To what extent does family/child care responsibilities impact women's career progression?
Legislative compliance	This is the degree to which organisations comply with legislation on: gender equity and gender fairness legislation; skills development of designated groups; promoting equitable representation at all levels; and ownership, management control and employment of blacks and women.	RO5: To evaluate the relationship between adherence to related legislation and women's skills development career progression in the workplace.	**H5a:** There is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's skills development.	To what extent does compliance with these laws result in women's skills?
			H5b: There is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's career progression.	To what extent does compliance with selected legislation result in women's career progression?

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Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend that measures and indicators should be devised for each construct and variable. The operationalisation constructs in Table 6.2 below present the literature from which items under each construct were drawn. This process was followed to ensure that questions were designed based on existing theories and related research findings (Vnoučková et al., 2015). Full references to these studies can be found in the reference list after the final chapter of this research report.

Table 6.2: Operationalisation of constructs

Construct	Measurement items	Authors
Support strategies	Facilitate developmental networking for women.	Ames et al., 2019 ; Arthur & Rousseu 1996, 2001 ; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Howson et al., 2018; Gipson et al., 2017; Kilian et al., 2005; Kumara, 2018; Lam et al., 2013,; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016.
	Providing different platforms for learning and growth (learning culture).	Austin, 2015; Birdi et al., 1997; Coetzee, 2017; De Braine, 2011; Judrups et al. 2015; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Hameed & Waheed, 2011; London & Smither 1999; Manuti et al., 2015; Mehta, 2019; Rapuano, 2020; Stacho et al., 2019; Stachová et al. 2017; Taulli, 2018; The Skills Development Act; Swanson & Holton III, 2001.
	Leadership development programmes.	Ames et al., 2019; Knipfer et al., 2017; KPMG International, 2014; Łaba, 2011.
	Facilitate career planning and career management.	Afande, 2015 ; Ames et al., 2019 ; Birdi et al., 1997; Howson et al., 2018 ; Prossack, 2018).
	Sponsorship-seniors use their authority to promote juniors.	Ames et al., 2019 ; Chanland & Murphy, 2017 ; Ibarra et al., 2010; Kumara, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Nkomo, 2012.
	Gender-friendly organisational culture/practices.	Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Jáuregui & Olivos 2018; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; Łaba, 2011; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Nguyen, 2013; Mathur-Helm, 2018; Sherman, 2005; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016; Zulu, 2013.

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Construct	Measurement items	Authors
	No queen bee syndrome-supporting junior women.	Ellemers, 2014 ; Ensour et al., 2017; Faniko et al. 2017 ; Derks et al., 2011; Hills, 2015 ; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Sheppard & Aquino, 2017.
Impediments	Lack of support for women who want to further their formal education.	Joshi et al., 2015 ; Morley, 2014; PWC, 2018a; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014.
	Lack of mentorship programmes.	Ames et al., 2019 ; Kilian, 2005 ; Khalid et al., 2017; Gipson et al., 2017 ; Oosthuizen et al., 2019; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014.
	Unfair and non-transparent promotion practices.	McKinsey & Company, 2019; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Vasel, 2019; Walsh et al., 2016.
	Male domination/males privileged over women in my organisation – patriarch/old boys clubs.	Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Chowdhury, 2015; Islam et al., 2018; Moalusi and Jones, 2019; Naudé, 2017; Zulu, 2013.
	No support for work-family balance.	Bosch, 2016; De Braine, 2011; Ensour et al., 2017; Dizaho et al., 2016); Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Karkowsky & Morris, 2016; Khalid et al., 2017; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; Kumara, 2018; Malek et al., 2019; Mengistu, 2012; Walsh et al., 2016; World Economic Forum, 2020.
	Female role models.	Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Boshoff & Bosch, 2012; Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Khalid et al., 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Walsh et al., 2016.
Skills development	Engagement in programmes and projects that develop skills.	Bhatti & Kaur, 2010; Esen & Collison, 2005; Turaba & Casimir, 2015.
	Progressively improve skills over time.	Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Kuvaas & Dysnik, 2010.
	Skills development opportunities are aligned to career plans/needs.	Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009 ; Carucci, 2018; Garava et al., 2011; McDowall & Saunders, 2010; Swanson & Holton III, 2001.
	Continuously learn new things in my work	Craig, 2018 ; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manuti et al., 2015; Stacho et al., 2019; Vnoučková et al., 2015.
Career progression	Promoted into a higher position within my organisation.	Heathfield, 2019; Osibanjo et al., 2014; Prossack, 2018.
	Increased responsibilities at work.	Heathfield, 2019; Osibanjo et al., 2014; Prossack, 2018.

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Construct	Measurement items	Authors
	My authority in my company has increased over time.	Heathfield, 2019; Osibanjo et al., 2014; Prossack, 2018.
	Satisfaction with career progress in this company.	Heathfield, 2019 ; De Vos, Dujardin, Gielens, Meyers, 2016 ; Osibanjo et al., 2014; Vasel, 2019.
	Changing job title.	Heathfield, 2019; Osibanjo et al., 2014; Vasel, 2019.
Gender discriminatory practices in the workplace	Gender stereotypes - shared beliefs about women, what they should be and how they should behave - preconceptions about women's attributes, characteristics or professional abilities.	Bosch, 2017; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; Koch et al., 2015; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Nkomo, 2012; Thébaud, 2013, 2015.
	Women are treated based on their culturally-assigned roles in the workplace – gender roles.	Bosch, 2017; Łaba, 2011; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; ILO, 2018a, 2022; Geldenhuys, 2011; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Stewart, 2020.
	Women are subjected to unfavourable perceptions when assessed for promotions- gender bias.	Ames et al., 2019; Chanland and Murphy, 2017; Chetty and Naidoo, 2017; Ellemers, 2014; Ely et al., 2011; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Nemoto, 2013; Thébaud, 2015; Patel, 2013; Schwanke, 2013.
	Glass ceiling – an invisible, systemic barrier that prevents women from rising to senior leadership.	Aeran, 2014; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Hills; 2015; Kumara, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Nkomo, 2012; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Moalusi & Jones 2019; Davis & Maldonado, 2015.
	Gender pay gap.	Afande, 2015; Auspurg, Hinz & Sauer, 2017; Boninelli, 2015; Bosch, 2015; Bosch, 2011; Carter & Silva, 2010; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; Tharenou, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2020.
	Sexual harassment.	McKinsey & Company, 2019; Sang & Powell, 2012; Williams et al., 2012.
	Women are unfairly represented at senior organisational levels –diversity.	McKinsey & Company, 2019; Osthuizen et al., 2019; The Employment Equity Act; Preeya, 2014.
	Addressing gender unfair practices are reported.	Bosch, 2017 ; Łaba, 2011; Lahiri-Dutt, 2015; Pienaar et al., 2018.
Personal attributes	Putting in required effort to succeed.	Oosthuizen et al., 2019 ; Vnoučková et al., 2015.
	Professional Confidence.	Afande, 2015 ; Ensour et al., 2017; Kay & Shipman, 2014; Mathur-Helm, 2018; Sturm et al., 2014; O'Neil

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Construct	Measurement items	Authors
		et al., 2015; Franze, 2011; Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019.
	Taking responsibility for career.	Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Howson et al., 2018; Kuvaas & Dysnik, 2010; Łaba, 2011; Rapuano, 2020; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016; Prossack, 2018.
	Optimism/motivated about career future.	Ames et al., 2019 ; Vnoučková et al., 2015); Faniko et al., 2017.
	Career plan communicated with manager.	Afande, 2015 ; Howson et al., 2018 ; Prossack, 2018.
Family responsibilities	Family/childcare demands interfere with career.	Mythili, 2019; Kumara, 2018; O'Driscoll, Brough and Kalliath, 2004; O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2015; Malek et al., 2019;
	Family /childcare responsibilities produce strains on career.	Allen et al, 2013; Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; Dizaho et al., 2016; Ensour et al., 2017; Khalid et al., 2017; Łaba, 2011; O'Driscoll, Brough & Kalliath, 2004.
	Time spent on family/childcare cuts career time.	Carlson, Kacmar & Williams, 2000; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; Neto, Chambel & Carvalho, 2018; Rath, Mohanty & Pradhan, 2019.
	Family pressures stress career engagements.	Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams, 2000; Neto, Chambel and Carvalho, 2018; O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria, 2015; Stewart, 2020.
Legislative provisions	Gender equity and gender fairness legislation.	The Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997; The Constitution of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996; The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998; The Employment Equity Act No. 75 of 1997; The Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995.
	Legislation around skills development of designated groups.	The National Qualification Act No. 67 of 2008; The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998; The Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998.
	Legislation that promotes equitable representation at all levels.	Alexander, 2019; Bosch, 2011; Oosthuizen et al., 2019; Schwartz, 1989; The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998; The Employment Equity Act No. 75 of 1997.
	Legislation set to increase the ownership, management control and employment of blacks and women.	Alexander, 2019; Bosch, 2011; The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Amendment Act No. 46 of 2013.

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6.3.4.2. The research instrument

Questionnaires are among the most widely used data collection methods within the survey strategy because they provide an efficient way to gather responses from a large sample (Mishra & Alok, 2017). Kumar (2015) acknowledges that it is hard to produce a effective questionnaire that will collect the precise data required to answer the research question(s) needed to achieve the research objectives. In order to mitigate this risks, a careful and meticulous approach was used to design the questionnaire employed in this study.

Questionnaires can include both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow respondents to fill in their own answers while closed-ended questions provide a number of alternatives from which the respondent is expected to choose, based on their knowledge or attitude towards the enquiry (Popping, 2015). Closed-ended questions are relatively easy to answer and enhance comparability of answers, yet they strictly confine data collection to the question asked and deprive the researcher from additional information the respondent might have about the question. Although open-ended questions allow the respondents to answer in their own terms, resulting in rich knowledge, probably not thought of before by the researcher, they are time consuming for respondents and difficult to analyse by the researcher. After weighing the pros and cons of both types of questions, the research questionnaire was designed using both closed-ended and opened-ended questions in order to capture as much information as possible from respondents.

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Longer questionnaires usually result in lower response rates (Edwards et al., 2002). Hence, Saunders et al., (2012) consider a four to eight page self-administered questionnaire as acceptable. However, researchers are advised not to cramp the questionnaire presentation just to make it appear shorter (Bryman, 2016). In line with these recommendations, the final questionnaire used in this study consisted of seven pages of clearly tabulated questions inclusive of a cover letter. The cover letter was clear and concise, stating background information, the research problem and its purpose, as well as motivating the reasons why the respondents should complete the survey, a closing note of thanks and the researcher's contact details (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

To ensure consistency, quality and technical correctness, the questionnaire was aligned to conventional questionnaire drafting guidelines such as being clear, concise, comprehensive, orderly and systematic (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaires had an unbiased and captivating title that conveyed the topic of the questionnaire (Bhome et al., 2013), the order and flow of questions were carefully considered and each new topic/section was properly introduced and clear instructions conveyed to respondents (Saunders, 2012). Moreover, the questionnaire's layout was visually attractive, thus, making it easy for respondents to read and present their responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kumar, 2015). In addition, the instrument was reviewed by two subject matter experts and a statistician before piloting it.

Respondents' attributes, behaviour and attitudes were collected using surveys (Kumar, 2015). The Likert scale ratings were employed to capture respondents' opinions relating to closed questions (Bryman, 2016), with higher scores indicating greater variable strength (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). As suggested by Pandey and

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Pandey (2015), positive and negative statements/questions were included in the questionnaire to ensure that respondents read and thought carefully before answering questions. The questionnaire consisted of 12 biographical questions, 43 closed-ended and 14 open-ended questions, totalling 69 questions, all of which were presented in English. This choice of language was because the research targeted respondents who have a fair comprehension of the English language, with at least post-secondary school qualifications (refer to Figure 7.8 below). A sample of the questionnaire has been attached as Annexure A.

6.3.4.2.1. Validity and reliability of the instrument

Validity (accuracy) and reliability (repeatability) are two important measures of effective and rigorous research (Bhome et al., 2013). Internal validity and reliability are the degrees to which questions and answers consistently make sense. Reliability refers to the degree to which data gathering techniques or procedures of analysis are transparent enough to yield consistent findings on different occasions (Saunders et al., 2012). Cronbach's Alpha measurements from both the pilot study and the actual study have been recorded in section 6.3.4.3 below.

Validity relates to whether the findings are about what they appear/are supposed to be, by ensuring that there is adequate literature backing for the investigative questions (Saunders et al. 2012) to ensure that the collected data is generalizable to the population (Bryman, 2016). The data requirement and operationalisation of constructs (Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 above), as well as the content being scrutinised by subject experts, have addressed issues regarding the content validity. Piloting also allowed the researcher to assess the validity and reliability of the data to be collected by establishing the content

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validity of the instrument and the internal consistency of the items (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Predictive or criterion-related validity was achieved using correlation analysis (Saunders et al., 2012) that is discussed in Chapter Seven of this study. Validity, reliability and response rates were maximised by: operationalising questionnaire items (see Table 6.2 above), carefully designing individual questions based on data requirements, presenting a clear and pleasing questionnaire layout, providing a clear explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire, piloting the questionnaire and carefully planning and executing the administration of the questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2012).

6.3.4.2.2. Piloting the research instrument

As indicated above, a pilot study was conducted before administering the self-administered questionnaires (Bryman, 2016). This practice is important when using unpublished questionnaires or a combination of published/unpublished questionnaires (as was the case in this study), and requires the researcher to report on the reliability of the information specific to the study (Thompson, 1994). The purpose of piloting was to identify gaps in the questionnaire and refine it to ensure the smoothness of the response process for respondents and hitch-free data collection for the researcher (Saunders et al., 2012). Piloting was also necessary to establish the content validity of the instrument and the internal consistency of the items (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, the design and structure of the questionnaire and the rigour of piloting, to a large extend, ensured the internal validity and reliability of collected data (Saunders et al., 2012). After piloting, a preliminarily analysis was conducted to ensure that respondents had followed instructions, understood the questions and answered them appropriately (Johnson &

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Christensen, 2014). Subsequent sections report upon the piloting exercise and its outcome.

Forty (40) respondents participated in the pilot study, exceeding the recommended minimum of 10 respondents suggested (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Saunders et al., 2012). The members of the pilot group, who did not form part of the study, were similar to the respondents who comprised the sampled population (Pandey & Pandey, 2015) and mostly included women employed in the accounting sector in Johannesburg. During piloting, information was gathered regarding the time required to complete the questionnaire (on average 25 minutes), layout, clarity of instructions and questions, possible omissions, respondents' comments (Kumar, 2015; Pandey & Pandey, 2015) and the instrument's initial reliability was also measured. Pilot results are reported below.

A. Pilot report on descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics gathered from the pilot study are discussed in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Descriptive statistics from the pilot study

ITEM	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT	CATEGORY WITH THE HIGHEST FREQUENCY
DEMOGRAPHICS			
Race			
African	39	97.5	x
Indian/Asian	1	2.5	
Total	40	100	
Age group			
21-25	11	27.5	
26-30	9	47.5	x

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ITEM	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT	CATEGORY WITH THE HIGHEST FREQUENCY
31-35	6	15	
36-40	4	10	
Total	40	100	
Marital status			
Single	28	70	x
Married	9	22.5	
Partnership/Cohabitation	3	7.5	
Total	40	100	
Number of children/dependents within age groups: [0-5 years]			
None	20	50	**x**
1 Dependent	14	35	
2 Dependents	6	15	
Total	40	100	
Number of children/dependents within age group: [6-10 years]			
None	23	57.5	**x**
1 Dependent	13	32.5	
2 Dependents	3	7.5	
3 Dependents	1	2.5	
Total	40	100	
Number of children/dependents within age group: [11-18 years]			
None	31	77.5	**x**
1 Dependent	6	15	
2 Dependents	2	5	
3 Dependents	1	2.5	
Total	40	100	
Number of children/dependents within age group: [above 18 years]			
None	33	82.5	**x**

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ITEM	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT	CATEGORY WITH THE HIGHEST FREQUENCY
1 Dependent	5	12.5	
2 Dependents	2	5	
Total	40	100	
Job grade/level			
Semi-skilled worker	5	12.5	
Skilled worker/ Junior manager	14	35	**x**
Manager	5	12.5	
Middle manager	8	20	
Senior manager	7	17.5	
Top manager/Executive	1	2.5	
Total	40	100	
Qualifications			
Matric	1	2.5	
Certificates/diploma	4	10	
1st Degree	22	55	**x**
Honours/postgraduate	9	22.5	
Master's and above	4	10	
Total	40	100	
Field of qualification			
Arts	1	2.5	
Commerce	38	95	**x**
Science	1	2.5	
Total	40	100	
OTHER DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS			
\Work experience within your current company?			
1– 5 years	31	77.5	**x**
6 – 10 years	9	22.5	

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ITEM	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT	CATEGORY WITH THE HIGHEST FREQUENCY
Total	40	100	
Type of work contract			
Permanent	34	85	**x**
Limited duration/contract	6	15	
Total	40	100	
What is the approximate number of employees working in your company?			
Less than 10	1	2.5	
11-50 employees	22	55	**x**
51-200 employees	11	27.5	
Above 200 employees	5	12.5	
Unknown	1	2.5	
Total	40	100	

The above section remained unchanged, except for an additional question in the final questionnaire to determine the sector/category within which the company operates. This inclusion was made because the population was extended from women in the accounting/consulting sector to women within the service industry to address the inaccessibility and/or unresponsiveness and slow response from women within the accounting field. The additional question requested respondents to choose between the following sectors: accounting/consulting, IT, education, marketing/sales, banking, recreation, insurance, transport, hospitality, social work, healthcare, law, media/communications, retail or any other.

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B. Initial reliability and convergent validity of the constructs

Reliable scores are acceptable at 0.7 and above, and convergent validity values at 0.5 (Malhotra et al., 2017). In the next section, the initial reliability scores of the various constructs are presented and discussed.

i. Initial reliability of items measuring workplace support strategies construct

There were 7 items in this construct and the Cronbach's Alpha for this construct was 0.915. Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7, therefore the construct was deemed reliable.

Table 6.4: Initial reliability of items measuring workplace support strategies

	Items	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted	Conclusion
1	My company facilitates the development of networks for women.	.794	.898	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.794) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
2	My organisation provides different learning and growth platforms for women.	.770	.899	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
3	In my organisation there are leadership development programmes which target women.	.602	.916	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	My organisation facilitates career planning/career management for women.	.799	.895	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
5	Senior executives in my organisation use their authority to promote women into higher roles.	.795	.898	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
6	The organisational culture/practices where I work are gender friendly.	.731	.903	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

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	Items	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted	Conclusion
7	Successful senior women in my organisation support/promote the advancement of junior women.	.747	.902	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

Based on result of the evaluation presented and discussed in Table 6.4 above, the construct on workplace support strategy to women's skills development and career progression remained unchanged in the final questionnaire.

ii. Initial reliability of workplace impediments construct

Cronbach's Alpha was 0.944 for the 6 items measuring workplace impediments. With Cronbach's Alpha scores greater than 0.7, this construct was deemed reliable with suitable internal consistency of the scale.

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Table 6.5: Initial reliability of items measuring workplace impediments

	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Conclusion
1	My organisation does not support women who want to pursue formal qualifications.	.880	.928	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.880) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
2	There is no mentorship programme to help women in their career development.	.847	.933	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
3	Promotion practices are not fair or transparent.	.853	.931	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	There are powerful male domination cycles that exclude women from top positions.	.751	.943	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
5	My company does not provide support for women to live a balanced 'work-family' life.	.873	.930	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
6	We do not have female role models who have climbed the organisational ladder in the organisation.	.813	.938	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

Based on results of the evaluation presented and discussed in Table 6.5 above, the construct on workplace impediments to women's skills development and career progression remained unchanged in the final questionnaire.

iii. Initial reliability of skills development construct

Cronbach's Alpha for the 4 items measuring skills development was 0.781. There was suitable internal consistency of the scale because Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7, therefore, this construct was assessed as reliable.

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Table 6.6: Initial reliability of items measuring skills development

	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted	Conclusion
1	At work, I engage in programmes/projects that develop my skills.	.634	.706	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.634) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
2	The skills development opportunities offered by my company are aligned to my career plans/needs.	.684	.674	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
3	My skills have progressively improved over time.	.719	.662	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	I am happy with the pace at which I am learning in my company.	.360	.849	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.360) was less than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered non-valid for this study.

Item number 4 (see Table 6.6 above), that had a low corrected item-total correlation of 0.360, was reformulated in the final questionnaire to read “I continuously learn new things in my work”.

iv. Initial reliability of career progression construct

Cronbach's Alpha value for the 5 items measuring career progression was 0.844, this indicates acceptable internal consistency of the scale because Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7.

Table 6.7: Initial reliability of items measuring career progression

	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted	Conclusion
1	I have moved from a lower to a higher position.	.434	.879	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.434) was less than 0.5. Therefore, this item needed to be replaced.

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2	My responsibilities at work have increased over time.	.702	.807	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.702) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
3	My authority in my company has increased over time.	.724	.791	The convergent validity of this item was supported because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	I am satisfied with my career progress at work.	.696	.802	The convergent validity of this item was supported because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
5	My job title has changed favourably over time.	.777	.775	The convergent validity of this item was supported because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

Item number 1 (refer to Table 6.7 above), with a low corrected item-total correlation of 0.434, was rephrased in the final questionnaire to read 'I got promoted into a higher position within my organisation'.

v. Initial reliability of personal attributes construct

Cronbach's Alpha for the 6 items measuring personal attributes was 0.652, and, thus, was below 0.7. This construct's reliability needed to be improved because the internal consistency of the scale was insufficient.

Table 6.8: Initial reliability of items measuring personal attributes

	Items	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted	Conclusion
1	I put in the required effort to succeed in my career.	.636	.568	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.634) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
2	I am confident about my professional abilities.	.547	.579	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

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3	I take full responsibility for my career growth	.620	.567	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	I am optimistic about the future of my career.	.528	.589	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
5	I talk about my career plans/aspirations to my manager.	.657	.541	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
6	I prioritise my work responsibilities over my family responsibilities.	.174	.891	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.174) was less than 0.5. Therefore, this item needed to be replaced.

Item number 6 under this construct (see Table 6.8 above), was removed from the final questionnaire as the corrected item-total correlation was very low i.e., 0.174.

vi. Initial reliability of family responsibilities construct

Cronbach's Alpha for the 4 Items measuring family responsibilities was 0.482, and, thus, was less than 0.7, indicating poor internal consistency of the scale. Therefore, this construct needed to be improved.

Table 6.9: Initial reliability of items measuring family responsibilities

	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item deleted	Conclusion
1	My spouse/partner or relative(s) assist me with house chores or child care duties.	.087	.539	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.087) was less than 0.5. Therefore, this item needed to be replaced.
2	I have a paid domestic worker at home to help me.	.443	.210	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items was less than 0.5. Therefore, this item needed to be replaced.
3	I feel that my family responsibilities negatively affect my career.	.391	.288	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items was less than 0.5.

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				Therefore, this item had poor convergent validity.
4	My family comes first, hence I spend a great proportion of my time on family responsibilities.	.220	.460	The convergent validity of this item was not supported because its correlation with the rest of the items was less than 0.5. Therefore, this item had a poor convergent validity.

In support of the issues with poor reliability and internal consistence revealed in Table 6.9 above, further in-depth analysis of the construct by subject experts revealed that this section did not focus on what the questionnaire/statements sought to achieve (i.e., the impact of family responsibilities on women's career). Hence all items in the construct were replaced in the final questionnaire by statements from pre-existing questionnaires measuring family/childcare demands interfering with a career, family/childcare responsibilities constraining a career, time spent on family/childcare reducing career time, and family pressures resulting in career stress. New items were: 'The demands of my family/home/children interfere with my career', 'My family /childcare responsibilities produce strain that makes it difficult for me to fulfil my career ambitions', 'The time I spend on my family responsibilities cuts into the time I would like to spend on my career' and 'Due to all the family pressures, I am sometimes too stressed to engage in activities related to my caree'. In previous studies, the first two items had a Cronbach value of 0.87 (O'Driscoll, Brough & Kalliath, 2004) while the last two items had a Cronbach value of 0.95 (Carlson, Kacmar & Williams, 2000) and 0.96 (Neto, Chambel & Carvalho, 2018).

vii. Initial reliability of workplace gender discriminatory practices construct

Cronbach's Alpha value for the 8 items measuring workplace gender discriminatory practices was 0.944. There was suitable internal consistency of the scale because Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7, therefore, this construct was reliable.

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Table 6.10: Initial reliability of items measuring workplace gender discriminatory practices

	Items	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted	Conclusion
1	There are preconceptions about women's attributes, characteristics or professional abilities in my organisation.	.611	.950	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.611) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
2	In my workplace, women are treated based on their culturally assigned roles.	.763	.939	This item was important was measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
3	In my organisation women are subjected to unfavourable perceptions when assessed for promotion.	.796	.937	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	I feel that women's careers are stuck at lower and middle management levels in my organisation.	.844	.933	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
5	In my company, women earn lower salaries than men for the same job done.	.797	.937	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
6	Cases of sexual harassment were reported by women in my workplace.	.928	.928	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
7	Women are unfairly represented (less than 50%) at senior levels in the organisation.	.841	.933	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
8	When reported, my organisation puts in little or no effort to address discriminatory gender practices.	.837	.934	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

Based on result of the evaluation presented and discussed in the Table 6.10 above, the construct on workplace gender discriminatory practices remained unchanged in the final questionnaire.

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viii. Initial reliability of legislation on gender in the workplace construct

Cronbach's Alpha for the 4 items measuring legislation on gender in the workplace was 0.949. There was suitable internal consistency of the scale because Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7. Therefore, this construct was deemed reliable.

Table 6.11: Initial reliability of items measuring legislation on gender in the workplace

	Items	Corrected Item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted	Conclusion
1	My organisation complies with gender equity and gender fairness legislation.	.929	.919	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items (0.929) was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
2	My organisation complies with legislation around skills development of designated groups.	.906	.925	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
3	My organisation complies with legislation that promotes equitable representation at all levels.	.801	.960	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.
4	My organisation complies with legislation set to increase the ownership, management control and employment of blacks and women.	.909	.925	This item was important in measuring the construct because its correlation with the rest of the items was greater than 0.5. Therefore, this item was considered valid for this study.

Based on result of the evaluation presented and discussed in the Table 6.11 above, the construct relating to legislation on gender in the workplace remained unchanged in the final questionnaire.

To carter for the accessibility of women within the chosen accounting sector, a question was added in the descriptive statistics to capture various sectors in which respondent

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were working. Also, out of the eight constructs piloted, three were refined (skills development, career progression, personal attributes) one was completely changed (family dynamics) while the others remained unchanged. This section marks the end of the qualitative report on piloting. The next section provides the report on the open-ended questions.

C. Open-ended questions under each construct in the questionnaire

Open-ended questions were asked to capture women's overall impressions about each construct measured in the questionnaire. The issue that arose from the pilot exercise was that the open-ended questions were ambiguous – 'skills development' and 'career progression' were not separated. For example, 'What is your overall impression about the support your organisation provides to women for their skills development and career progression?' However, participants' impressions regarding skills development may not necessarily be true for career progression because they are two separate constructs and, thus, needed to be analysed separately. The questionnaire, therefore, was adjusted to include separate open-ended questions for respondents' impressions about skills development and career progression (For example: 'What is your overall impression about the support your organisation provides to women for their skills development?' and 'What is your overall impression about the support your organisation provides to women for their career progression?').

Likewise, impressions about legal compliance that was captured under one question was also subdivided into three questions to capture impressions about compliance with legislation on gender equity, compliance with legislation on skills development and

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compliance with legislation relating to gender equity/representation at senior levels separately. All these adjustments were made before administering the final questionnaire.

6.3.4.3. Administration of the questionnaire

After the piloting and preliminary analysis exercise (presented in the piloting report above), the questionnaire was refined (as explained in Section 6.3.4.2.2) and administered to the study sample with the help professional data collection specialists from the 26 February to 30 June 2021. An electronically self-administered questionnaire, in which respondents had to read and answer the questions by themselves (Creswell, 2014) was issued for completion using an online platform (a google form). Even though it is not possible for the researcher to assist respondents with difficult questions, probe respondents to elaborate their answers or ensure a high response rate, self-administered questionnaires are quicker to administer, cost efficient, convenient for respondents and limit variability (Bryman, 2016). Hence the rationale for using self-administered online questionnaires in this study.

The survey was initially launched online and advertised to a panel of more than 2 000 respondents. The screening questions were first asked using a google form that was constructed in such a way that respondents who failed the screening questions' component were not able to continue with the survey. A total of 620 respondents attempted the survey online, of whom 188 met the screening questions criteria and the survey link was distributed to them online via a panel. Screening questions comprised: gender (only females were allowed to complete the survey), employment status (only employed individuals were allowed to complete the survey), industry in which they worked (initially the survey focused only on females in the accounting profession but it was later

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extended to those employed within the service sector) and province (only respondents working in Johannesburg could complete the survey).

When responses from the panel slowed down enumerators were recruited to visit companies to contact female employees, share the google form survey link with them via their WhatsApp numbers and encourage them to take part in the survey online. Some of the organisations in the service industry visited included: Florida Primary school, Dowling Primary school, University of Johannesburg, Coronation Hospital, Garden City shopping complex, Simba Company, Nedbank, Capitec Bank, African Bank, First National Bank and Standard Bank. An exhaustive list of companies surveyed cannot be provided because respondents were not required to provide the name of the company in which they work, and enumerators were not instructed to keep a record of companies surveyed. Most respondents were given the link to the google form survey at their workplace and the Managers of the different companies gave verbal permission for the survey link to be distributed to their employees. However, because most questions asked were about personal information and experiences, and not about confidential company information, respondents were free to respond in their own capacity without company permission.

The main challenge encountered during the administration of the questionnaire was the high drop-out rate due to the length of the survey. Many respondents complained about the open-ended questions that required them to type answers. This protest led to the design of strategies to deal with this challenge. Firstly, the settings of the open-ended questions were changed from compulsory to optional and respondents were informed that that they could omit answering the open-ended questions if they felt they had no further comments. This decision was taken after collecting about half of the responses. Secondly,

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enumerators and a field worker were again sent to companies to try to motivate employees to answer the online survey until the target of 412 respondents was reached, after which data analysis commenced.

6.4. Data analysis

Unless raw data is properly processed, analysed and interpreted, it conveys little meaning (Saunders et al., 2012). Data analysis helps to examine, describe, interpret and present relationships and trends within data. Analysis of quantitative data was conducted through the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) system while a thematic content analysis approach was used to analyse responses to qualitative questions.

6.4.1. Analysis of quantitative data

The SEM analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS AMOS version 27. This analysis methodology is flexible, comprehensive and ideal to represent, test and estimate theoretical models, as well as to explain the extent of variance and evaluate the structural relationships of the variables in the conceptual model (Ramlall, 2017). To analysis descriptive data, the SPSS was used because it is a powerful tool for manipulating and deciphering survey data, providing solutions for data management and data documentation (IBM, 2017). Scales of measurement, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

6.4.1.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics describe the features of the data within a sample (Palys & Atchison, 2014). It also summarises sample observations (Babbie, 2013) of the independent and dependent variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It presents the mode, median and the

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mean, that are used to measure central tendencies in descriptive statistics (Bryman, 2016). The mode represents the most frequent occurrence, the median is the mid-point in a distribution, and the mean is the average value. It is equally important to describe how data values for the different variables are dispersed around the central tendency (Saunders et al., 2012). In this study the practice was conducted using the inter-quartile range and the standard deviation. While the former measurement depicts the difference between values, the later describes and compares the degree by which values differ from the mean (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, median, mode and ranges were used in this study.

6.4.1.2. Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics extend beyond descriptive statistics to depict significant differences and relationships between sample groups and enables researchers to test hypotheses and generalise results based on analytic evidence (Saunders et al., 2012). Inferential statistics are used to deduce measures and patterns that allow the researcher to generalise conclusion from the sample in the population (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This process also unveils the link between variables and/or compares variables of groups in such a way that inferences to the population can be drawn from the sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Babbie (2013, p. 474) defines the level of significance as “the degree of likelihood that an observed, empirical relationship could be attributed to sampling error”. The author reveals that levels of significance of 0.05, 0.10 and 0.001 are norms in social research. Significance testing assesses the probability that a pattern, such as a relationship between variables, is occurring by chance alone (Kumar, 2015). This aspect is usually

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measured as the p-value. A low p-value (generally $p<0.05$) indicates a statistically significant relationship. This result means that the probability of the test statistic occurring by chance is very low (Saunders et al., 2012) i.e., the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected while the hypothesis (H1) is accepted. The reverse is also true. Saunders et al. (2012) cautions researchers from committing two types of errors when analysing data. A Type I error is rejecting the null hypothesis when it should not be rejected and a Type II error is accepting the null hypothesis when it should be rejected. Chances of making a Type I error can be reduced by setting the significance level at 0.01 rather than 0.05. However, the scholars argue that a Type II error is the opposite of a Type I error, thus, reducing Type I error will increase the chance of making a Type II error by the same amount. Hence the p<value for this study was pre-set at 0.05.

A confidence interval is "a range of values (an interval) that describes a level of uncertainty around an estimated observed score" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 158). Most researchers either specify the level of confidence in advance or they just report the level of significance for each tested relationship (Babbie, 2013). Margins of error greatly depend on the sample size and +/-5% margin of error is acceptable for sample sizes around 400 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) as was the case in this study.

Data capturing errors were minimised by carefully recording information, checking illegitimate codes, looking for illogical responses and attaching labels to each variable and their associated code (Saunders et al., 2012). Item non-response/missing data is when people agree to complete the questionnaire but accidently or intentionally fail to answer specific questions (Bryman, 2016). Codes were generated for missing data and, when necessary, missing data was excluded from subsequent analyses (Saunders et al.,

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2012). Due to the sensitive nature of AMOS errors were handled in SPSS before exporting the data to AMOS.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyse data. SEM refers to a set of statistical techniques researchers use to measure and analyse relationships of observed and latent variables (Kline, 2011). The two common SEM approaches often used are Covariance based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) and Partial Least Squares based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Dash & Paul, 2021). The former approach is based on covariance, while the later is based on variance. CB-SEM is approporitate to test existing theories and evaluate model fitness while PLS-SEM is mostly used at an exploratory stage for predictions and theory building or to maximise R-square (Hair et al., 2019). This study sought to test existing theories and the fitness of the conceptual model in Figure 1.2., hence CB SEM was preferred.

Normality in statistics is a characteristic of a random variable that is distributed as per the normal distribution (Byrne, 2010). Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients were used to test normality with acceptable values to be below ±3 and ±10, respectively.

The assessment of the research model was done using the confirmatory factors analysis and structural model analysis. The confirmatory factors analysis examines the associations between observed measures and constructs using the ‘goodness-of-fit’, the validity of the measurement model, the reliability and convergent validity, and the statistical evidence of discriminant validity (Brown, 2015). Chi-square ratio, the CFI (Goodness-of-Fit-Index), TLI (Tucker Lewis Index), NFI (Normed Fit Index) and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) were used to assess goodness-of-fit. The

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model was considered fit if the Chi-square ratio of the model was less than 5 (Bentler, 1989, 1990), the CFI (Goodness-of-Fit-Index) and TLI (Tucker Lewis Index) exceeded 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2014), NFI (normed fit index) exceeded 0.90 (Byrne, 1994) and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) was below 0.08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). All factor loadings in the measurement model were considered good if above 0.5 (Malhotra et al., 2017). The factor loading indicates the correlation between the item/variable and the factor.

Reliability, which is the extent to which the scale of a construct yields stable and consistent results (Taherdoost, 2016) was calculated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Field, 2013) with cut-off value for both at 0.7 (Malhotra et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistency while composite reliability measures the aggregate reliability at least similar items. Convergent validity, the degree to which a group of items measures only one latent variable in the matching direction, was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) estimates (Hosany et al., 2015). AVE is a assesses of the degree of variance that is captured by a construct compared to variance due to measurement errors. Convergent validity was affirmed when factor loadings were at least 0.5. Discriminant validity, which is the level to which a construct discriminates from other constructs was calculated through the matrix of correlations and AVE square root coefficients (Taherdoost, 2016; Hair et al., 2022).

The structural model analysis was performed with AMOS 27, to test the structural model using indices of the structural model (i.e., Chi-square, p value). It was also used to determine the standardised regression weights using p-values (Sig) (to estimate the significance of the predictive effect and how the independent variable affects the

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dependent variable) and Beta (β) values (to assess the direction and strength of the relationship) (Pallant, 2010).

The variance explained indicates the influence of the independent variables on dependent variables and was measured using R^2 (Hosany et al., 2015). R-squared (R^2) is a measure that represents the share of the variance for a reliant/dependent variable that is explained by an independent variable (s) in a regression model. Analysis of quantitative data was followed by the analysis of qualitative data for data cross examination.

6.4.2. Analysis of qualitative data

A combination of interpretive and deductive methods demonstrates the added value of open-ended questions for a standardised questionnaire or survey instrument (Kelly et al., 2021). The inclusion of open-ended questions in quantitative research (an action that often follows a positivist rationale) allows respondents also to voice their opinion, hence balancing power between the researcher and respondents (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Responses to open questions complement and enrich survey findings and draw attention to underlying complexities, nuances and sometimes contradictions that are difficult to capture in closed-ended questions (Popping, 2015). This statement provides support for the inclusion and analysis (thematic content analysis) of open-ended questions in this study.

Although having open-ended questions is a common practice when administering attitude surveys, because of their potential to elicit detailed responses and highlight issues that the researcher might not have considered, they also can provide more nuances in understanding why respondents answered certain closed-ended questions in the way

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they did (Kumar, 2015). In addition, open-ended questions are often time consuming, difficult to analyse and/or not completed by respondents (Kelly et al., 2021) and opinions gathered may not represent those of the entire study sample (Bryman, 2016). To address these drawbacks, findings from open-ended questions were compared with those from closed-ended questions.

Kelly et al. (2021) advice that with thematic content analysis, the researcher examines data to identify common/repeated themes, topics, ideas or patterns. Analysis of qualitative data was done manually. Firstly, the researcher read all the respondents' comments and decided on themes based upon common perceptions provided in responses. The researcher then identified non-related issues (outliners) in order to critically reflect on them to determine relevance for the research and if further analysis was necessary (Moore et al., 2016). Secondly, coding schemes were developed. Guidelines for coding schemes recommend considering both the explicit and latent content of the response. In some cases, contextual judgement was applied to interpret and decide under which category the comment should fall. Coding categories were formulated in a neutral manner – specific, concrete and short – using the conceptual framework (Popping, 2015) presented in Chapter One as a guideline. This practice was facilitated by the fact that open-ended questions were asked at the end of each section covering specific concepts raised in the questionnaire.

6.5. Research ethics

Ethical standards should be adhered to prior to and during every stage of the research project to produce quality social research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are risks of harm and deception during data collection, hence the principles of voluntary

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participation and informed consent were adhered to (Bhome et al., 2013) and issues regarding the invasion of respondents' privacy were covered in the consent statement (Bryman, 2016) and those concerning ideological neutrality likewise protected when conducting and interpreting results (Bhome et al., 2013). Furthermore, professional/institutional code of ethics (i.e., for the Central University of Technology) was consulted and adhered to and credit was given to all consulted authors and literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Honesty, respect, acknowledgement, openness, unbiasedness, anonymity and safety were hallmarks at the different stages of this research. The cover letter specified respondents' rights to anonymity, confidentiality and openness to share research outcomes. The quantitative research approach when duly followed, as was the case in the study, are value-laden and ethical because they are based on facts and the objectivity of practices, concepts and discourses (Zyphur & Pierides, 2020). Therefore, this study was conducted in an ethical manner.

6.6. Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology used in this study. This research espoused a post positivist philosophy; primarily, it followed a quantitative approach complemented by open-ended questions that gathered respondents' opinions and experiences. The study was descriptive or correlative because it aimed to describe factors that affect women's skills development and their workplace progression. It also examined the link between women's skills development and career progression and selected organisational and non-organisational factors and existing legislation. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed via online platforms using a convenience non-probability sampling method to gather data from 412 women employed within various spheres of the

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service industry within Johannesburg. Although the research instrument was unpublished, strict academic rules regarding questionnaire design were followed by following protocols on questionnaire data requirements and an operationalisation of constructs. A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire, after which it was revised to meet the purpose of this study. Quantitative data was analysed using SEM and qualitative data was analysed using a thematic content analysis approach. All research techniques and protocols employed followed sound research ethics principles. The next chapter presents the research findings.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

7.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to design a framework to facilitate the skills development and career progression of women. The study was primarily quantitative in nature; however, open-ended questions were added at the end of each section to capture respondents' thoughts on specific issues. This chapter presents the research results, discussions and interpretations of quantitative data analysis, while the next chapter unpacks the qualitative results.

7.2. Quantitative research results

The section on quantitative findings provides results of the numerical data collected for this study. It covers descriptive statistics, the assessment of the research model and variance statistics.

7.2.1. Descriptive statistics

This section describes, interprets and discusses descriptive statistics of this study, such as the demographic distribution of the sample, central tendency measures and normality tests.

7.2.1.1. Demographic distribution of respondents

A total of 412 women participated in this study. Demographic variables measured include employment status, company category, age, marital status, race, number of

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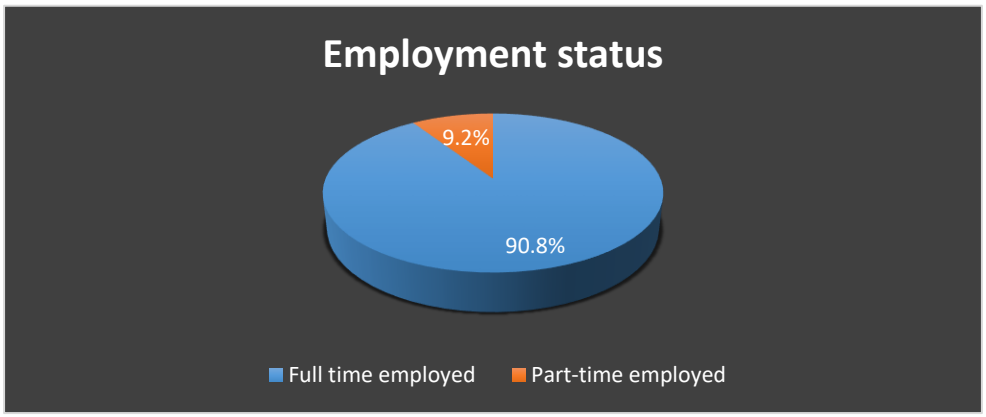
children/dependents within different age groups, job grade/level, qualification level, qualification field, tenure in current company, type of work contract and the number of employees working in the respondent's company. In the next sections each of these demographic variables are presented and discussed.

7.2.1.1.1. Employment status of respondents

The employment status of the sample is presented in Figure 7.1 below and discussed thereafter.

Figure 7.1: Employment status of respondents



As illustrated in Figure 7.1, 90.8% of respondents i.e., 373 respondents were full-time employees, 38 respondents (9.2%) were part-time employees. One respondent did not answer this question and was excluded when calculating the percentage. It can be inferred that the majority of women who are full-time employees have to continuously juggle between work and other life commitments and, hence, are more susceptible to work-life conflicts as was revealed in previous research (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019; Valcour, 2015) (refer to Section 5.2.16 above).

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7.2.1.1.2. Company category of the sample

The company category of the sample is presented in Figure 7.2 below and discussed thereafter.

Figure 7.2: Company category of the sample

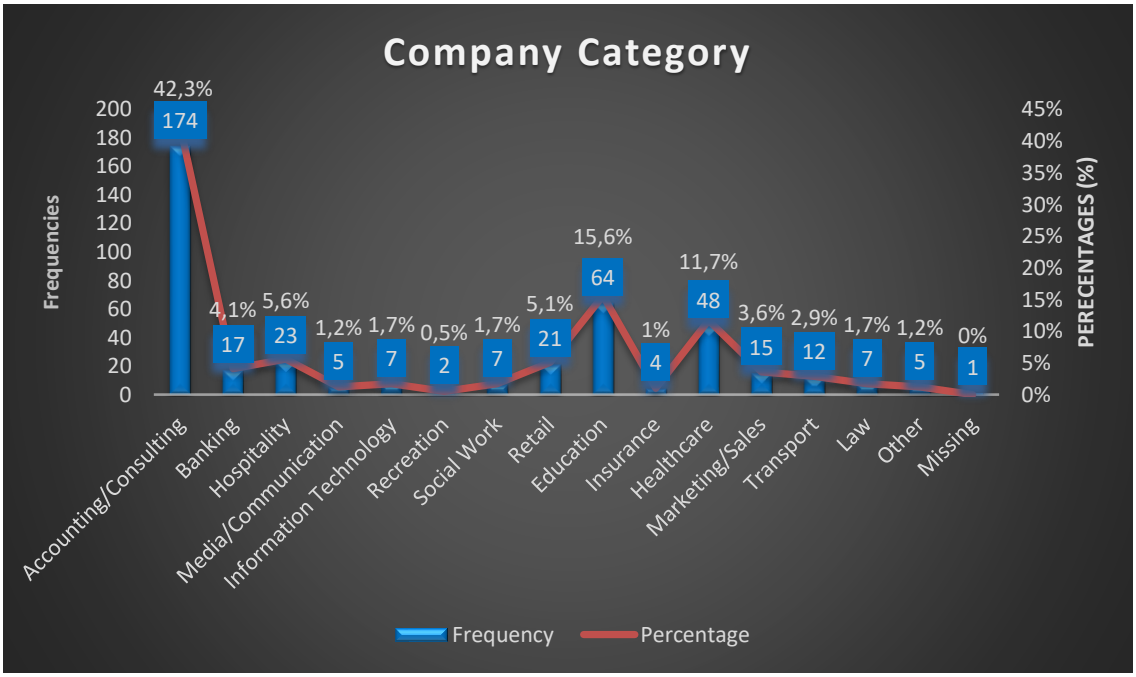

Figure 7.2 shows that the majority of respondents (42.3%, n=174)) are employed in companies within the field of accounting/consulting, followed by education (15.6%, n=64) and healthcare (11.7%, n=48). Each of the remaining sectors constitutes less than 6% of the sample. The justification for most respondents working for companies within the field of accounting/consulting is that this study originally intended to focus on women in the accounting/consulting sector, however, due to factors beyond the researcher's control, it was extended to the service sector in general (see Section 6.3.2 above).

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7.2.1.1.3. Age distribution of the sample group

The age distribution of the sample is portrayed in Figure 7.3 below and discussed afterwards.

Figure 7.3: Age distribution of the sample

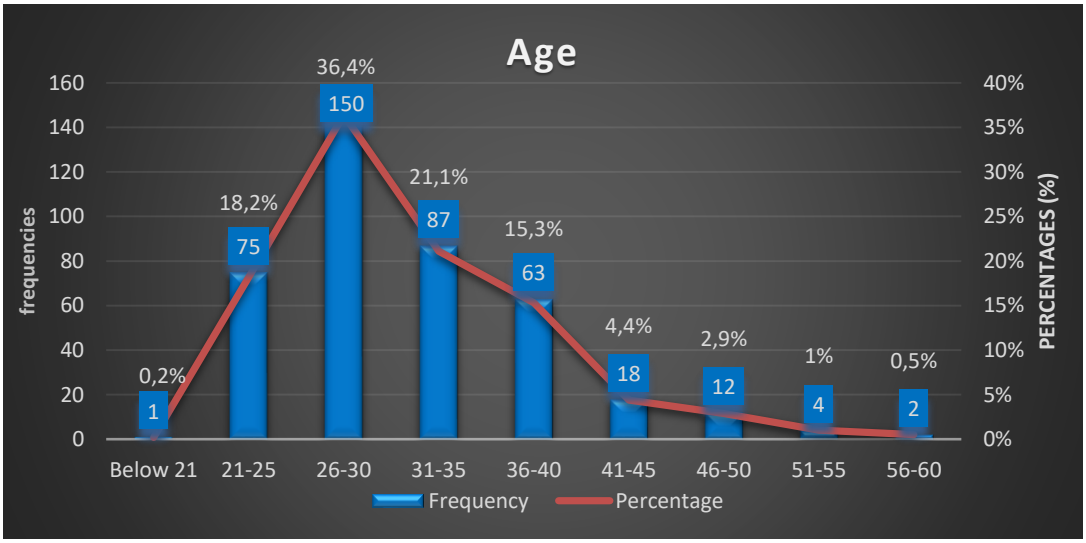

Figure 7.3 reveals that the majority of respondents fall within the age group 26-30 years (36.4%, n=150). This group is followed by respondents within the age group 31-35 years (21.1%), then by women who are between 21 and 25 years old (18.2%, n=75) and lastly by women aged between 36 and 40 years (15.3%, n=63). Hence 91% of the sampled population are aged between 21 and 40 years. The sum of respondents from other age groups totals less than 9% of the entire sample. This result means that the majority of respondents are young adult women within the age bracket of 21 to 40 years and, thus, are at the prime of their fertility and/or busy raising children (Jacobson, 2014; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) – a situation that could create some work-life conflicts (see

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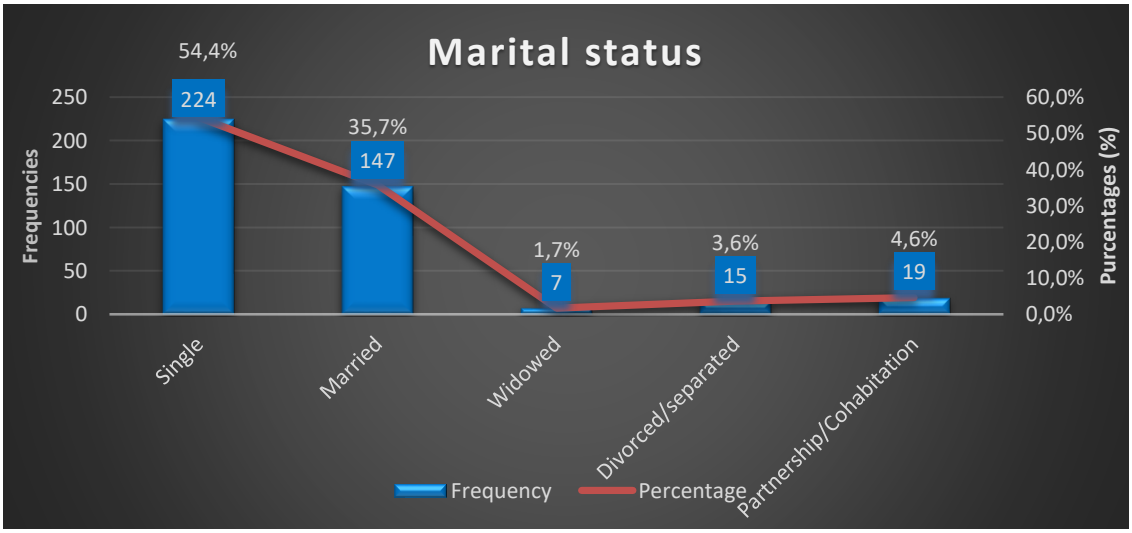
Section 5.2.16 above). Hence the appropriateness of the sample for measuring work-family conflicts.

7.2.1.1.4. Marital status of respondents

The marital status of women who took part in this study are presented in Figure 7.4 below and explained subsequently.

Figure 7.4: Marital status of respondents



Findings in Figure 7.4 indicate that the majority of study respondents are single (54.4%, n=224), while 35.7% are married (n=147), 4.6% cohabitate (19), 3.6% are divorced (n=15) and 1.7% are widows (n=7). This result implies that only 40.3 % of women are likely to received support from a partner (35.7% who are married and 4.6% who cohabitate). However, Islam et al (2018) and Rath et al. (2019) state that support from a partner or husband is critical for women's career advancement and the lack thereof could have adverse effects (see Section 5.2.16 above).

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7.2.1.1.5. Race distribution

The racial representation in this study is displayed in Figure 7.5 below and discussed subsequently.

Figure 7.5: Race distribution of respondents.

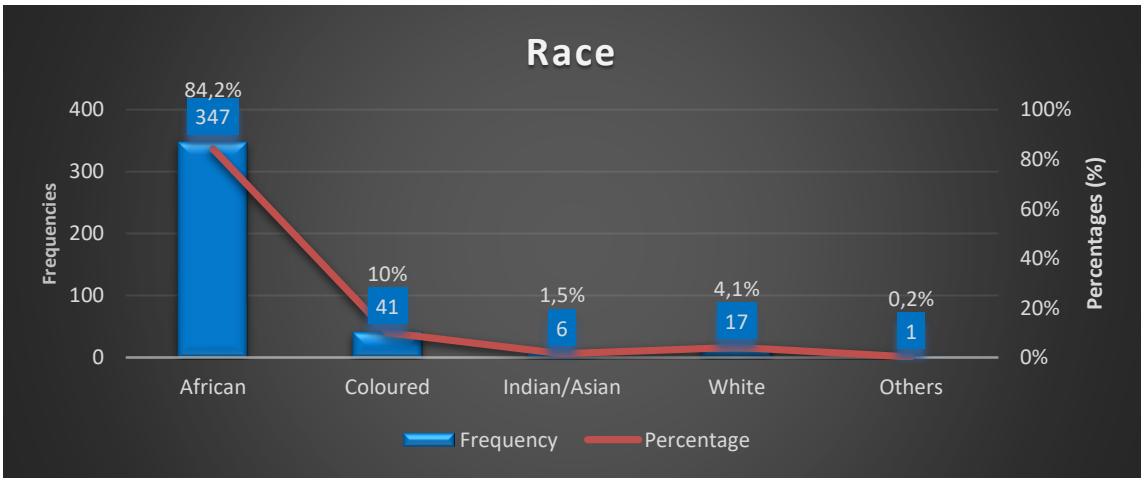

Figure 7.5 indicates that the greatest number of respondents are from African descend (84.2%, n=347), meanwhile 10% (n=41), 4.1% (n=17), 1.5% (n=6) of women in the sample are Coloureds, Whites or Indians/Asians respectively. Only 0.2% fall under the category 'other' (n=1). Thus, most women in the sample are Africans, a fact that supports researchers' plea for more research to be conducted on African women's careers (Komalasari et al., 2017) with the aim of preserving the African culture that advocates the indispensable role of women within the family unit (Bosch, 2017; Chilisaa & Ntseane, 2010) (refer to Section 1.4.4 above). Such researcher implies that a woman's career success should not be detrimental to her nurturing role – rather she should be assisted to assume her dual responsibilities with greater ease.

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7.2.1.1.6. Distribution of respondents' dependents.

The distribution of women according to the number of their dependants within different age groups is presented in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.6 below and discussed after.

Table 7.1: Distribution of respondents' dependents

	0-5 years age group		6-10 years age group		11-18 years age group		Above 18 years age group	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
None	218	52.9%	244	59.2%	261	63.3%	284	68.9%
1 Dependent	166	40.3%	120	29.1%	92	22.3%	53	12.9%
2 Dependents	23	5.6%	44	10.7%	51	12.4%	48	11.7%
3 Dependents	3	0.7%	4	1%	7	1.7%	14	3.4%
4 Dependents	1	0.2%	0	0%	1	0.2%	6	1.5%
5 or more dependents	1	0.2%	0	0%	0	0%	7	1.7%
Total	412	100	412	100	412	100	412	100

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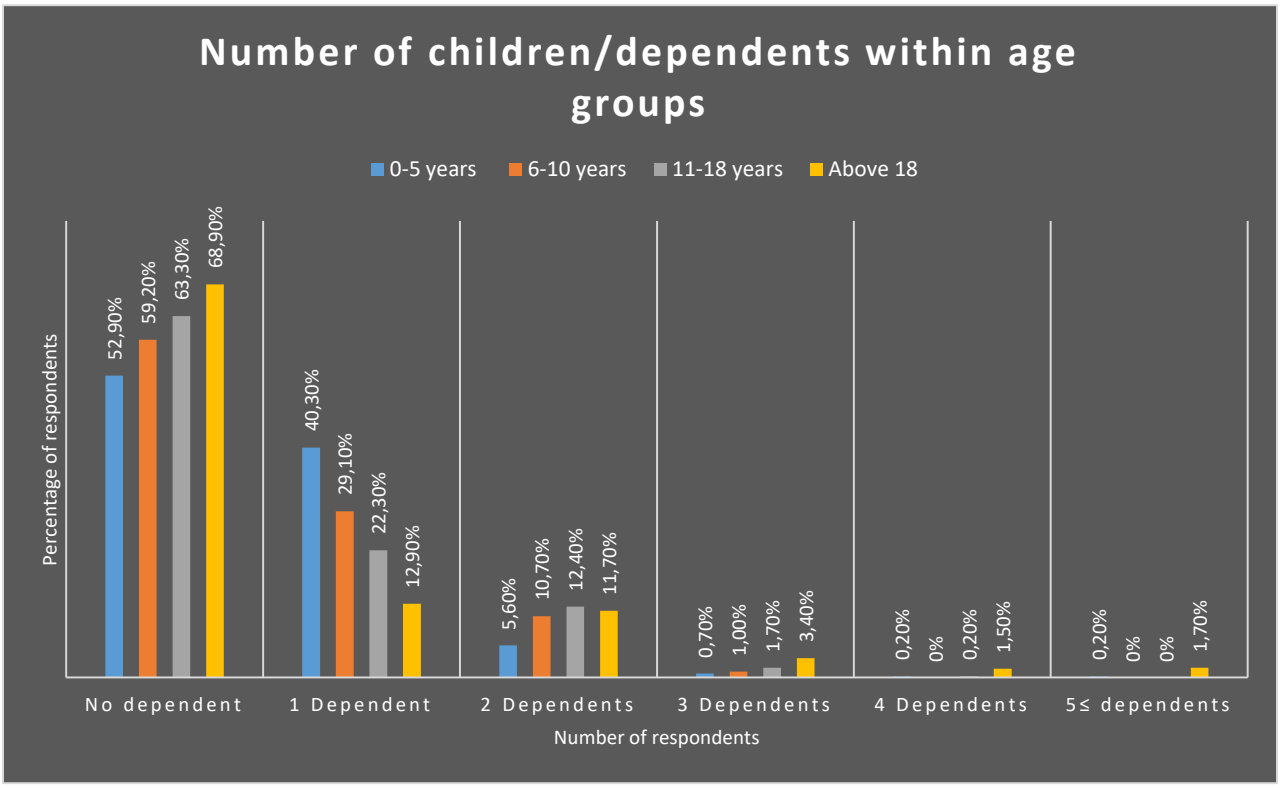
Figure 7.6: Distribution of dependent of respondents



The majority of respondents (52.9%, n=218) indicated that they do not have dependents within the 0-5 years age group. However, 47.1% (i.e., 40.3% + 5.6% + 0.7% + 0.2%+ 0.2%, n=194) indicated that they have at least 1 dependent within the 0-5 years age group. Also 59.2% of women revealed that they do not have dependents between 6 and 10 years old (n=244), while 40.8% (n=168) of women indicated that they have at least 1 dependent who is within this age group (i.e 29.1% +10.7%+1%). In addition, 63.3% of the sample revealed that they do not have dependents within the 11-18 years age group (n=261), while 36.7% indicated that they have at least 1 dependent within this age group (i.e 22.3% +12.4%+1.7%+0.2%, n=151). Lastly, 68.9% (n= 284) of respondents do not have dependents who are above 18 years while 31.1% (n=125) revealed that they have

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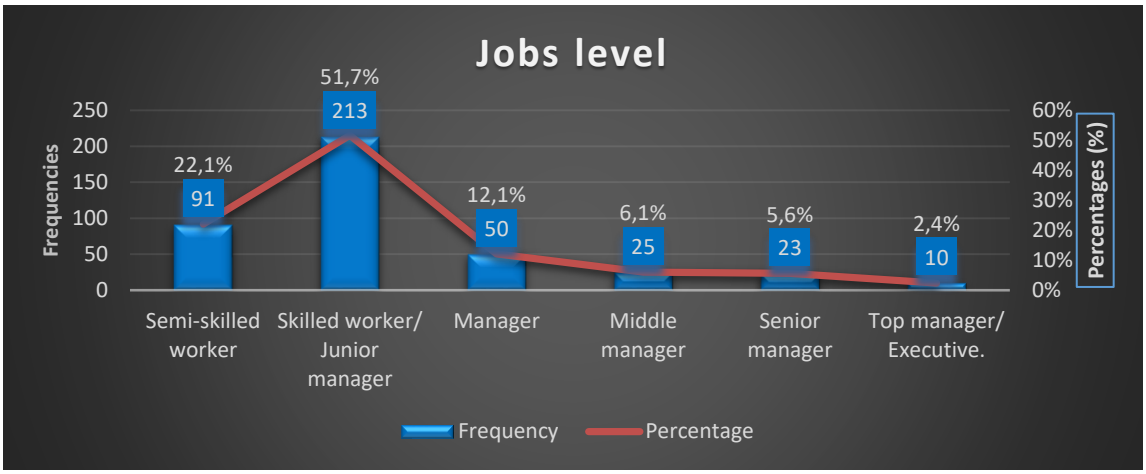
at least one dependent within this age group (i.e., 12.9%+11.7%+3.4% +1.5% +1.7%). The majority of women who responded to the questionnaire do not have dependents.

Even though the majority of women indicated that they do not have dependants, 47.1% of women (quite a significant proportion of the sample) had at least 1 dependent within 0 - 5 year's old group and 40.8% had dependents within the 6-10 years group. Children within this age group usually require more attention than older children (Stewart, 2020), therefore, their parents, if employed, are more prone to work-family conflicts (Malek et al., 2019) (discussed in Section 5.2.16 above).

7.2.1.1.7. Job level of respondents

The job levels of respondents are presented in Figure 7.7 below and discussed afterwards.

Figure 7.7: Job levels of respondents



The results presented in Figure 7.7 above indicate that 22.1% (n=91) of respondents were semi-skilled and 51.7% (n=213) were skilled workers or junior managers. Only 12.1% (n=50), 6.1% (n=25), 5.6% (n=23) and 2.4% (n=10) were managers, middle managers,

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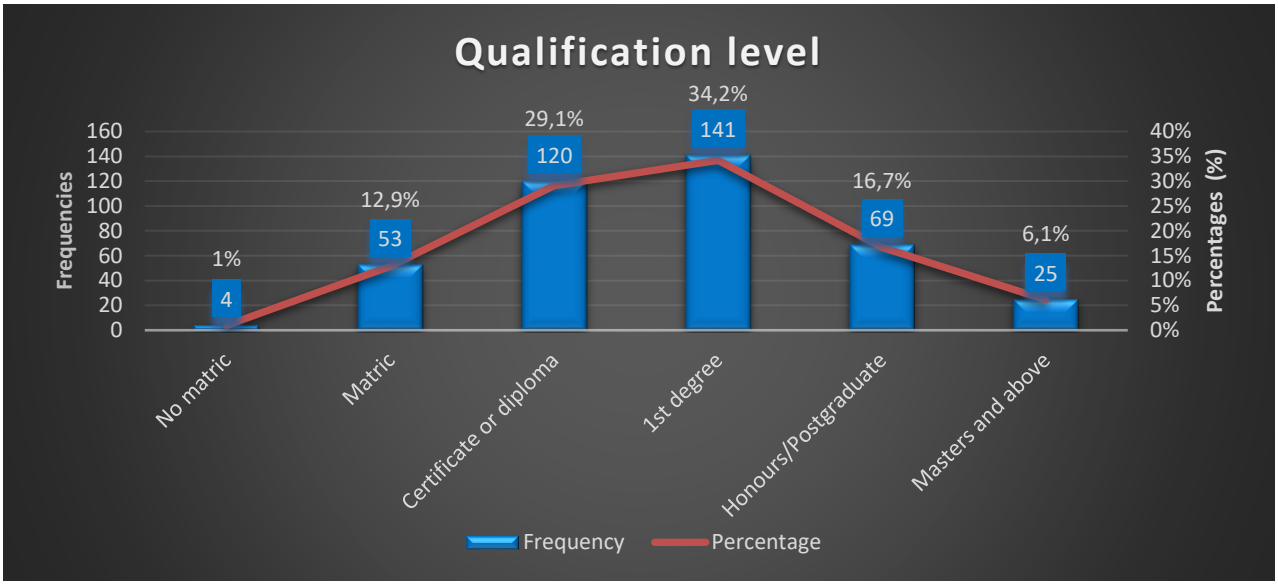
senior managers and top managers respectively. This result shows that women still have the potential to develop and progress into senior and management positions.

7.2.1.1.8. Level of qualification of respondents

The levels of qualification of respondents are shown Figure 7.8 below and discussed thereafter.

Figure 7.8: Qualification of respondents



As seen in Figure 7.8, most respondents have a 1st degree as their highest qualification (34.2%, n=141). Furthermore, 29.1% (n=120) have certificates/diplomas, 16.7% (n=69) have honours/post graduate qualifications, 12.9% (n=53) have matric, a total of 6.1% (n=25) have Master's degrees, and 1% (n=4) do not have a matric certificate. This result implies that most respondents are sufficiently educated to engage in further training and development.

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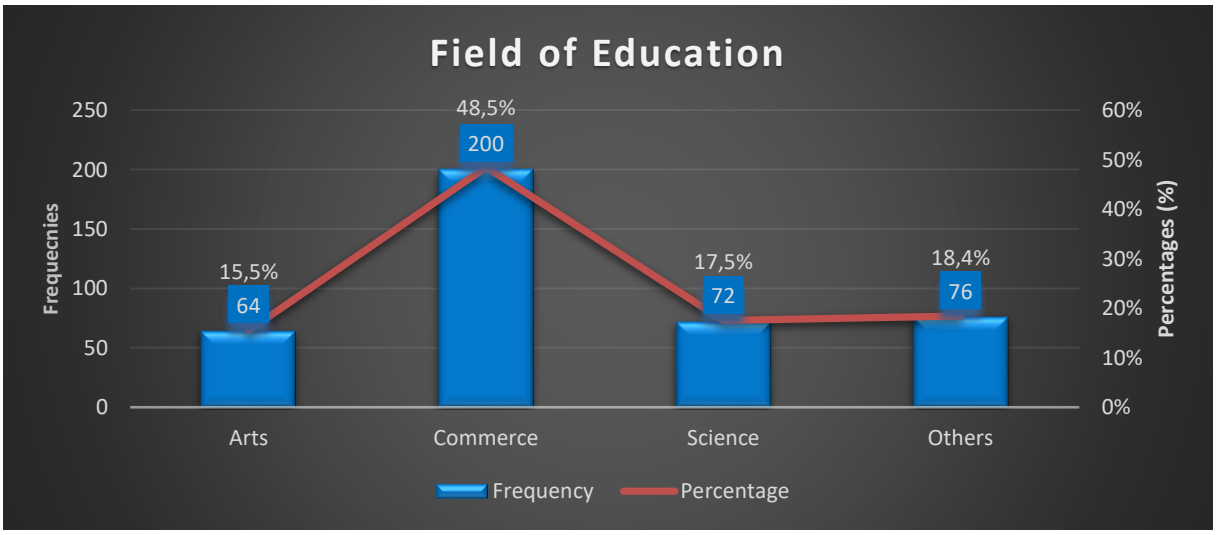
7.2.1.1.9. Respondents' field of education

Figure 7.9 below highlights the fields of education of the respondents in the sample. Discussions follow thereafter.

Figure 7.9: Respondents' fields of education



Results in Figure 7.9 indicate that 48.5% (n=200) of the respondents' qualifications are within the field of commerce. A total of 15.5% (n=64) of the women possess arts related qualifications, 17.5% (n=72) possess science qualifications while 18.4% (n=76) of women have their qualifications from other fields of study. The fact that 48.5% of respondents have commerce qualifications is likely due to the fact that this research study initially intended to focus on women in the accounting/consulting sector but was later extended to cover the service sector (refer to Section 6.3.2 above).

7.2.1.1.10. Years of tenure of sample

The number of years respondents have worked for their current company is presented in Figure 7.10 below and discussed afterwards.

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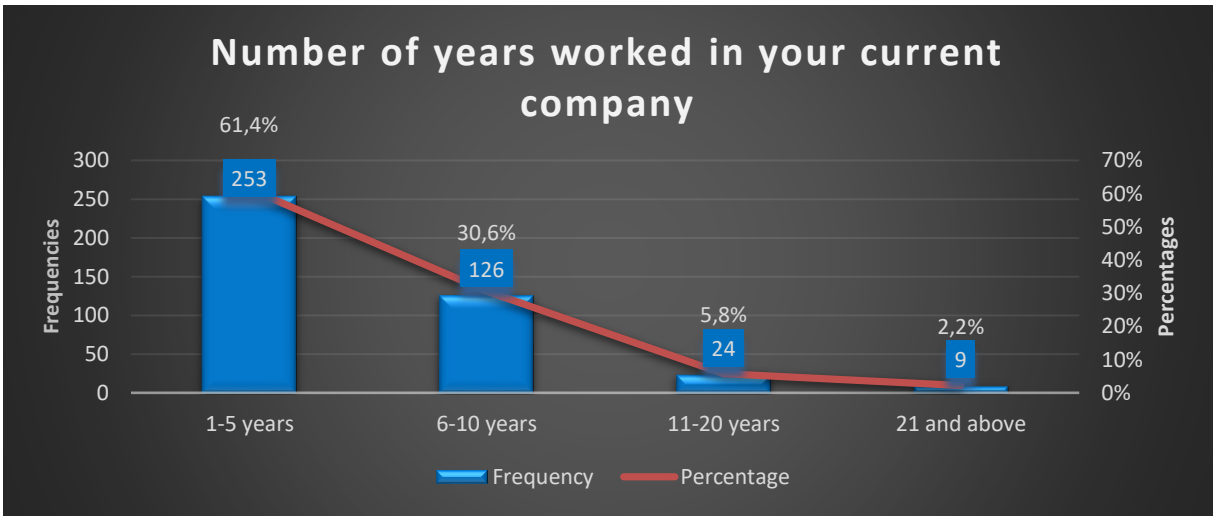
Figure 7.10: Tenure of respondents



According to Figure 7.10, the majority of respondents (61.4%, n=253) have worked for their current company for 1-5 years, 30.6% (n=126) have worked for their company for 6-10 years, 5.8% (n=24) for 11-20 years and 2.2% (n=9) for 21 years and more. Vasel (2019) recommends promotion after every three years at the start of a career and after seven years for senior employees, (see section 4.4 above). Thus, many of the respondents have worked long enough (for more than 3 years) for their current organisation to qualify for career advancement opportunities.

7.2.1.1.11. Type of employment contract of sample

Information on the nature of respondents' work contract is presented in Figure 7.11 below and discussed below.

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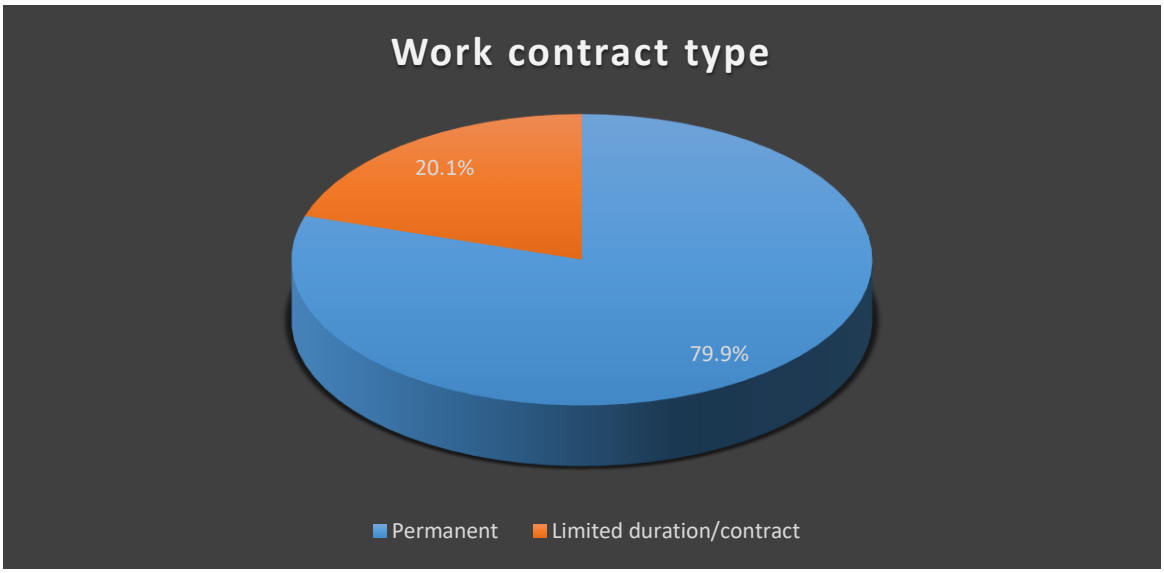
Figure 7.11: Type of work contract of sample



Results in Figure 7.11 show that 79.9% (n=329) of the respondents have a permanent position within their companies while 20.1% (n=83) are on fixed-term contracts. The fact that most respondents are permanent employees means that they are likely to remain with their company for a long time. The company, therefore, can invest in their skills development with the intent of reaping returns in the future.

7.2.1.1.12. Number of employees working in company

The number of employees working in respondents' companies are portrayed in Figure 7.12 below and discussed afterwards.

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Figure 7.12: Number of employees working in company

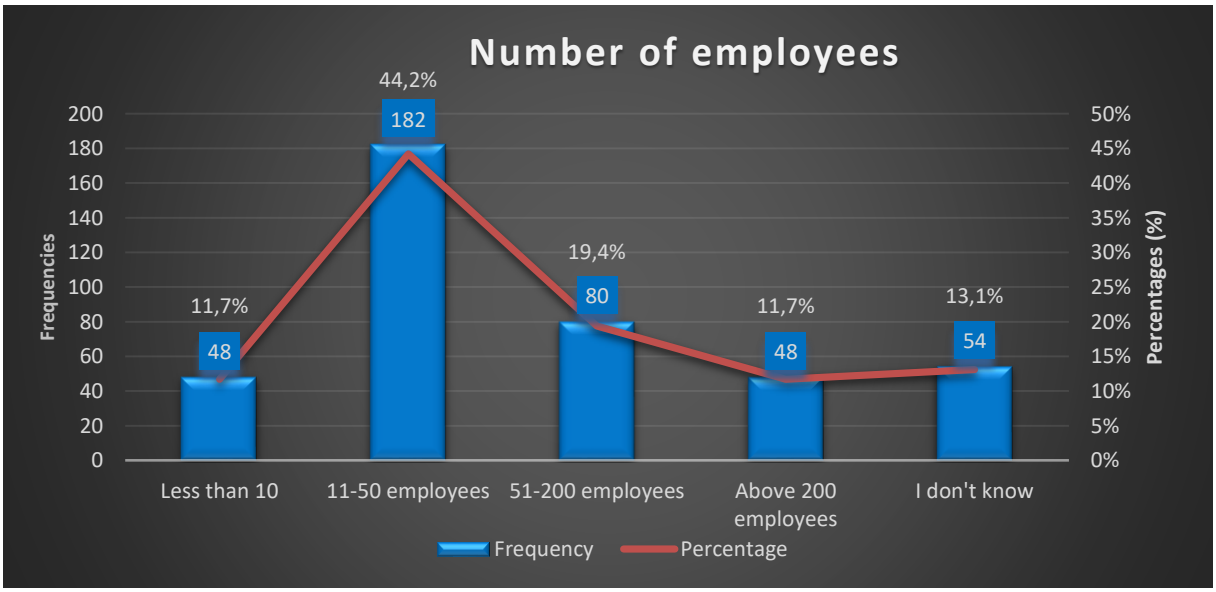

Figure 7.12 indicates that most respondents (44.2%, n=182) worked for small companies with 11-50 employees, and 19.4% (n=80) worked for companies with 51-200 employees. Only 11.7% (n=48) worked for companies with less than 10 employees while the same number (11.7%, n=48) worked for companies with above 200 employees. In summary, most respondents (44.2%) are from small companies, while 19.4% are from medium companies – these companies may be financially limited and unable to invest in the skills development of employees or may not have many avenues for internal promotion (Corporate Finance Institute Team, 2022).

This section presented findings on the demographic background of the women who participated in the sample and revealed that the majority of them are: young adult single African women, without children/dependents who are educated and possess qualifications in the field of commerce, who have been employed full-time on permanent contracts for between 1-5 years by relatively small companies within the accounting

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sector, at the lower levels of organisational hierarchies. The next section discusses the central tendency of the eight constructs in the study.

7.2.1.2. Central tendency measures

The purpose of this section is to unpack respondents' opinions regarding the different constructs and items. It presents the mean (average), mode (most frequent), median (midpoints) and standard deviations around the mean. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure opinions; the lowest value 1 corresponded to 'strongly disagree' while the highest value 5 corresponded to 'strongly agree'. Based on a number line logic, the mean point of the five-point Likert scale was 2.5 (5/2). Hence opinion scores lower than 1.5 fall under 'strongly disagree', opinions between 1.5 and 2.4 are under 'disagree', opinions from 2.5 to 3.4 mean neither 'agree' nor 'disagree', opinions between 3.5 and 4.4 tend to 'agree' and those that fall between 4.5 and 5 'strongly agree'.

Central tendency refers to a central value for a probability distribution that describes a set of data and identifies the central position within a set of data. In each of the sub-sections that follow the central tendency measure for specific constructs will be presented, followed by a summary table of results as well as discussion and interpretations thereafter.

7.2.1.2.1. Central tendency measures for Workplace Support Strategies

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for Workplace Support Strategies. Each statement within the construct is analysed in Table 7.2 below and their means presented, after which summaries are discussed in terms of the total

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number of women who disagreed with the statement (the sum of women who disagree and strongly disagree), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (the sum of women who agree and strongly agree).

Table 7. 2: Central tendency measures for Workplace Support Strategies

	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Dev	Summaries
My company facilitates the development of networks for women.					
Strongly disagree	77	18.7%	2.95	1.425	Overall disagree: 46.4% Neutral: 13.6% Overall agree: 40%
Disagree	114	27.7%			
Neither agree nor disagree	56	13.6%			
Agree	82	19.9%			
Strongly agree	83	20.1%			
Total	412	100			
My organisation provides different learning and growth platforms for women.					
Strongly disagree	71	17.2%	2.95	1.392	Overall disagree: 46.1% Neutral: 14.3% Overall agree: 39.6%
Disagree	119	28.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	59	14.3%			
Agree	86	20.9%			
Strongly agree	77	18.7%			
Total	412	100			
In my organisation there are leadership development programmes which target women.					
Strongly disagree	70	17.0%	2.92	1.358	Overall disagree: 45,2% Neutral: 17.5% Overall agree: 37.4%
Disagree	116	28.2%			
Neither agree nor disagree	72	17.5%			
Agree	84	20.4%			
Strongly agree	70	17.0%			
Total	412	100			
My organisation facilitates career planning/career management for women.					
Strongly disagree	72	17.5%	2.90	1.369	Overall disagree: 46.6% Neutral: 17.0% Overall agree: 36.4%
Disagree	120	29.1%			
Neither agree nor disagree	70	17.0%			
Agree	78	18.9%			
Strongly agree	72	17.5%			
Total	412	100			
Senior executives in my organisation use their authority to promote women into higher roles.					
Strongly disagree	73	17.7%	2.93	1.343	Overall disagree: 41.5% Neutral: 23.1% Overall agree: 35.4%
Disagree	98	23.8%			
Neither agree nor disagree	95	23.1%			
Agree	77	18.7%			

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	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Dev	Summaries
Strongly agree	69	16.7%			
Total	412	100			
The organisational culture/practices where I work are gender friendly.					
Strongly disagree	79	19.2%	2.96	1.400	Overall disagree: 43.2% Neutral: 16.5% Overall agree: 40.3%
Disagree	99	24.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	68	16.5%			
Agree	91	22.1%			
Strongly agree	75	18.2%			
Total	412	100			
Successful senior women in my organisation support/promote the advancement of junior women.					
Strongly disagree	81	19.7%	2.91	1.382	Overall disagree: 43.7% Neutral: 18.7% Overall agree: 37.6%
Disagree	99	24.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	77	18.7%			
Agree	85	20.6%			
Strongly agree	70	17.0%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.93 **Median =2.71** **Std. Dev = 1.299**					

When looking at the overall mean for “Workplace Support Strategies”, that is a computation of all items in the constructs, results lie in between 2.5 and 3.4 (Mean=2.93). Hence the interpretation, based on the number line logic, is that the majority of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements that their organisation provides support to female employees in the workplace.

However, when considering the cumulative percentage of respondents in agreement/disagreement/neutral for individual items under the construct Workplace Support Strategies in Table 7.2 (see ‘Summaries’ column), most women disagree (either disagree or strongly disagree) that their organisation supports women. In general, 46.4% women disagreed, 13.6% neither agreed not disagreed, and 40% of them agreed that their company facilitates the development of networks for women. When asked whether their organisation provides different learning and growth platforms for women, 46.1% of

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women expressed negative opinions, 14.3% were neutral and 39.6% agreed. Also, 45.2% of respondents disagreed that their organisation has leadership development programmes that target women, 17.5% expressed neutral feelings and 37.4% agreed. When asked whether their organisation facilitates career planning/career management for women, 46.6% disagreed, 17.0% expressed neutral opinions while 36.4% agreed. Moreover, 41.5% of respondents disagreed that senior executives in their organisation use their authority to promote women into higher roles, however, 23.1% neither agreed nor disagreed on the statement while 35.4% agreed. While 43.2% of women disagreed that their organisational culture and practices are gender friendly, 16.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 40.3% of the total respondents agreed, 43.7% disagree that successful senior women in their organisation support the advancement of junior females, while 18.7% were neutral, and 37.6% agreed. Hence most women disagree or strongly disagree with statements that their organisation support women.

Even though developmental networks are vital for women's careers (Gipson et al., 2017; Kumara, 2018; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016), research has confirmed that women still lack network opportunities (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Łaba, 2011) and have limited access to networks (Athanasopoulou et al. 2017; Liu, 2013). Hence, they lack support in this area. Prior research also confirms that many women get appointed to senior positions without having the required skills (Grundling & Bosch, 2011; Linkov, 2014; Oosthuizen et al., 2019), depicting deficiencies in learning avenues within organisations. Women are rarely groomed for leadership (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) and hardly take part in leadership development opportunities (Ames et al., 2019; Knipfer et al. 2017; KPMG International, 2014). Also, career planning and career management initiatives help

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employees reach their career goals faster (Afande, 2015; Howson et al., 2018; Prossack, 2018). Implying that without planning, most women may not experience career success. In addition, women need sponsorship to advance internally and the lack thereof can stagnate their careers (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Kumara, 2018). Despite the relevance of sponsorship to women's careers, they are often under sponsored, resulting in a high probability of their being overlooked for promotion (Ames et al., 2019; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Moalusi & Jones, 2019). In addition, some organisational cultures are not gender-friendly and do not support women's career advancement (Mathur-Helm, 2018; Nguyen, 2013; Zulu, 2013). Moreover, previous researchers have alluded that senior women do not often support junior women (Ensour et al., 2017; Faniko et al., 2017; Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). Although listed organisational support strategies are critical for women's careers, women in this sample did not perceive that they received these forms of support from their organisations towards their careers.

7.2.1.2.2. Central tendency measures for Workplace Impediments

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct Workplace Impediments. Each statement within the construct is analysed in Table 7.3 below. Thereafter general summaries are discussed i.e., construct means, total number of women who disagreed with the statement (the sum of women who disagreed and strongly disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed), and women who agreed with the statement (the sum of women who agreed and strongly agreed).

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Table 7. 3: Central tendency measures for Workplace Impediments

My organisation does not support women who want to pursue formal qualifications.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	108	26.2%	2.27	1.159	Overall disagree: 69.6% Neutral: 14.6% Overall agree: 15.8%
Disagree	179	43.4%			
Neither agree nor disagree	60	14.6%			
Agree	34	8.3%			
Strongly agree	31	7.5%			
Total	412	100			
There is no mentorship programme to help women in their career development.					
Strongly disagree	103	25.0%	2.26	1.102	Overall disagree: 69.9% Neutral: 14.3% Overall agree: 15.8%
Disagree	185	44.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	59	14.3%			
Agree	44	10.7%			
Strongly agree	21	5.1%			
Total	412	100			
Promotion practices are not fair or transparent.					
Strongly disagree	106	25.7%	2.27	1.118	Overall disagree: 67.7% Neutral: 17.2% Overall agree:15%
Disagree	173	42.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	71	17.2%			
Agree	38	9.2%			
Strongly agree	24	5.8%			
Total	412	100			
There are powerful male domination cycles that exclude women from top positions.					
Strongly disagree	103	25.0%	2.29	1.137	Overall disagree: 68.2% Neutral: 15.8% Overall agree: 16.1%
Disagree	178	43.2%			
Neither agree nor disagree	65	15.8%			
Agree	39	9.5%			
Strongly agree	27	6.6%			
Total	412	100			
My company does not provide support for women to live a balanced "work-family" life.					
Strongly disagree	111	26.9%	2.26	1.136	Overall disagree: 68.6% Neutral: 14.8% Overall agree: 16.5%
Disagree	172	41.7%			
Neither agree nor disagree	61	14.8%			
Agree	45	10.9%			
Strongly agree	23	5.6%			
Total	412	100			
We do not have role models who have climbed the organisational ladder in the organisation.					

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Strongly disagree	116	28.2%	2.23	1.125	Overall disagree: 65.5% Neutral: 16.0% Overall agree: 14.5%
Disagree	170	41.3%			
Neither agree nor disagree	66	16.0%			
Agree	36	8.7%			
Strongly agree	24	5.8%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.27 **Median = 2.00** **Std. Dev = 1.038**					

The mean for the construct 'Workplace impediments' is 2.27 and is below 2.5. Based on the number line logic, this result means that the majority of respondents tended to disagree with statements regarding impediments to women's careers within the workplace.

However, cumulatively percentages of respondents in agreement/ disagreement/neutral for each question under the construct reveal that most women disagreed (either disagreed or strongly disagreed) with statements that there are impediments to women's career within their workplace. The summaries column in Table 7.3 above shows that 69.6% women disagreed that their organisations do not support women who want to pursue formal qualifications, while 14.6% expressed neutral opinions and 15.8% agreed. Overall, 69.9% of respondents disagreed that there are no mentorship programmes designed to help women in their career development, while 14.3% were neutral and 15.8% agreed. Moreover, a total of 67.7% women expressed their disagreement with the statement that promotion practices in their organisations are not fair or transparent, meanwhile 17.2% were neutral and 15% agreed. Altogether, 68.2% women disagreed that there are powerful male domination cycles that exclude women from top positions, while 15.8% expressed neutral feelings and 16.1% agreed. Likewise, 68.6% women disagreed, 14.8% were neutral and 16.5% agreed that their company does not provide

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support for women to live a balanced ‘work-family’ life. Moreover, 65.5% of women disagreed, 16.0% neither agreed nor disagreed and 14.5% agreed there are female role models who have climbed the organisational ladder in the organisation.

These findings contradict previous research that deplores the lack of organisational support towards women’s education and highlights the need to address this gap (Joshi et al., 2015; Morley, 2014; PWC, 2018b). Some scholars also claim that it is difficult for women to secure mentors (Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Similarly, it has been proven that promotion practices are often neither fair nor transparent, thus, limiting employees’ progress within the workplace (Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014; Vasel, 2019; Walsh et al., 2016). Likewise, investigations prove that male domination is still a challenge in certain organisations (Chowdhury, 2015; Islam et al., 2018; Naudé 2017). Although more companies are now offering more work-life flexibility (McKinsey & Company, 2019; Wang & Verma, 2012; Mukanzi et al., 2014), these have not been effective in achieving women’s work-life balance (Allen et al., 2013; Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Hence, confirming deficiencies in work-life balance initiatives in organisations means that women’s work-life balance initiatives are not serving their purpose. In addition, past studies deplore the lack of female role models (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Boshoff & Bosch, 2012; Chanland & Murphy, 2017). Hence the opinions expressed by the majority of women in this study contest with the findings of existing literature.

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7.2.1.2.3. Central tendency measures for Skills Development

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct Skills Development for women. Each statement within the construct is analysed in Table 7.4 below, after that the overall summaries are discussed i.e., the total number of women who disagreed with the statement (disagreed and strongly disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (agreed and strongly agreed).

Table 7. 4: Central tendency measures for Skills Development

At work, I engage in programmes/projects that develop my skills.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	109	26.5%	2.91	1.577	Overall disagree: 51.7% Neutral: 3.9% Overall agree: 44.4%
Disagree	104	25.2%			
Neither agree nor disagree	16	3.9%			
Agree	82	19.9%			
Strongly agree	101	24.5%			
Total	412	100			
The skills development opportunities offered by my company are aligned to my career plans/needs.					
Strongly disagree	103	25.0%	2.89	1.527	Overall disagree: 50.5% Neutral: 6.8% Overall agree: 42.7%
Disagree	105	25.5%			
Neither agree nor disagree	28	6.8%			
Agree	86	20.9%			
Strongly agree	90	21.8%			
Total	412	100			
My skills have progressively improved over time.					
Strongly disagree	103	25.0%	2.93	1.561	Overall disagree: 50.5% Neutral: 5.6% Overall agree: 44%
Disagree	105	25.5%			
Neither agree nor disagree	23	5.6%			
Agree	79	19.2%			
Strongly agree	102	24.8%			
Total	412	100			
I continuously learn new things in my work.					
Strongly disagree	121	29.4%	2.87	1.609	Overall disagree: 52.9% Neutral: 3.2%
Disagree	97	23.5%			

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Neither agree nor disagree	13	3.2%			Overall agree: 43.9%
Agree	78	18.9%			
Strongly agree	103	25.0%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.90 **Median = 2.25** **Std. Dev = 1.536**					

The overall mean score for the construct 'Skills Development' of women, is 2.9, implying that most of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with statements measuring women's skills development (according to the number line logic).

Yet, when considering the aggregate percentage of respondents in agreement, disagreement or with having neutral feelings for each item under this construct, most women indicated that they are not experiencing skills development. The results indicated that 51.7% of women in the sample disagreed that they engage in programmes/projects that develop their skills at work, while 3.9% express neutral feelings and 44.4% agreed. Likewise, 50.5% of women denied that their skills have progressively improved over time meanwhile 5.6% expressed neutral feelings and 44% agreed. Furthermore, most respondents (50.5%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the skills development opportunities offered by their company are aligned to their career plans/needs, while 6.8% were neutral and 42.7% agreed. Lastly, in total, 52.9% of women disagreed that they continuously learn new things at work, whereas 3.2% were neutral and 43.9% agreed. Consideration of these figures indicates that most women disagreed that their skills are being developed.

These results are in tandem with previous findings that acknowledge that women's skills are not adequately developed to enable them to assume senior roles (Hills, 2015; Babcock, Recalde & Vesterlund, 2018; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) (refer to Section 5.2.17

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above). However, research has proven the relevance of learning new skills at work (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Manuti et al., 2015), engaging in projects that develop one's skills (Turaba & Casimir, 2015), improving skills over time (Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Kuvaas & Dysnik, 2010), and aligning skills development opportunities to one's career needs (Carucci, 2018; Garava et al., 2011). The fact that women's skills not being developed means that they will be deficient in the skills required for their career progress and may not be considered for promotion.

7.2.1.2.4. Central tendency measures for Career Progression

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct 'Career Progression'. Each statement within the construct is analysed in Table 7.5 below. Thereafter, overall summaries are discussed in terms of the total number of women who disagreed with the statement (the sum of disagreed and strongly disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (the sum of agreed and strongly agreed).

Table 7.5: Central tendency measures for Career Progression

I got promoted into a higher position within my organisation.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	67	16.3%	2.83	1.305	Overall disagree: 47.6% Neutral: 19.9% Overall agree: 32.6 %
Disagree	129	31.3%			
Neither agree nor disagree	82	19.9%			
Agree	74	18.0%			
Strongly agree	60	14.6%			
Total	412	100			
My responsibilities at work have increased over time.					
Strongly disagree	56	13.6%	2.99	1.288	Overall disagree: 42.5% Neutral: 16.7%
Disagree	119	28.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	69	16.7%			

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Agree	111	26.9%			Overall agree: 40.7%
Strongly agree	57	13.8%			
Total	412	100			
My authority in my company has increased over time.					
Strongly disagree	61	14.8%	2.91	1.309	Overall disagree: 45.0 % Neutral:18.4 % Overall agree: 35.9%
Disagree	127	30.8%			
Neither agree nor disagree	76	18.4%			
Agree	85	20.6%			
Strongly agree	63	15.3%			
Total	412	100			
I am satisfied with my career progress at work.					
Strongly disagree	87	21.1%	2.94	1.434	Overall disagree: 38.1% Neutral: 14.6% Overall agree: 40.7%
Disagree	97	23.5%			
Neither agree nor disagree	60	14.6%			
Agree	90	21.8%			
Strongly agree	78	18.9%			
Total	412	100			
My Job title has changed favourably over time.					
Strongly disagree	77	18.7%	2.93	1.401	Overall disagree: 45.9 % Neutral:15.0 % Overall agree: 39.0%
Disagree	112	27.2%			
Neither agree nor disagree	62	15.0%			
Agree	85	20.6%			
Strongly agree	76	18.4%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.92 **Median = 2.80** **Std. Dev = 1.258**					

The mean score for the construct ‘Career Progression’ is 2.92, implying that most women tended to neither agree nor disagree with the statements measuring this construct.

When looking at aggregates for agreement/disagreement/neutral presented in Table 7.5 above for the construct ‘Career Progression’, most women do not perceive that they have progressed in their workplace. In total, 47.6% of women are in disagreement that they were promoted into higher positions within their organisations, 19.9% had neutral opinions and 32.6 % agreed. Furthermore, 42.5% of women disagreed that their responsibilities at work have increased over time while 16.7% of women were neutral and

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40.7% women agreed with this notion. More so, 45.0 % of respondents disagreed that their authority has increased over time within their companies while 18.4 % were neutral and 35.9% agreed. Moreover, 38.1% of women further disagreed that they are satisfied with their career progress at work, 14.6% expressed neutral feelings and 40.7% agreed. Finally, in general more women disagreed that their job titles have changed favourably over time (45.9 %) however, 15.0 % were neutral and 39.0% agreed. Hence most women are of the opinion that they ae not progressing within their workplace.

Prior research has confirmed negative gender prejudice about women's professional abilities that stagnate women' careers (Ames et al., 2019; Biwa, 2021; Chetty & Naidoo 2017; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018) (refer to Section 4.5.5 above). Also, women's lack of skills (Hills, 2015; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) and inadequate preparation to assume higher roles (Mythili, 2019) could be the reason why they are not promoted as expected (refer to Section 5.2.17 above). In instances in which women lack the required skills, it is not advisable to promote them to senior roles without upskilling them. Token female appointments occur when women who do not possess the appropriate skills are promoted to senior positions because the organisation wants to comply with existing laws (Grundling & Bosch, 2011; Linkov, 2014; Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Likewise, when women progress in the workplace without professional expertise, they are more likely to face allegations of using their sensuality to promote their career (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Ideally, organisations should ensure they promote women periodically (Vasel, 2019). It, therefore, is important that organisations use different strategies to prepare women for their next senior role (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4 above).

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7.2.1.2.5. Central tendency measures for Personal Attributes

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct Personal Attributes. Each statement (item, question) within the construct is presented in Table 7.6 below. Overall summaries are discussed thereafter in terms of the total number of women who disagreed with the statement (disagreed and strongly disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (agreed and strongly agreed).

Table 7.6: Central tendency measures for Personal Attributes

I put in the required effort to succeed in my career.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	134	32.5%	2.87	1.653	Overall disagree: 52.2% Neutral: 2.7% Overall agree: 45.2%
Disagree	81	19.7%			
Neither agree nor disagree	11	2.7%			
Agree	77	18.7%			
Strongly agree	109	26.5%			
Total	412	100			
I am confident about my professional abilities.					
Strongly disagree	125	30.3%	2.87	1.606	Overall disagree: 50.9% Neutral: 4.4% Overall agree: 44.6%
Disagree	85	20.6%			
Neither agree nor disagree	18	4.4%			
Agree	85	20.6%			
Strongly agree	99	24.0%			
Total	412	100			
I take full responsibility of my career growth.					
Strongly disagree	131	31.8%	2.87	1.639	Overall disagree: 51.7% Neutral: 4.4% Overall agree: 43.9%
Disagree	82	19.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	18	4.4%			
Agree	73	17.7%			
Strongly agree	108	26.2%			
Total	412	100			
I am optimistic about the future of my career.					
Strongly disagree	122	29.6%	2.90	1.621	Overall disagree: 51% Neutral: 5.1% Overall agree: 44%
Disagree	88	21.4%			

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Neither agree nor disagree	21	5.1%			
Agree	72	17.5%			
Strongly agree	109	26.5%			
Total	412	100			
I talk about my career plans/aspirations to my manager.					
Strongly disagree	114	27.7%	2.84	1.541	Overall disagree: 50.5% Neutral: 9.7% Overall agree: 39.8%
Disagree	94	22.8%			
Neither agree nor disagree	40	9.7%			
Agree	73	17.7%			
Strongly agree	91	22.1%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.87 **Median = 2.20** **Std. Dev = 1.561**					

The mean for the construct 'Personal Attributes', that measure women's attitude towards their career is 2.87. Hence, based on a number line logic, most women tended to neither agree nor disagree that they have the right attitude towards their career.

Cumulative percentages for agreements/disagreements and neutral for each item under the construct 'Personal Attributes' presented in Table 7.6 above show that women are not taking ownership of their careers. In summary, 52.2% women disagreed that they put in the required effort to succeed in their career, 2.7% neither agreed nor disagreed and 45.2% agreed. More so, most women (50.9%) disagreed that they are confident about their professional abilities, 4.4% women expressed neutral feelings and 44.6% indicated they are confident about their professional abilities. Furthermore, the majority of women (51.7%) disagree that they take full responsibility for their career growth while 4.4% neither agreed nor disagreed and 43.9% agreed. In addition, 51% of women disagreed that they are optimistic about the future of their career, 5.1% were neutral while 44% agreed. Lastly, 50.5% of women disagreed that they talk to their managers about their career plans/aspirations, 9.7% neither agreed nor disagreed while 39.8% of women

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agreed. In general, the results showed that most women fail to take major actions that will move their careers forward.

Although 'personal effort' (highlighted in Section 3.6.2 above), is critical for women's career (Bosch, 2017), some women do not put in the effort required to succeed (Howson et al., 2018). Also, women's lack of professional confidence is aligned to the findings of other research studies (Afande, 2015; Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Ensour et al., 2017). By failing to take personal responsibility (Rapuano, 2020), and not being optimistic (Ames et al., 2019) women limit their career growth. This study's findings on women's career aspiration contradicted those of the consulted literature. Zenger and Folkman (2019) disputes that women lack career aspiration while McKinsey and Company (2019) and Naudé (2017) advocate that women have great career aspirations. Furthermore, for women to advance in their career, they need to share their career aspirations with their manager (Prossack, 2018). The voicing of career aspiration is important to address unfounded prejudices concerning women's career ambitions. Therefore, women need to be intentional about their career growth and take responsibility for it.

7.2.1.2.6. Central tendency measures for Family Responsibilities

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct 'Family Responsibilities'. Each statement or item within the construct is presented in Table 7.7 below. Thereafter, overall summaries are discussed in terms of the total number of women who disagreed with the statement (disagreed and strongly disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (agreed and strongly agreed).

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Table 7.7: Central tendency measures for Family Responsibilities

The demands of my family/home/children interfere with my career.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	91	22.1%	2.63	1.334	Overall disagree: 54.9% Neutral:19.7% Overall agree: 25.5%
Disagree	135	32.8%			
Neither agree nor disagree	81	19.7%			
Agree	44	10.7%			
Strongly agree	61	14.8%			
Total	412	100			
My family /childcare responsibilities produce strains that make it difficult for me to fulfil my career ambitions.					
Strongly disagree	74	18.0%	2.68	1.308	Overall disagree: 55.1% Neutral: 18.4% Overall agree:26.4%
Disagree	153	37.1%			
Neither agree nor disagree	76	18.4%			
Agree	47	11.4%			
Strongly agree	62	15.0%			
Total	412	100			
The time I spend on my family responsibilities cuts into the time I would like to spend on my career.					
Strongly disagree	97	23.5%	2.46	1.219	Overall disagree: 59.7% Neutral: 19.7% Overall agree: 20.6%
Disagree	149	36.2%			
Neither agree nor disagree	81	19.7%			
Agree	49	11.9%			
Strongly agree	36	8.7%			
Total	412	100			
Due to all the family pressures, I am sometimes too stressed to engage in activities related to my career.					
Strongly disagree	100	24.3%	2.41	1.222	Overall disagree: 63.4% Neutral: 18% Overall agree: 18.7%
Disagree	161	39.1%			
Neither agree nor disagree	74	18.0%			
Agree	37	9.0%			
Strongly agree	40	9.7%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.55 **Median = 2.25** **Std. Dev = 1.123**					

The overall mean score for the construct 'Family Responsibilities' presented in Table 7.7 above is 2.55 that is between 2.5 and 3.4. The interpretation, according to the number base logic, is that most women neither agrees nor disagrees with statements relating to the fact that their family responsibilities burden their careers.

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However, the cumulative percentages of respondents in agreement, disagreement, with neutral feeling regarding each question under the construct 'Family Responsibilities' show that most women denied that family responsibilities burden their careers (in terms of stress, strain, time spent and interference). Findings indicate that, 54.9% of women respondents disagreed that the demands of their family/home/children interfere with their career, while 19.7% expressed neutral feelings and 25.5% agreed. Furthermore, most women disagreed (55.1%) that their family/childcare responsibilities produce strains that make it difficult for them to fulfil their career ambitions, whereas 18.4% were neutral and 26.4% agreed with the statement. Moreover, most women (59.7%) disagreed that the time spent on family responsibilities cuts into the time they would like to spend on their career. 19.7% of women were neutral about this statement while 20.6% agreed with the statement. Finally, most women (63.4%) disagreed that family pressures sometimes prevent them from engaging in activities related to their careers, while 18% of women expressed neutral feelings about the statement and 18.7% of women agreed with the statement. Therefore, most women disagreed that their family responsibilities burden their careers.

Although this analysis contradicts several others that affirm work-family conflict for women and its negative affect on their careers (Khalid et al., 2017; Kumara, 2018; Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019; Stewart, 2020), it appears to confirm suggestions by Chetty and Naidoo (2017) that women use family responsibilities as an excuse for avoiding work responsibilities (refer to Section 5.2.16 above). Further investigations are needed to definitively ascertain whether women have adapted to their reality of dual responsibility and have succeeded in balancing both spheres of their lives.

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7.2.1.2.7. Central tendency measures for Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct 'Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices'. Each statement or item within the construct is presented in Table 7.8 below. Thereafter, overall summaries are discussed in terms of the total number of women who disagreed with each statement (disagreed and strongly disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (agreed and strongly agreed).

Table 7.8: Central tendency measures for Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices

There are preconceptions about women's attributes, characteristics or professional abilities in my organisation.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	70	17.0%	2.73	1.240	Overall disagree: 48.8% Neutral: 23.8% Overall agree: 27.5%
Disagree	131	31.8%			
Neither agree nor disagree	98	23.8%			
Agree	67	16.3%			
Strongly agree	46	11.2%			
Total	412	100			
In my workplace, women are treated based on their culturally assigned roles.					
Strongly disagree	84	20.4%	2.57	1.178	Overall disagree: 52% Neutral: 25.5% Overall agree: 22.5%
Disagree	130	31.6%			
Neither agree nor disagree	105	25.5%			
Agree	64	15.5%			
Strongly agree	29	7.0%			
Total	412	100			
In my organisation women are subjected to unfavourable perceptions when assessed for promotion.					
Strongly disagree	84	20.4%	2.54	1.188	Overall disagree: 55.4% Neutral: 22.1% Overall agree: 22.5%
Disagree	144	35.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	91	22.1%			
Agree	62	15.0%			
Strongly agree	31	7.5%			
Total	412	100			

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I feel that women's careers are stuck at lower and middle management levels in my organisation.					
Strongly disagree	101	24.5%	2.52	1.237	Overall disagree: 55.3% Neutral: 20.9% Overall agree: 23.8%
Disagree	127	30.8%			
Neither agree nor disagree	86	20.9%			
Agree	66	16.0%			
Strongly agree	32	7.8%			
Total	412	100			
In my company, women earn lower salaries than men for the same job done.					
Strongly disagree	110	26.7%	2.39	1.182	Overall disagree: 58.7% Neutral: 22.8% Overall agree: 18.4%
Disagree	132	32.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	94	22.8%			
Agree	50	12.1%			
Strongly agree	26	6.3%			
Total	412	100			
Cases of sexual harassment were reported by women in my workplace.					
Strongly disagree	106	25.7%	2.40	1.185	Overall disagree: 59.4% Neutral: 21.8% Overall agree: 18.7%
Disagree	139	33.7%			
Neither agree nor disagree	90	21.8%			
Agree	49	11.9%			
Strongly agree	28	6.8%			
Total	412	100			
Women are unfairly represented (less than 50%) at senior levels in the organisation.					
Strongly disagree	105	25.5%	2.42	1.194	Overall disagree: 59.5% Neutral: 20.1% Overall agree: 20.4%
Disagree	140	34.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	83	20.1%			
Agree	57	13.8%			
Strongly agree	27	6.6%			
Total	412	100			
When reported, my organisation puts in little or no effort to address discriminatory gender practices.					
Strongly disagree	111	26.95%	2.41	1.210	Overall disagree: 59% Neutral: 22.1% Overall agree: 18.9%
Disagree	132	32.05%			
Neither agree nor disagree	91	22.1%			
Agree	47	11.4%			
Strongly agree	31	7.5%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.50 **Median = 2.25** **Std. Dev = 1.049**					

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The overall mean for the construct 'Workplace Gender discriminatory practices' is 2.5 implying that most respondents tended to neither agree nor disagree that gender discriminatory practices exist in their workplace.

As illustrated in Table 7.8 above (under the 'Summaries' column), the aggregate percentage of respondents in agreement, disagreement or neutral opinion show that the greatest proportion of women disagreed (either disagreed or strongly disagreed) that gender discriminatory practices exist in their workplace – 48.8% of women disagreed that there are biased preconceptions about women's attributes, characteristics or professional abilities in their organisation, 23.8% neither agreed nor disagreed while 27.5% agreed. Moreover, 52% of women disagreed that in their workplace women are treated based on their culturally assigned roles, whereas 25.5% neither agreed nor disagreed and 22.5% agreed. Also, most women (55.4%) disagreed that women in their organisation are subjected to unfavourable perceptions when assessed for promotion. However, 22.1% of the women who responded expressed neutral feelings and 22.5% agreed with the statement. In addition, 55.3% of the respondents disagreed that women's careers have stagnated at lower and middle management levels in their organisation, while 20.9% women had neutral feelings and 23.8% agreed. In addition, 58.7% of women disagreed that women earn lower salaries than men for the same job in their company, meanwhile 22.8% of women respondents expressed neutral feelings and 18.4% agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 59.4% of respondents disagreed that cases of sexual harassment were reported by women in their workplace, whereas 21.8% of women neither agreed nor disagreed and only 18.7% of the women agreed with the statement. In addition, most women (59.5%) disagreed that women are unfairly represented at senior

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levels in their organisation, while 20.1% of women expressed neutral feelings and 20.4% of them agreed. Finally, 59% of the respondents disagreed that their organisation puts in little or no effort to address discriminatory gender practices that employees report. However, 22.1% of women respondents neither agreed nor disagrees and only 18.9% agreed with this statement. Therefore, most women disagreed with statements that alluded that gender discriminatory practices exist within their workplace.

These findings are contrary to Patel (2013) who claims that women are often unfavourably assessed for senior positions. They also oppose prior research that promotion is based on relationships rather than competence (Ames et al., 2019; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017). Further, converse findings show that men mostly hold top positions within organisations (Islam et al., 2018; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Oosthuizen et al., 2019). When such findings are analysed alongside those of this study, it is possible that gender representation at senior levels could be a sector specific rather than a general issue. The relational nature of work in the service industry could make it is easier for women to ascend to top positions. McKinsey and Company (2019) and Sang and Powell (2012) also argue that some sexual harassment behaviours are difficult to identify and challenge. Hence, the supposed non-existence of sexual harassment in this study could reveal that the women respondents fail to identify and report such behaviours. In contrast, earlier findings deny that women's pay is on par with men's globally and in South Africa (Boninelli, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2020; PWC, 2018a, 2018b). This discrepancy could also be a sector specific finding because previous studies show such occupational segregation (Stockdale & Nadler, 2013; with female-dominated occupations often receiving lower pay (Schwanke, 2013; Wirth-Dominicé, 2015) than male-dominated occupations (Leuze &

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Strauß, 2016), thus, meaning that women-dominated sectors may not experience gender pay-gap problems. Also, the undetected gender-pay gap could be a result of ignorance (Lips, 2013) because individual pay rates usually are not published. Bosch (2017) and Moalusi and Jones (2019) also contradict this study's findings by confirming the presence of gender prejudices and stereotypes, that often enter the workplace through employees who are members of communities that embed these cultural behaviours. Although this study denies that women often fail to advance their career, earlier research reveals that women often stagnate at mid-career levels due to invisible barriers that hinder them from progressing further (Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014). More opposing findings reveal that when some gender malpractices such as sexual harassment are reported, they are not properly investigated and dealt with (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). Further contradicting research shows that competences and abilities of people are based on their gender, and are usually in favour of men (Oosthuizen et al., 2019; Thébaud, 2015). Gender discriminatory practices have been researched for many decades and found to exist within the workplace. Though central tendency measures reveal otherwise, more tests are needed to draw a definitive conclusion on this matter.

7.2.1.2.8. Central tendency measures for Legislation on Gender in the Workplace

This sub-section describes and discusses central tendency measures for the construct 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace'. Each statement or item within the construct is presented in Table 7.9 below. Thereafter overall summaries are discussed in terms of the total number of women who disagreed with each statement (disagreed and strongly

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disagreed), women who expressed neutral feelings (neither agreed nor disagreed) and women who agreed with the statement (agreed and strongly agreed).

Table 7. 9: Central tendency measures for Legislation on Gender in the Workplace

My organisation complies with gender equity and gender fairness legislation.					
	Freq.	**%**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Summaries**
Strongly disagree	96	23.3%	2.85	1.461	Overall disagree: 49.3% Neutral: 12.9% Overall agree: 37.8%
Disagree	107	26.0%			
Neither agree nor disagree	53	12.9%			
Agree	76	18.4%			
Strongly agree	80	19.4%			
Total	412	100			
My organisation complies with legislation around skills development of designated groups.					
Strongly disagree	82	19.9%	2.87	1.401	Overall disagree: 47.8% Neutral: 14.8% Overall agree: 37.4%
Disagree	115	27.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	61	14.8%			
Agree	82	19.9%			
Strongly agree	72	17.5%			
Total	412	100			
My organisation complies with legislation that promotes equitable representation at all levels.					
Strongly disagree	84	20.4%	2.86	1.396	Overall disagree: 47.3% Neutral: 16.5% Overall agree: 36.1%
Disagree	111	26.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	68	16.5%			
Agree	78	18.9%			
Strongly agree	71	17.2%			
Total	412	100			
My organisation complies with legislation set to increase the ownership, management control and employment of blacks and women.					
Strongly disagree	86	20.9%	2.83	1.417	Overall disagree: 49.8% Neutral: 14.8% Overall agree: 35.4%
Disagree	119	28.9%			
Neither agree nor disagree	61	14.8%			
Agree	70	17.0%			
Strongly agree	76	18.4%			
Total	412	100			
Mean = 2.85 **Median = 2.50** **Std. Dev = 1.370**					

The mean for the construct 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' is 2.85. This score is between 2.5 and 3.4, indicating that most respondents tended to neither agree nor

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disagree that their organisation complies with legislation promulgated on gender bias in the workplace.

Yet, the aggregate percentage of agreements, disagreements and neutral opinions for this construct depict that the greatest proportion of respondents indicated a lack of compliance by their organisation in terms of the above regulations. In summary, 49.3% of women disagreedd that their organisation complies with gender equity legislation, whereas 12.9% neither agreed nor disagreed and 37.8% agreed. In addition, 47.8% of respondents disagreed that their organisation complies with legislation relating to skills development for designated groups while 14.8% expressed neutral feelings and 37.4% agreed. Furthermore, 47.3% of the sample disagreed that their organisation complies with legislation that promotes equitable representation at all levels, meanwhile 16.5% expressed neutral feelings and 36.1% agreed. Lastly, 49.8% of women disagreed that their organisation complies with the legislation aimed at increasing the ownership, management control and employment of Blacks and women. However, 14.8% neither agreed nor disagreed and 35.4% agreed. Based on individual responses, most women believed that their organisation does not comply with any of the above listed legislation.

Previous research findings affirm that despite innovative gender-based laws in South Africa, gender discrimination still persists in the workplace (Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). The reason for this practice could be that the scope of existing laws is unclear to employers (Naudé, 2017) or that they may not understand the difference between equality and equity (Pienaar, Naidoo & Malope, 2018). Hence employers may fail to satisfactorily adhere to these laws or apply appropriate measures to achieve equity. The prevailing national culture has been set by existing laws; however,

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organisational culture plays a significant role in its continued implementation (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Khapova, Brisoce & Dickman, 2016). The lack of compliance with existing equity legislation could depict issues within gender-biased organisational cultures that are built by men in favour of men (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019), that hamper the implementation of gender equity laws. Such cultures are detrimental to women's skill acquisition and career progression (Grundling & Bosch, 2011). Research findings further could imply that organisations are not committed to the implementation of such laws (Komalasari et al., 2017). The South African government has promulgated legislation that has demonstrated its dedication to workplace gender equity. Nevertheless, there are still implementation gaps reflected through organisations' continuation of practices that are alien to gender equity.

This section has covered the central tendency measures for the eight constructs examined in this study. Most of the women respondents in the sample disagreed with the following statements: there are impediments to women's career within their workplace, their organisation supports women and gender discriminatory practices exist within their workplace. It would appear logical to infer that the women's almost unanimous indication of the absence of impediments and gender discriminatory practices in the workplace imples support for women. However, central tendency measures reveal otherwise. Likewise, most women either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements alluding to the fact that: their skills are being developed, they are progressing in their workplace, they take responsibility for enhancing their careers, their family responsibilities burden their career progress and that their organisation complies with gender-related legislation. These responses further depict limited organisational and personal commitment to

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women's career development and progression. Despite its detailed content, however, the results on central tendencies are not conclusive, hence further tests are required to establish relationships between variables in this study. The next section presents results from normality tests undertaken prior to testing the model.

7.2.1.3. Normality tests

Before investigating the model fit indices, it is ideal to conduct a normality test to confirm whether the model can be estimated using the maximum likelihood method (Byrne, 2010). Normality tests determine if the data is well-modelled and the likelihood for a random variable in the data to be normally distributed. Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients are usually used to measure normality. Table 7.10 below presents Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients of all the constructs in the model employed in this research study.

Table 7.10: Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients

Constructs	Skewness	Kurtosis
Workplace support strategies	0,174	-1,304
Workplace impediments	0,956	0,262
Skills development of women	0,145	-1,628
Career progression of women	0,194	-1,261
Personal attributes (non-workplace)	0,156	-1,669
Family responsibilities (non-workplace)	0,590	-0,506
Workplace gender discriminatory	0,665	-0,332
Legislation on gender in the workplace	0,232	-1,347

To assume normality, Kline (2015) recommends that indicators' skewness and kurtosis values should be below ±3 and ±10, respectively. Values in Table 7.10 above are below the threshold for skewness (+/- 3), and also for kurtosis (+/- 10), hence they indicate that the assumption of univariate normality was met and, thus, the maximum likelihood method can be used to assess the model fit.

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7.2.2. Assessment of the measurement/research model

The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) methodology utilised in this study is used frequently to represent, test and estimate theoretical models as well as to explain variances (Ramlall, 2017). SEM is also a necessary requirement to evaluate the structural relationships of the variables in the conceptual model. To assess the measurement model, a confirmatory factors analysis was conducted and then followed by a structural model analysis.

7.2.2.1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the phase of SEM that deals with the measurement of models. CFA investigates the relationships between observed measures/indicators and constructs/latent variables (Brown, 2015). Factor analysis is used to explain variability between observed, correlated variables based on hypothetically fewer numbers of unobserved variables. It covers the aspects of 'goodness-of-fit' and the validity of the measurement model, the reliability and convergent validity, and the statistical evidence of discriminant validity.

7.2.2.1.1. Goodness-of-fit and validity of the measurement model.

Figure 7.13 below illustrates the initial measurement model drawn from SPSS Amos 27. To ensure a rigorous model fit, Chi-square ratio of the model should be less than 5, (Bentler, 1989, 1990), the CFI (goodness-of-fit-index) and TLI (Tucker Lewis index) should exceed 0.90 (Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2014), NFI (normed fit index) should exceed 0.90 (Byrne, 1994) and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) value should be below 0.08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The model yields a Chi-square =

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2303.229, degree of freedom (df) = 832 and p value = 0.000. Due to the sensitivity of the Chi-square statistic to the sample size, Hair et al. (2014) recommends that researchers examine the fit indices such as CMIN/df = 2.768, TLI = 0.944, CFI = 0.948, GFI = 0.786, NFI = 0.921, and RMSEA = 0.066. In this study, the GFI does not meet the requirement.

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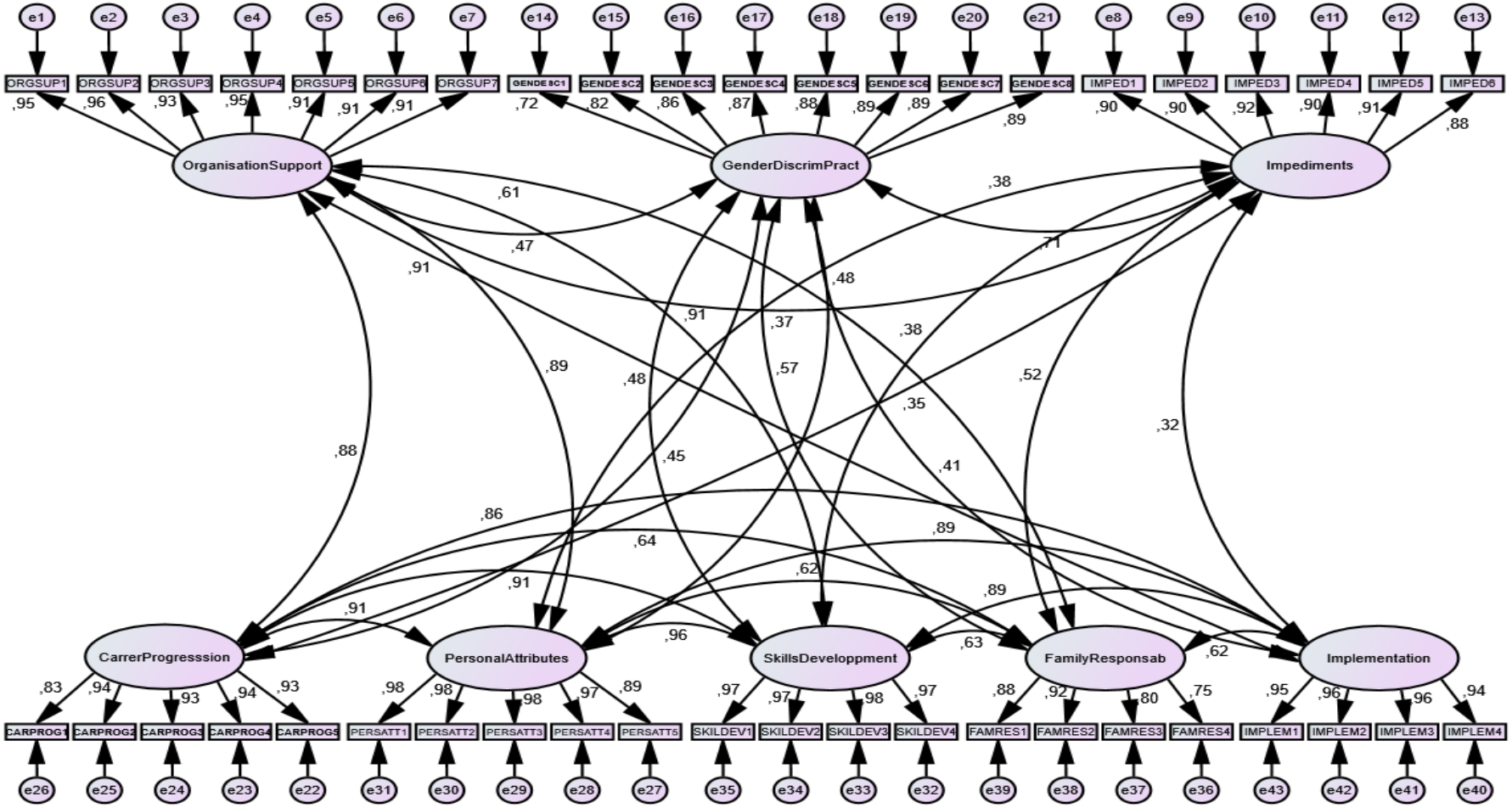
Figure 7.13: Initial measurement model (unimproved)



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The measurement model (Figure 7.14 below) indicates that the initial model was improved using the covariance of error terms' approach in order to meet the required thresholds of at least 0.8 for GFI. This practice is a common approach with SEM. The improved model yields a Chi-square = 1939.456; degree of freedom (df) = 825 and p. value = 0.000 (significant). As indicated in Table 7.11 below, fit indices show an acceptable 'goodness-of-fit' between the data and the tested model (CMIN/df = 2.351, TLI = 0.957, CFI = 0.961, GFI = 0.819, NFI = 0.934 and RMSEA = 0.057). A summary of the fit indices of the initial and the improved model is presented in Table 7.11 below.

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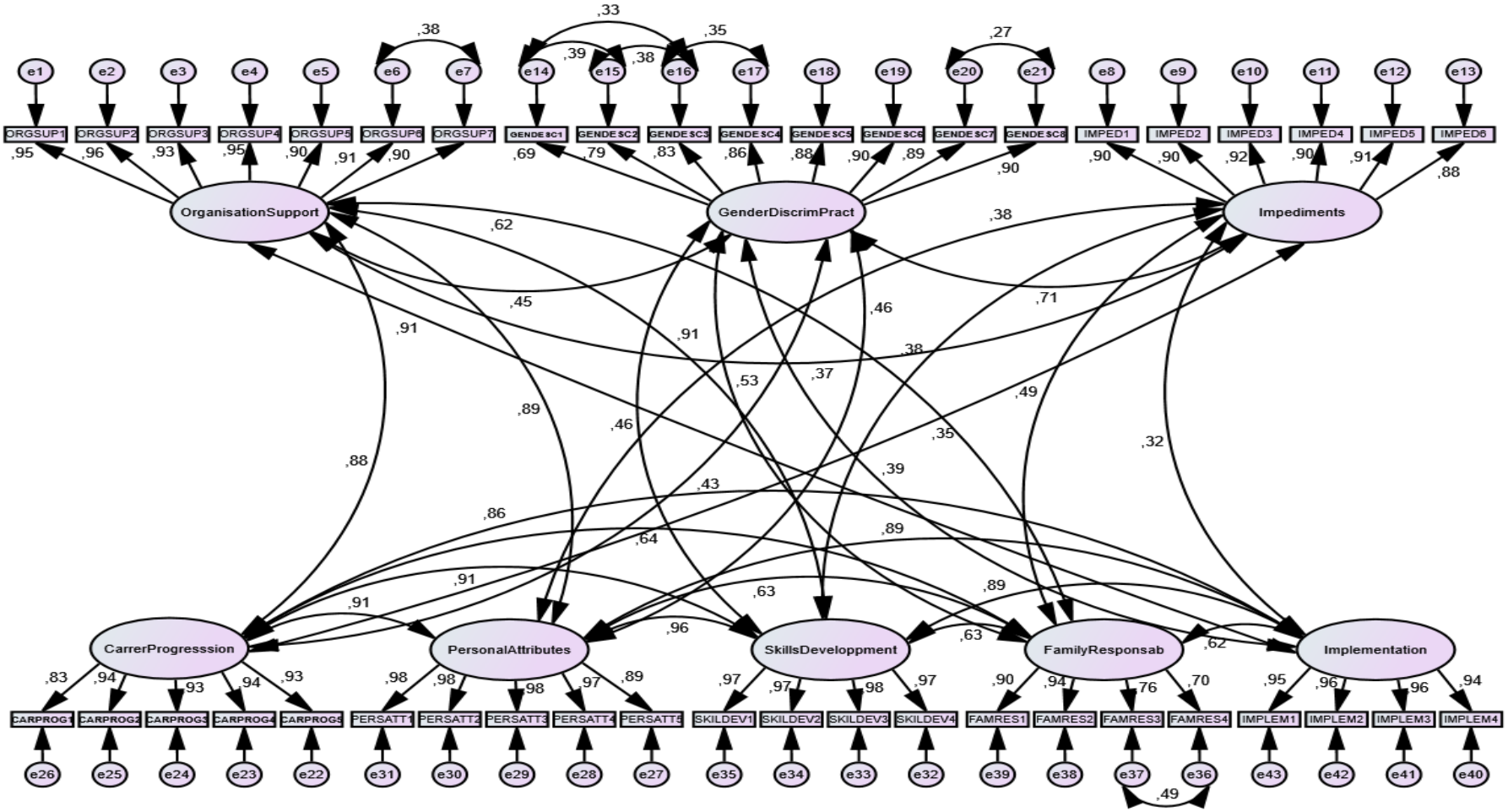
Figure 7.14: Improved measurement model outputs



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The measurement model shown in Figure 7.14 above has eight latent variables (or constructs), namely: 'Workplace Support Strategies', 'Workplace Impediments', 'Skills Development of Women', 'Career Progression of Women', 'Personal Attributes', 'Family Responsibilities', 'Workplace Gender Discriminatory' and 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace'. Each item's contribution to its construct is indicated by the item's factor loadings. The factor loading quantifies the degree to which a variable is related to a certain factor. All the factor loadings in the measurement model are deemed to be 'good' because they are all above 0.5 (Malhotra et al., 2017). The measurement model illustrated in Figure 7.14 above, therefore, supports the convergent validity of all the items.

Due to the fact that the initial model employed in this study had a GFI of less than 0.80 (0.786 in Table 7.11 below) the model needed to be improved in order to obtain model fitness and test hypotheses. The improvement of GFI was performed using the covariance of error terms, which is common practice with SEM, resulting in an acceptable GFI of 0.819 as shown in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: Summary of model fit indices

Fit Indicator	Threshold adapted from Hair et al. (2014: 579-580)	Initial measurement model	Final measurement model
CMIN/DF (Chi-square/degree of freedom)	Less than 3 (good) Between [3-5] (acceptable) Above 5 (poor)	2.768	2.351
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	Less than .05 (good) Between [.06-.1] (acceptable) Above .1 (poor)	0.066	0. 057
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	Less than .90 (poor) Above .90 (good)	0.948	0. 961
TLI (Tucker Lewis Index)	Less than .80 (poor) Between [.80-.90] (acceptable) Above .90 (good)	0.944	0.957

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GFI (Goodness-Of-Fit-Index)	Less than .80 (poor) Between [.80-.90] (acceptable) Above .90 (good)	0.786	0.819

7.2.2.1.2. Reliability and convergent validity

This section reports on the reliability of the scale and the convergent validity.

A. Reliability of the scales

Reliability is the degree to which the measurement of a construct provides stable and consistent results (Taherdoost, 2016). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are often used to measure the reliability of a scale (Field, 2013). Although the value 0.6 is permissible, the required cut-off value of both the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability is 0.7 (Malhotra et al., 2017). Results in Table 7.12 below reveal that the Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.906 (for the construct 'Family Responsibilities') to 0.986 (for the construct 'Skills Development'). These results indicate a satisfactory overall level of internal consistency for all eight constructs considered in the model. Cronbach's alpha results are also supported by composite reliability coefficients for all constructs that range from 0.897 (the lowest being for the construct 'Family Responsibilities') to 0.986 (the highest being for the construct 'Skills Development'). Hence all constructs in this study are deemed reliable.

B. Convergent validity

Convergent validity is the degree to which a set of items measures only one latent variable in the same direction (Hosany et al., 2015). Based upon the results of this study, the visual representation of the measurement model suggests a convergent validity because all the factor loadings are at least 0.5. The statistical evidence (refer to Figure 7.12 above) further supports the convergent validity of the measurements

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through the Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) estimates above 0.5. (See Table 7.12 below), hence convergent validity is supported (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Table 7.12: Statistical evidence of reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	P-value	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Final number of items
Workplace support strategies	ORGSUP1	0,947	***	0,978	0,978	0,862	7
	ORGSUP2	0,959	***				
	ORGSUP3	0,934	***				
	ORGSUP4	0,947	***				
	ORGSUP5	0,904	***				
	ORGSUP6	0,906	***				
	ORGSUP7	0,899	***				
Workplace impediments	IMPED1	0,902	***	0,963	0,963	0,813	6
	IMPED2	0,900	***				
	IMPED3	0,918	***				
	IMPED4	0,905	***				
	IMPED5	0,906	***				
	IMPED6	0,879	***				
Skills development of women	SKILDEV1	0,972	***	0,986	0,986	0,945	4
	SKILDEV2	0,978	***				
	SKILDEV3	0,969	***				
	SKILDEV4	0,97	***				
Career progression of women	CARPROG1	0,935	***	0,963	0,963	0,840	5
	CARPROG2	0,944	***				
	CARPROG3	0,93	***				
	CARPROG4	0,938	***				
	CARPROG5	0,832	***				
Personal attributes (non-workplace)	PERSATT1	0,89	***	0,983	0,983	0,922	5
	PERSATT2	0,965	***				
	PERSATT3	0,977	***				
	PERSATT4	0,983	***				
	PERSATT5	0,984	***				
Family responsibilities (non-workplace)	FAMRES1	0,702	***	0,906	0,897	0,688	4
	FAMRES2	0,759	***				
	FAMRES3	0,938	***				
	FAMRES4	0,897	***				
Workplace gender discriminatory practices	GENDESC1	0,688	***	0,955	0,952	0,715	8
	GENDESC2	0,794	***				
	GENDESC3	0,83	***				
	GENDESC4	0,86	***				
	GENDESC5	0,883	***				
	GENDESC6	0,901	***				
	GENDESC7	0,887	***				
	GENDESC8	0,898	***				
Legislation on gender in the workplace	IMPLEM1	0,942	***	0,976	0,976	0,911	4
	IMPLEM2	0,957	***				
	IMPLEM3	0,965	***				
	IMPLEM4	0,954	***				

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(***Indicates the significance of the factor at 99% confidence interval.)

Results in Table 7.12 above statistically support the reliability and the convergent validity of the items in the final measurement model. Therefore, the items retained in the final measurement model are reliable measures of their constructs.

7.2.2.1.3. Statistical evidence of discriminant validity

This section presents and discusses the statistical evidence of discriminant validity through the matrix of correlations and AVE square root coefficients (see Table 7.13 below). Discriminant validity is the level to which a construct or latent variable discriminates from other construct or latent variables (Taherdoost, 2016, Hair et al, 2022). Discriminant validity is measured by comparing correlations among all pairs of constructs with the square root of AVE of each construct (Malhotra et al., 2017). Correlation values greater than the square root of AVE indicate poor discriminant validity between the said constructs. Ideally, the square root of the AVE is expected to be above the inter-construct correlation coefficients (see Table 7.13 below).

Table 7.13: Correlation matrix to assess the discriminant validity.

	Family responsibilities	Workplace Support strategies	Workplace Impediments	Gender discriminatory practices	Career Progress	Personal Attributes	Skills Development	Legislation on gender in the workplace
Family responsibilities	**0,83**							
Workplace Support strategies	0,618	**0,928**						
Workplace Impediments	0,49	0,366	**0,902**					
Gender Discriminatory practices	0,526	0,449	0,714	**0,845**				
Career Progress	0,641	0,879	0,354	0,428	**0,917**			

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Personal attributes	0,627	0,891	0,376	0,457	0,911	**0,96**		
Skills Development.	0,63	0,909	0,377	0,457	0,914	0,957	**0,972**	
Legislation on gender in the workplace	0,625	0,908	0,32	0,389	0,864	0,893	0,892	**0,955**

Results in Table 17.13 above indicate that there is no discriminant validity concern between the constructs because all their AVE square roots are above their own inter-construct correlation values.

In conclusion, the measurement model (Figure 7.14 above) fits the data satisfactorily. All constructs in the instruments used in the final measurement model were reliable. Likewise, convergent and discriminant validity are supported in this study. Also, given that the overall results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are satisfactory, the structural model can be tested.

7.2.2.2. Structural model analysis

The maximum likelihood, performed with AMOS 27, was used to test the structural model that is presented in Figure 7.15 below. This section presents both the research findings and interpretations.

7.2.2.2.1. Results from structural model analysis

The fit of the model was assessed and results indicated satisfactory fit indices of the structural model (Chi-square = 1939.456; p value= 0.000; df= 825) because CMIN/DF= 2.351; GFI= 0.819; NFI= 0.934; TLI = 0.957; CFI = 0.961; and RMSEA = 0.057 (refer to Figure 7.14 and Table 7.11). These results indicate that the structural model in Figure 7.15 below fits the data and can therefore be confidently used to test the hypotheses in Table 7.14 below.

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Figure 7.15: Structural model

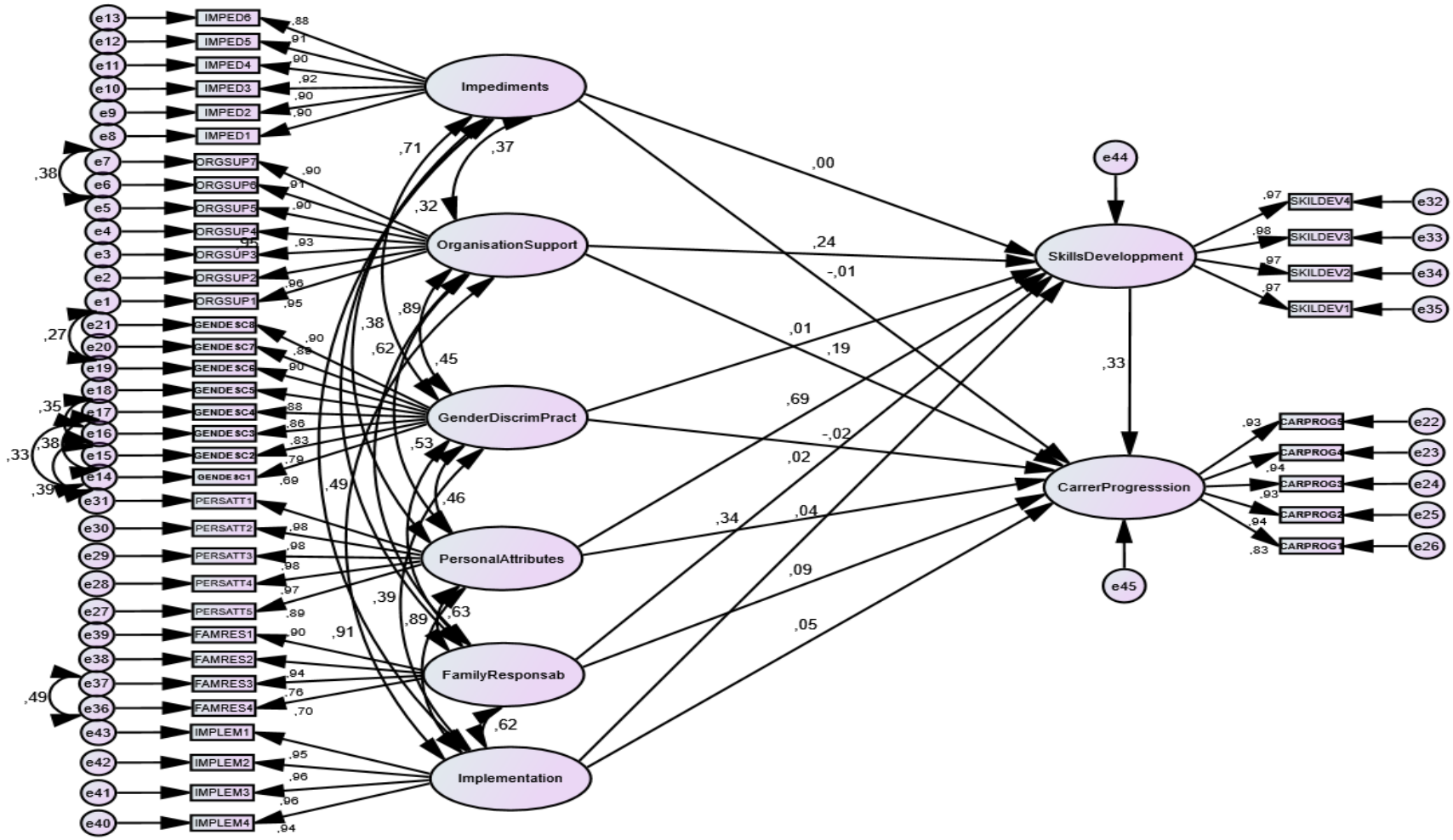

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Table 7.14 below establishes the predictive effects of the independent variable on dependent variables using Beta (β) and p-values (Sig). Beta (β) values indicate the direction and strength of the relationship (Pallant, 2010). Beta coefficient compares the strength of the effect of each individual independent variable to the dependent variable. The higher the absolute value of the beta coefficient, the stronger the effect. Beta values in Figure 7.14 below indicate the direction and the strength of the relationship (positive values indicate positive relationships, and negative values indicate negative relationships). The p-values (Sig) estimate the significance of the predictive effect (Pallant, 2010). The significance of the relationship in this study is measured through the p-value below 0.05 (at least at 95% Confidence Interval).

Table 7.14: Standardized regression weights and hypothesis conclusion

Dependent variables		Independent variables	β values	P-values	Conclusion
H1a: Selected workplace factors are impediments to women's skills development.					
Skills Development of Women	<---	Workplace Impediments	0.003	0.906	H1a is rejected.
H1b: Selected workplace factors are impediments to women's career progression					
Career Progression of Women	<---	Workplace Impediments	-0.013	0.687	H1b is rejected.
H1c: Selected workplace factors support/promote women's skills development.					
Skills Development of Women	<---	Workplace Support Strategies	0.224	0.000	H1c is accepted.
H1d: Selected workplace factors support/promote women's career progression.					
Career Progression of Women	<---	Workplace Support Strategies	0.187	0.004	H1d is accepted.
H2a: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's skills development.					
Skills Development of Women	<---	Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices	0.006	0.819	H2a is rejected.
H2b: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's career progression					

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Dependent variables		Independent variables	β values	P-values	Conclusion
Career Progression of Women	<---	Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices	-0.02	0.556	H2b is rejected.
(H3): Women's skills development is positively linked to their career progression.					
Career Progression of Women	<---	Skills Development of Women	0.334	0.000	H3 is accepted.
H4a: Some personal factors impact women's skills development.					
Skills Development of Women	<---	Personal Attributes (non-workplace)	0.687	0.000	H4a is accepted.
H4b: Some personal factors impact women's' career progression					
Career Progression of Women	<---	Personal Attributes (non-workplace	0.336	0.000	H4b is accepted.
H4c: Family responsibilities/childcare impact women's skills development					
Skills Development of Women	<---	Family Responsibilities (non-workplace)	0.017	0.455	H4c is rejected.
H4d: Family responsibilities/childcare impact women's career progression.					
Career Progression of Women	<---	Family Responsibilities (non-workplace)	0.088	0.005	H4d is accepted.
H5a: There is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's skills development.					
Skills Development of Women	<---	Legislation on Gender in the Workplace	0.043	0.337	H5a is rejected.
H5b: There is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's career progression.					
Career Progression of Women	<---	Legislation on Gender in the Workplace)	0.054	0.389	H5b is rejected.

(<--- Refers to the direction of the relationship from the independent variables onto the dependent variables.)

Findings in Table 7.14 above reveal that out of the 13 hypotheses tested, six relationships were statistically significant and seven relationships were non-significant. Each hypothesis is discussed in detail in the next section.

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7.2.2.2.2. Discussions and interpretations of hypotheses

This section presents discussions of findings from the 13 hypothetical relationships. It also includes the interpretation of these results and compares these findings with previous research.

A. Hypothesis 1: Selected factors within the workplace impact women' skills development and career progression (H1).

Hypothesis 1 was divided into four sub-hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d), each of which is stipulated and discussed below.

i. Hypothesis H1a: Selected workplace factors are impediments to women's skills development.

Table 7.14 above shows that the construct 'Workplace Impediments' does not have a significant effect on the skills development of women (β=0.003, P= 0.906). Hence, hypothesis H1a, that states that selected workplace factors impede women's skills development, is rejected. This finding means that the removal of various 'Workplace Impediments' will not translate automatically into an improvement of 'Skills Development'. These results contradict research conclusions that the organisational dynamics play a critical role in the skills development of all employees (Coetzee, 2017; Stacho et al., 2019; Vnoučková et al., 2015) (see Sections 3.6.1 and 3.9.1 above).

ii. Hypothesis H1b: Selected workplace factors are impediments to women's career progression.

Table 7.14 above reveals that the construct 'Workplace Impediments' does not have a significant effect on women's career progression, even though there is an adverse relationship between the two constructs (β= - 0.013, P= 0.687). Therefore, hypothesis H1b, that states that selected workplace factors are impediments to women's career progression, is rejected. Although this finding means that the removal of 'Workplace

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Impediments' will not translate automatically into an improvement of women's career progression, the negative Beta value (β= - 0.013) shows that the presence of impediments adversely affects women's career progression. Results from the non-statistical link does not concord with previous findings that some organisationsal factors hinder the progress of women (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; McKie & Jyrkinen, 2017; Naudé, 2017; Stacho et al., 2019; Wyatt & Sylvester, 2015) (refer to Section 5.2 above).

iii. Hypothesis H1c: Selected workplace factors support/ promote women's skills development.

The construct 'Workplace Support Strategies' has a significant effect on women's skills development (β=0.224, P=0.000). This finding implies that when 'Workplace Support Strategies' improve by one standard deviation, there is a 99% chance that 'Skills Development of Women' will also increase by 24.4% of its own standard deviation (refer to Table 7.14 above). Therefore, hypothesis H1c, that stipulates that selected workplace factors support or promote women's skills development, is accepted. In agreement with this result, Khalid et al. (2017) and the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 confirm that organisational support is vital for employee's skills development (see Section 3.6.1 above).

iv. Hypothesis H1d: Selected workplace factors support/ promote women's career development.

The construct 'Workplace Support Strategies' has a significant effect on women's career progression (β=0.187, P=0.004). This finding means that when 'Workplace Support Strategies' improve by one standard deviation, there is a 99% chance that 'Career Progression of Women' will also improve by 18.7% of its own standard deviation (see Table 7.14 above). Therefore, hypothesis H1d, that states that selected

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workplace factors support/promote women's career development, is accepted. Previous research findings presented by Oosthuizen et al. (2019) and Nel et al. (2016) agree that employers can use certain initiatives to promote women's career progression (refer to Section 5.2 above).

The findings discussed above reveal that Hypothesis 1 is partially accepted because there is no relationship between the constructs 'Workplace Impediments' and 'Women's Skills Development' (H1a is rejected). Likewise, there is no relationship between the constructs 'Workplace Impediments' and 'Career Progression of Women' (H1b is rejected). However, there is a link between the construct 'Workplace Support Strategies' and 'Skills Development' (H1c is accepted) and 'Career Progression of Women' (H1d is supported).

B. Hypothesis 2: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's skills development and career progression

This hypothesis was divided into two sub-divisions (H2a and H2b) as indicated and discussed below.

i. Hypothesis H2a: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's skills development.

The construct 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' does not have a significant effect on women's 'Skills Development' (β=0.006, P= 0.819) (refer to Table 7.14 above). Therefore, hypothesis H2a, that states that the construct 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' negatively impacts 'Women's Skills Development', is rejected. This rejection implies that improving 'Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices' will not translate automatically into improved 'Skills Development' for women. These results contradict previous research findings that 'Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices' that both treat women as men and ignore the different sets of challenges women face, impede

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the development of women's capabilities (Gipson et al., 2017, Moalusi & Jones, 2019) (refer to Sections 3.4.2.1 and 3.5.1 above).

ii. Hypothesis H2b: Gender discriminatory practices negatively impact women's career progression.

Table 7.14 above shows that the construct 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' does not have a significant effect on 'Women's Career Progression', yet there is an adverse relationship between the two constructs (β= - 0.02, P= 0.556). Therefore, hypothesis H2b, that states that 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' negatively impact 'Women's Career Progression', is rejected. This result means that removing 'Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices' will not translate automatically into an improvement in 'Career Progression for Women'. This result contradicts previous research findings (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2019) indicating that inappropriate organisational practices hinder women's promotion to senior positions. It also challenges the ideology that depriving women of appropriate opportunities, resources and power limits their career potential (Choi & Park 2014; Hills, 2015) and contests findings that some work procedures, processes and structures negatively affect women's career growth (Botha & Cronjé, 2015a, 2015b) (refer to Section 5.2 above). However, the negative Beta value (β= - 0.02) in this relationship indicates that 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' deter 'Women's Career Progression'.

In conclusion, hypothesis H2 is rejected because there is no statistical relationship between 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' and both 'Skills Development of Women' and 'Career Progression of Women'.

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C. Hypothesis 3: Women's skills development is positively linked to their career progression.

As reflected in Table 7.14 above, the construct 'Skills Development' has a significant effect on the 'Career Progression for Women' (β= 0.334, P= 0.000). This finding indicates that when 'Skills Development of Women' improves by one standard deviation, there is a 99% chance that 'Career Progression of Women' also increased by 33.4% of its own standard deviation. Therefore, hypothesis H3, that states that women's skills development is positively linked to their career progression, is accepted. These findings are in synch with previous findings that education, training and development enhance women's progression in the workplace (Afande, 2015; Rath, Mohanty & Pradhan, 2019) (refer to Section 5.2.17 above). When the women's skills are developed their chance of being promoted is increased.

D. Hypothesis 4: Some selected non-workplace factors (personal and family) impact the skills development and career progression of women.

This hypothesis was divided into four sub-sections (H4a, H4b, H4c, and H4d) as indiated and discussed below.

i. Hypothesis H4a: Some Personal Attributes impact the skills development of women.

As portrayed in Table 7.14 above, the construct 'Personal Attributes' has a significant effect on the 'Skills Development of Women' (β= 0.687, P= 0.000). This finding means that when 'Personal Attributes' improve by one standard deviation there is a 99% chance that 'Skills Development of Women' will also increase by 68.7% of its own standard deviation. Therefore, hypothesis H4a, that stipulates that some personal factors impact women's skills development, is accepted. These results are in tandem with previous arguments that individuals, especially women (Bosch, 2017; Tansley at al., 2016), have a significant role to play in their skills development (Hoole & Hotz,

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2016; Van der Walt, 2018; Vnoučková et al., 2015) (refer to Section 5.2 above). Women who take charge of their careers are more likely to engage in skills development initiatives.

ii. Hypothesis H4b: Some personal attributes impact the career progression of women

As presented in Table 7.14 above, the construct 'Personal Factors' has a significant effect on the 'Career Progression of Women' (β= 0.336, P= 0.000). This finding indicates that when 'Personal Attributes' improves by one standard deviation, there is a 99% chance that 'Career Progression of Women' also increases by 33.6% of its own standard deviation. Therefore, hypothesis H4b, that states that some personal factors impact women's' career progression, is accepted. These results are in tandem with previous research findings that women's advancement in the workplace greatly depends on their personal attitude (Ames et al., 2019; Howson et al., 2018; Khalid et al., 2017; Rapuano, 2020) (refer to Sections 5.2.17 and 5.2.18 above).

iii. Hypothesis H4c: Family responsibilities impact women's skills development.

Table 7.14 above reveals that the construct 'Family Responsibilities' does not have a significant effect on 'Skills Development of Women' (β= 0.017, P= 0.455). This result implies that lessening the impact of 'Family Responsibilities' will not translate into an automatically improvement in 'Skills Development of Women'. Therefore, hypothesis H4c, that states that family responsibilities impact women's skills development, is rejected. Contrary to this finding, other researchers argue that skills development requires time and effort (Armstrong &Taylor, 2014; Za et al., 2014) and, thus, family responsibilities are in conflict with the time needed for work activities/skills development (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017) (refer to Section 5.2.16 and 5.2.17

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above). More research on the relationship will be required to assess the exact relationship between these two variables.

iv. Hypothesis H4d: Family responsibilities impact women's career progression.

Table 7.14 above shows that the construct 'Family Responsibilities' has a significant effect on the 'Career Progression of Women' (β= 0.088, P= 0.005). This finding implies that when the construct 'Family Responsibility' improves by one standard deviation, there is a 99% chance that 'Career Progression of Women' will increase by 8.8% of its own standard deviation. Therefore, hypothesis H4d, that states that family responsibilities impact women's career progression, is accepted. Previous findings likewise agree that family responsibilities hamper women's career progress (Bakalim & Tasdelen-Karckay, 2017; Husin, Ghazali, Abdullah & Hadi, 2018; Kumara, 2018) (refer to Section 5.2.16 above). The fulfilling of family responsibilities requires time and competes with women's career related responsibilities.

In summary, Hypothesis H4 is partially accepted because the construct 'Personal Factors' negatively impact 'Women's Skills Development' (H4a is accepted), 'Personal Factors' negatively impact 'Women's Career Progression' (H4b is accepted) and 'Family Responsibilities' adversely impact Women's Career Progression (H4d is accepted). However, 'Family Responsibilities' do not negatively impact 'Women's Skills Development" (H4c is rejected). Therefore, women's attitude plays a significant role in their skills development and career progression, and 'Family Responsibilities' negatively impact 'Women's Career Progression'.

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E. Hypothesis 5: Adherence to legislation on gender is linked to women's skills development and career progression

This hypothesis has two sub hypotheses (H5a and H5b) that are listed and discussed below.

i. Hypothesis H5a: There is a link between adherence to legislation on gender and women's skills development.

As presented in Table 7.14 above, the construct 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' does not have a significant effect on the construct 'Career Progression of Women' (β=0.043, P= 0.337). This finding implies that the implementation of 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' will not necessarily translate into an improvement in 'Skills Development of Women'. Therefore, hypothesis H5a, that states that there is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's skills development, is rejected. These results agree with previous research findings stating that existing legislation have not been efficient in addressing gender-related issues within organisations (Alexander, 2019; Department of Trade and Industry, 2019; Moleko, 2019; Pienaar et al., 2018). Either these laws are not serving their purpose or they are not being adhered to. Hence, there is a need to revisit existing legislation and/or keenly monitor their implementation (refer to Section 2.5. 4 above).

ii. Hypothesis H5b: There is a link between adherence to legislation on gender and women's career progression.

The construct 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' does not have a significant effect on the construct 'Career Progression of Women' (β=0.054, P= 0.389). This result implies that improving 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' will not necessarily translate into 'Career Progression of Women'. Therefore, hypothesis H5b, that states that there is a link between adherence to related existing legislation and women's career progression, is rejected. These findings resonate with that of other

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researchers (Bosch, 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Pienaar & Kok, 2017) who argue that existing legislation fails to meet the reasons for which they were promulgated, or because adherence may just involve 'ticking-the-compliance-box' without achieving any realistic changes within the organisation, (refer to Section 2.4 and 2.5 above). Therefore, hypothesis H5 is rejected because the construct 'Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' neither has a significant effect on either 'Women's Skills Development' or 'Career Progression of Women'. These results indicate thatexisting legislation on gender equity, skills development and equal representation at senior levels do not translate into the skills development and career progression of women within the workplace.

From hypotheses provided in Table 7.14 above, only six relationships were statistically significant, the remaining seven were non-significant. This analysis of the structural model provides evidence that in organisations in which the appropriate support is provided, women are more likely to engage in skills development initiatives (H1c accepted) and progress within the workplace occurs (H1d accepted). Likewise, women are more likely to experience career progression within organisations in which their skills are developed (H3 accepted). In addition, women who take personal responsibility for their careers will develop their skills (H4a supported) and ascend the workplace hierarchy more swiftly (H4b supported). Furthermore, 'Family Responsibilities' adversely impact women's career progression (H4d accepted). However, no significant relationship was found between 'Workplace Impediments' and 'Women's Skill Development' (H1a rejected) and 'Career Progression of Women' (H1b not supported). Neither was there any statistical link between the constructs 'Gender Discriminatory Practices' and 'Skills Development' (H2a rejected) and 'Career Progression of Women' (H2b rejected). Lastly there was no statistical evidence of a

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relationship between the constructs 'Family Responsibilities' and women's 'Skills Development' (H4d not supported). Given that the above hypotheses were deduced from existing literature, the interpretation indicated here could be that not all the theories that informed this study may not apply to the selected sample. This interpretation might also imply that some items were not appropriate and, thus, the chosen constructs may need to be refined. The later explanation may require changes in the model considered in this study, with some constructs being deleted or revised and others added. The next section explains the extent to which the independent variables can cause the dependent variables to vary.

7.2.3. Variance explained

The variance explained concept indicates how much influence the independent variables have on the dependent variables. It explains the degree of spread in the data set and is a valid indicator of the quality or explanatory power of the theory used in the study. Higher percentages of explained variance indicate a robust strength of association, and is also an indication that more reliable predictions can be made. The variance explained findings for this study are graphically presented in Figure 7.16 below.

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Figure 7.16: Variance explained

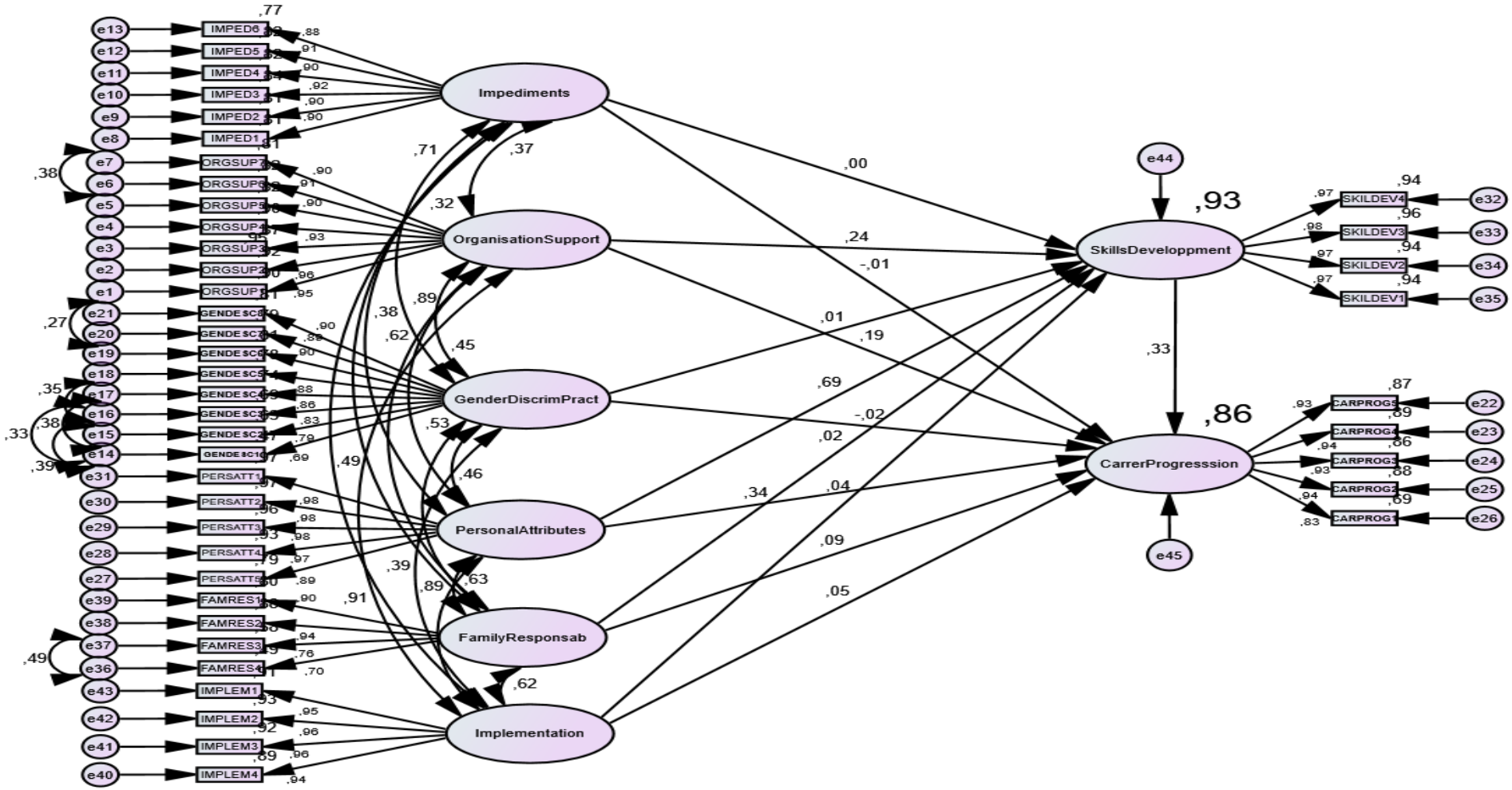

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Figure 7.16 above indicates that the constructs ‘Workplace Support Strategies’, ‘Workplace Impediments’, ‘Personal Attributes’, ‘Family Responsibilities’, ‘Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices’ and ‘Legislation on Gender in the Workplace' explain up to 93% of the variance of ‘Skills Development of Women’ (R^2=0.93), and 86% of the variance of ‘Career Progression of Women’ (R^2=0.86), respectively.

After satisfactorily conducting the confirmatory factor analysis, structural model analysis and determining the level of variance of the structural model, the final graphical representation of model for this research was drawn and is presented in Figure 7.17 below.

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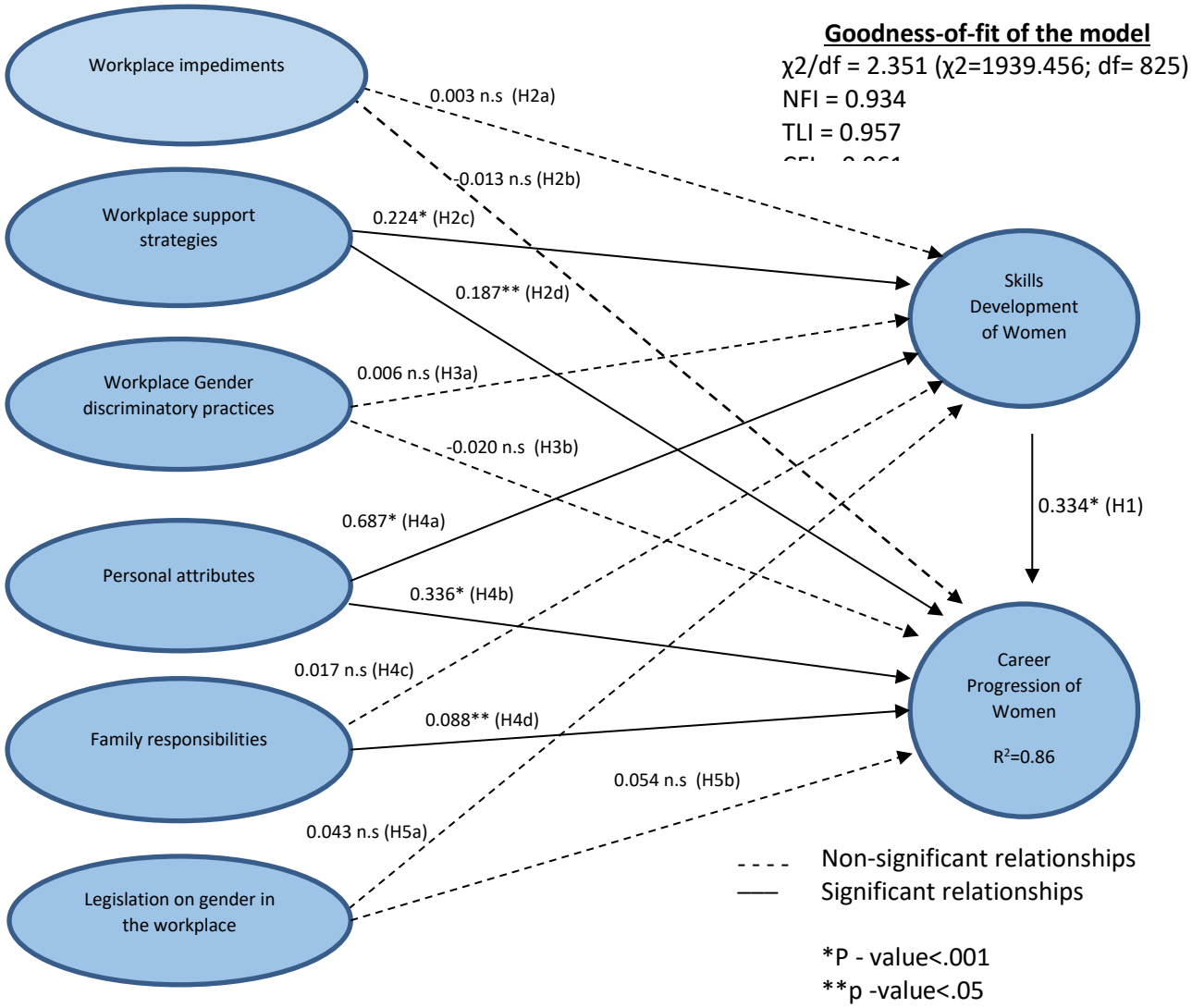
Figure 7.17: Graphical presentation of the model



7.3. Chapter summary and conclusion.

This chapter presented results as well as discussions and interpretations of the quantitative results analysed using the SEM. It presented findings, discussions and interpretations of assessments of the sampled population, examinations of items in the research instrument, evaluations of the fitness of the model and hypotheses tests, leading to the development of a graphical representation of the final model.

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Statistical results show that the constructs ‘Workplace Support Strategies’ and ‘Personal Attributes’ are statistically and significantly related to the ‘Skills Development of Women’. Also, the constructs ‘Workplace Support Strategies’, ‘Family Responsibilities’, ‘Personal Attributes’ and ‘Skills Development of Women’ are statistically and significantly related to ‘Career Progression of Women’. Conversely, the constructs ‘Workplace Impediments’, ‘Family Responsibilities’, ‘Legislation on Gender Applicable to the Workplace’ and ‘Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices’ have non-significant effects on the ‘Skills Development of Women’. Likewise, ‘Workplace Impediments’, ‘Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices’ as well as ‘Legislation on Gender Applicable to the Workplace’ have a non-significant affect on the ‘Career Progression of Women’.

This chapter concludes that, while organisational support is critical for women’s skills career development and career progression, the role of personal responsibility should not be underestimated. Also, the burden of family responsibilities on women’s career advancement cannot be ignored. In addition, the development of women’s skills is directly proportional to their career progression and women who wish to ascend the organisational ladder need to consciouslly develop their skills. The next chapter presents and discusses results from the analysis of open-ended questions.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUALIITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

8.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results, discussions and interpretations of the participants' responses to the open-ended questions analysed using the thematic approach discussed in Chapter 6 above. Responses to open-ended questions that were meaningful and related to the question were used to create themes. Comments that were irrelevant, unrelated and incomplete were considered invalid and, therefore, not included in the analysis. Discussions were supported with direct quotations from comments in order to capture underlying information.

8.2. Research themes

The main categories were generated from the conceptual framework (see Sections 1.5.2 and 6.4.2 above). These categories include: organisational support towards women's skills development, organisational support towards women's career progression, organisational impediments to women's skills development, organisational impediments towards women's career progression, organisational practices that combat gender discrimination, organisational practices that promote gender discrimination, personal attitude towards skills development, personal attitude towards career progression, the impact of family responsibilities on women's skills development, the impact of family responsibilities on women's career progression, organisational practices that enable compliance with gender legislation applicable to the workplace, and organisational practices that promote non-compliance with legislation on gender applicable to the

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workplace.. The most common themes are presented in this chapter and discussed in detail below.

8.2.1. Organisational support towards women's skills development

A total of 214 valid comments and 23 invalid ones were recorded under the question aimed at gathering women's overall impressions regarding their organisation's support towards women's skills development (i.e., "What is your overall impression about your organisation's support towards women's skills development?"). A similar question sought to understand women's impression regarding organisational efforts towards their personal skills development (i.e., "What is your overall impression about your organisation's efforts towards your skills development?") and 193 valid comments and 20 invalid comments were gathered from this question. The main themes generated from comments under the above two questions were: empowering and encouraging women, providing leadership development to women, offering skills development opportunities to women, financing the skills development of women and facilitating networking for women. Each of these themes are discussed and interpreted below.

8.2.1.1. Empowering and encouraging women

A participant commented that "The company wants to empower women in everything they do.", while another noted that "The organization empowers and motivates women to be innovative and be successful." Another participant also commented that "Women are encouraged to be anything they can be, they are encouraged to study and attend skills development programmes."

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These selected comments reveal that women participants considered encouraging and inspiring women to develop their skills as vital strategies for developing women's skills. This result matches previous research findings. Roe (2015) and Rapuano (2020) that confirm the relevance of inspiring employees to assume their share of responsibility towards their career development. A number of other research studies have emphasised the need to empower employees for career success (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Bishop, 2018; Chen et al., 2019; Dong et al., 2017; Khandakar & Pangil, 2019; Kurniawati & Sari, 2019; Zakariaa et al., 2017) (refer to Sections 3.6.1 and 5.2.1 above). Motivation and empowerment are vital for women's skills development and reward systems can encourage women in their skills development.

Previous findings confirm that rewarding women who expend effort on their careers incentivises them to continue this trend (Craig, 2018; Dong et al., 2017; Mathur-Helm, 2018; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) (see Section 5.2.2 above). Therefore, effective skills development reward systems act as incentives for women's continuous development

8.2.1.2. Providing leadership development

One participant wrote "My company makes sure that even us, women, are developed for leadership positions." Recognising the role of leadership development for women, another woman noted that "I wish my company could provide more support for the development of leadership in women."

Therefore, participants perceived having leadership development programmes is vital support towards the development of women's leadership skills. Knipfer et al. (2017) and

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KPMG International (2014) affirm this finding and highlight the need to enrol women in programmes that will develop their leadership abilities and prepare them for senior roles (refer to Sections 5.2.11 and 5.2.17 above). Hence, the significance of preparing and grooming women for executive positions using leadership development programmes.

8.2.1.3. Offering skills development opportunities

Participating women commented that their organisation provides opportunities for women to develop their skills. Three women wrote “My organisation highly looks upon women and they are given work to enhance and develop their skills.”; “My organization do support woman and do offer several opportunities to develop skills.”; and “My organization fully supports women's skills development, they go out of their way to make women empowered and develop new skills that are beneficial to them.”

Few participants also emphasised on the satisfactory frequency at which their organisation offers development opportunities to them. A woman commented that “Short courses and in-service training are offered continuously.” Another woman wrote that “I am impressed with the efforts my organisation is putting in place to develop women’s skills, they host monthly seminars to women.”, while one participant commented that “Every month we engage in project to help boost our knowledge in many aspects of business development, management and almost everything in general.”

This highlights the importance of organisations constantly giving women access to development opportunities and exposing them to programmes relevant for their career. This result is in synch with Coetzee (2017) and Dong et al. (2017) assertion that organisations support employees’ skills development by providing them with relevant

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development opportunities. Organisations have the social responsibility to invest in employees' skills development (Stacho et al., 2019; Vnoučková et al. 2015) and equip them with relevant skills that prepare them for the future (Inayatullah, 2012; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) (See Section 3.6.1.) and senior positions (Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017). Hence, offering women development platforms and opportunities is perceived as support towards their skills development. Such initiatives could include targeted training, on-the-job training, workshops, seminars and special programmes relevant to women's careers

8.2.1.4. Financing skills development

Comments such as "My company offers and pays fees for employees if its relevant to their job description and career goals.", "The company makes time and provide money for women's development." and "We have bursaries to study further." depict that funding skill development is a form of support towards women's skilfulness, especially when this is comes along with flexible work-study programmes.

This result coincides with the findings of Coetzee (2017) and Raheja (2015) who identify financing skills development, allocating time and providing development resources, as support processes towards employees' skills development (Refer to Section 3.6.1.). Organisations that cover the cost of upskilling programmes and offer women the flexibility to develop themselves while working, they are offering vital skills development support.

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8.2.1.5. Facilitating networking opportunities

One participant's comment was "We get vast opportunities to connect with employees from other big companies in short training programs once or twice a year." Another woman wrote 'My company organises events where women can network."

Therefore, facilitating networking opportunities is a way through which organisations support women's skills development. In concord with this finding, previous research supports that for effective skills development, organisations need systemic networks that facilitate the employees' knowledge creation and learning (Banyhmadana et al., 2020; Mehta, 2019; Taulli, 2018) (refer to Sections 3.2.3 and 5.2.15 above). Strategic networks are important because they provide opportunities through which women can learn and develop career-relevant skills.

In conclusion organisations should provide women with access to development opportunities, including leadership development required at executive levels. The next section addresses organisational support towards women's career progression.

8.2.2. Organisational support towards women's career progression

A total of 186 valid comments and eight invalid comments were noted under the question aimed at gathering the women's' overall impression of their organisation's support towards women's career progression. Also, 202 valid comments and 22 invalid ones were gathered under the question "What is your overall impression about your organisation's efforts towards your career progression?". The most common themes from this question were: prioritising women, providing skills development opportunities, providing growth

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opportunities, offering career assistance, having work life balance initiatives and mentoring. The results of the thematic analysis for organisational strategies towards women's career progression are discussed below.

8.2.2.1. Prioritising women

Statements such as "Gender is one of my company's top priorities." and "Women come first." show that prioritising women's professional advancement is considered as a form of support towards women's career growth.

Previous research attests to this finding. Walsh et al. (2016) acknowledge the relevance of prioritising women and their needs within organisations. Kurniawati and Sari (2019) and McKinsey and Company (2019) also add that organisations that value women treat them fairly and provide career growth opportunities for their advancement (see Section 5.2.2 above). When organisations value women's career advancement, they valorise issues that concern women and assist them in their career. Organisations that value women's career advancement, valorise issues that concern women and assist them during their career journeys.

8.2.2.2. Providing skills development opportunities

Some participants' comments were "My company organizes trainings and workshops that help women learn about new roles and positions.", "There are programs that are skewed in favour of women's development.", "As a young woman, my organising has greatly been involved in developing my skills continuously.", and "I like that they do support women's career progression, they provide funding for women who want to study further."

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This implies that the provision of skills development opportunities is a sign that the organisation wants women to grow. Previous findings affirm that organisations need to provide skills and leadership development opportunities relevant for women's career progress (Coetzee, 2017; Festing & Schafer, 2014; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Walsh et al., 2016). The fact that organisations indicate their intention to promote women employees is one of the main reasons for women to engage in skills development initiatives (Nwaeke & Onyebuchi, 2017). Women participants also raised the importance of being given the opportunity to apply the skills they learned within the workplace. While it is important to equip women with relevant skills, it is also critical to give them opportunities to put what they have learnt into practice. Earlier research confirms that providing women with opportunities to implement learnt skills is vital for assisting them to progress within the organisational hierarchy (Oosthuizen et al., 2019; Rigby & Ryan, 2018) (refer to Section 5.2.17 above). Investing in women's skills development provides them with the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to 'climb the organisational ladder'.

8.2.2.3. Providing growth opportunities

Some women commented that "My company promotes woman and gives them fair chances as men to ascend to high positions.", "There are great possibilities and chances for growth." "Opportunity offered by my company are aligned to my career." and "My company has created many opportunities towards my career progression."

Other women revealed their satisfaction in their career pace through comments such as "They promoted me twice within two years and they are doing well in assisting me in my

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career progression." and "I started out as a general worker at the company now I am a manager at the same company."

Hence providing growth opportunities and added responsibilities favours women's career advancement. Lewis and Beauregard (2018) and Moalusi and Jones, (2019) approve that fewer women than men perceive growth opportunities in organisations. The provision of growth opportunities aligned with promotion offers vital support towards women's career progress. Likewise, participants' comments revealed that women consider fair organisational practices as a signal that their organisation wants them to progress and succeed. Dzansi et al. (2016) and McKinsey and Company (2019) confirm the relevance of fair human resource practices for all staff (refer to Section 5.2.5 above). Hence, women easily progress in unbiased work environments. Perception of equal growth opportunities within an organisation is a retaining factor for employees.

Participants also lamented about practices that affect their career growth, such as sexual favours. When organisations do not tolerate sexual harassment, women perceive it as being supportive towards their career advancement. Few researchers agree on the negative effect of sexual harassment on women's careers (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015; Sang & Powell, 2012; Williams, Muller & Kilanski, 2012) (refer to Section 5.2.10 above). Zero leniency for sexual harassment gives women unrestricted freedom to pursue workplace opportunities without being afraid of being sexually harassed.

8.2.2.4. Career management assistance

Regarding career assistance initiatives, analysis of comments such as "There are measures put in place to elevate aspiring professionals to plan and get positive results.",

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"Every woman in my organisation is given career advice and there are more opportunities for women to grow and be knowledgeable." and "The organisation has been instrumental in directing me in areas that will greatly develop my career hence making me more valuable within the organisation."

Analysis show that organisations can support women's career progression by assisting them in managing their careers. In confirmation previous research highlight the need for organisations to assist women in planning and managing their careers (Afande, 2015; Howson et al., 2018; Prossack, 2018) (refer to Sections 5.2.11 and 5.2.18 above). Therefore, assistance with career management (which could be in the form of career planning processes, reviews and career feedback), can play a key role in women's career progression. Although often not available to women, mentors provide this kind of assistance such as mentorship (Ames et al., 2019; Gipson et al., 2017) (refer to Section 5.2.11 above). The lack of career guidance, such as mentorship, can discourage them from pursuing their goals and thereby delay women's career progression. Likewise, without adequate and efficient mentors many women may not have access to the career knowledge needed for their progression.

Wang and Shirmohammadi (2016) confirm the relevance of career knowledge in women's careers. The lack of career knowledge could be the result of poor career planning/management, ignorance of role requirements or inadequate mentorship. Roe (2015) and Afande (2015) allude to the roles that both the employee and the employer need to play in planning and executing personal career development plans. Setiawan and Julaeha (2020) highlight the importance of clarifying role requirements to employees. Oosthuizen et al. (2019) praise the role of mentors for targeted skills development for

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women (refer to Section 3.4.1 above). When organisations fail to provide adequate career management support and guidance, employees may be unaware of the skills needed to develop for their desired career goal, thus, become stagnated.

Facilitating networking should also be a form of career assistance for women. Previous research findings confirm the role of networks in women's careers and the relevance of helping women develop and leverage networking opportunities (Ames et al. 2019; Gipson et al., 2017; Hurst, Leberman & Edwards, 2018; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018) (see Section 5.2.15 above). Thus, networks expose women to learning and growth opportunities that they can leverage to boost their careers.

8.2.2.5. Work- family balance initiatives

It was discovered that women perceive work-family balance initiatives as support towards their career. This analysis was supported by comments such as "My organisation is highly supportive and affords flexibility to single women raising children alone by granting them flexible working hours." and "My company allows me time to look after my family."

Earlier research highlighted the role of work-life balance programmes in women's careers (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Mukanzi et al., 2014; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014) (refer to Section 5.2.16 above). Organisations that recognise that women have family responsibilities and make provision for them to perform their dual roles, provide balance for them to excel at work and in the family unit.

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8.2.2.6. Mentorship programmes

Women emphasized on the role mentorship plays in their ascension to senior positions through comments such as “There is a mentorship program that helps women to improve their skills.”, “The organization offers free training and mentoring to help us to grow and learn.” and “I have come across several seniors who have made it their business to mentor me to get to my next level. For that reason, I'll say there's an effort towards career progression for employees in my company.”

This result ties with that of Afande (2015) who recognise the role of mentorship in enhancing qualified women’s promotion to more senior roles. Lewis and Beauregard (2018) and Oosthuizen et al. (2019) also confirm the need for organisations to provide mentorship assistance to help women deal with the myriad of challenges they face (refer to Section 5.2.11 above). Mentorship programmes allow women to benefit from personalised career assistance relevant to their progression.

Mentorship is ideal in building women’s confidence. Hurst et al. (2018) highlight the responsibility of employers to instigate the self-confidence required for women’s advancement. Rohman et al. (2018) and Komalasari et al. (2017) also confirm that it is vital for organisations to inspire women employees to career greatness. Rohman et al. (2018) and Ames et al. (2019) cite encouraging and inspiring qualified women to apply for advertised positions as a motivating factor for their career advancement. All these practices can help women deal with their lack of confidence (Ensour et al., 2017; Mathur-Helm, 2018) (refer to Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.18 above). The manner in which an organisation, through mentors, inspires women employees plays a significant role in their

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career progression. When women acquire a holistic picture of all possible career advancement options, it may become easier for them to drive their career in the right direction.

In conclusion, organisations can support women's career progression by prioritising women and providing skills development and growth opportunities to them. Firms also offer women career assistance through mentorship and institutionalise work-life balance practices. The next section discusses organisational impediments to women's skills development.

8.2.3. Organisational impediments to women's skills development

While are practices that encourage the women's skills development, other processes can be detrimental to their development. A total of 174 usable comments and 19 unusable ones were gathered from the question "What is your overall impression about hindrances to women's skills development within your organisation? The main themes formed from these responses are: undermining women's professional capabilities, unfair promotion practices, lack of skills development support for women, lack of opportunities to apply skills, inadequate reward systems, and training women only for functional roles. These themes are discussed in detail below.

8.2.3.1. Undermining women's professional capabilities

From comments (like "Some leaders are men, they think women can't do what they are doing.", "Women are less trusted than men." and "Woman are undermined.") it can be

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noted that women's professional skills are often undermined, which may demotivate from developing their skills further.

This result was previously discovered by Oosthuizen et al. (2019) and McKinsey and Company (2019) who claim that the fact that women's knowledge, abilities and achievements are not usually recognised demotivates them (refer to Section 5.2.18 above). The undermining of women's abilities negates the importance of their skills, hence demotivating women from developing them further.

8.2.3.2. Unfair promotion practices

The existence of unfair promotion practices, detrimental of women's skills development was revealed through comments such as "Women are given lower position." and "We still need more women, especially black women in top positions."

Setiawan and Julaeha (2020) confirm that when employees lack knowledge of promotion requirements, they are demotivated to develop their skills. Also, Vasel (2019) affirms that vague promotion requirements means that capable employees may not receive promotion. Unfair promotional practices demotivate women (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) and create distrust in the system (Rohman et al., 2018), that could diminish employee's urge to equip themselves with new skills (see Section 5.2.5 above). Women may not see the need to develop their skills when they fail to perceive commensurate career growth or when there is lack of clarity regarding promotional practices and some may even decide to leave the organisation in search of better opportunities.

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8.2.3.3. Lack of support for women's skills development

One participant commented that "They don't promote women's development skills and it's so disappointing." While another noted that "Skills development are for men in my organization." This implies the lack of support towards women's skills development impedes women's development. Previous research confirms this result by arguing that when women lack support for their skills development, they are unable to reach their full potential within the workplace (Carucci, 2018; Doubell & Struwig, 2014; Mackay, 2017; Wang et al., 2017) (refer to Sections 3.4.1 and 3.6.1 above). Thus, inadequate support, or the lack thereof, hamper women's skills development.

Likewise, a woman wrote that "Projects are implemented but mainly for publicity especially during women's day after that the momentum dies down." This could imply that women's skills development initiatives are often rolled out for public exhibition meaning there is little commitment to continuously develop women's skills.

This result confirms that organisational investments in human capital is based on expected returns, such as company image (Banyhmadana et al., 2020; Fallon & Rice, 2015). Although this practice has some positive benefits, it becomes problematic when it is performed solely for public image without consideration of its relevance to women's careers. When women's skills development initiatives are undertaken for the sake of public exhibition only (e.g., women's month) it implies that there is little commitment to continuously develop women's skills, even when mandated by law. Timothy (2013) and Oosthuizen et al. (2019) confirm that organisational commitment to implementing the law is essential for organisations to attain gender parity (refer to Section 2.5 above).

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Conscious efforts towards gender equity will drive organisations to adhere to existing gender laws.

8.2.3.4. Lack of opportunities to apply skills

Among other, one participant commented that “When my company send us to train and develop, they should also promote us to new position to match the skills we have acquired.” while another wrote that “Women must be given chances to apply their skills.”

This shows that when women get trained, they are rarely given opportunities to apply the skills they have learned, hence discouraging them from further engaging in developmental activities. This result could mean that skills development programmes are not aligned always to career paths or that these programmes are provided without careful thoughts about their subsequent application within the workplace. Rigby and Ryan (2018) agree that women have not received sufficient opportunities to apply their skills. Alnachef and Alhajjar (2017) also confirm the importance of creating conducive environments in which acquired knowledge and skills are applied within organisations (refer to Sections 3.4.2.1 and 3.8.2 above). Skills development should be conducted with the intention of its internal application.

8.2.3.5. Inadequate reward systems

Comments like “Women obviously do more than they expected to and get no praise for it.” and “I think women are not recognised enough yet.” shows that some participants were disgruntled about inadequate rewards towards skills development which demotivates their further skills development. Craig (2018) and Dong et al. (2017) emphasize that

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organisations can facilitate employees' self-development by rewarding learning and self-initiated learning (see Sections 3.6.1 and 3.9 above). Without adequate rewards for skills development (either financial, verbal or career related), women may not be motivated to engage in further developmental activities.

8.2.3.6. Training women for functional roles

Women reported that they are often trained for specific and narrow organisational tasks that only allows them to develop certain skills. This analysis is from comments such as "Women are viewed mostly as a support structure and trained in that line" and "You are trained to do what your unit does. Meaning that, as holistic as I come from varsity, I'll only focus on one or two areas of what I've been taught. The candidate only the candidate flourishes under their unit."

This view coincides with Ames et al. (2019) who deplore that women often commit to narrow functional roles early in their career; hence, they fail develop oversight skills required to progress to top positions in organisations (refer to Sections 3.4.2.1 and 5.2.17 above). Limited development options restrict women from developing professional skills outside their job sphere and impedes their development for oversight roles. This limitation means that development initiatives are neither long-sighted nor ambitious. When development initiatives are unchallenging, they hinder the extent of skills development and confine women to lower roles.

In summary, when organisations undermine women's capabilities, fail to assist women in their career management and do not follow fair promotional procedures, they stall women's skills development. Likewise, when women's lack of organisational support for

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career-relevant skills development and opportunities to apply skills, they do not feel motivated to study further. Lastly, visible and invisible organisational barriers and inadequate reward for skills development are detrimental to women's skills development. The subsequent section considers organisational hindrances to women's career progression.

8.2.4. Organisational impediments to women's career progression

One hundred and seventy-eight (178) valid comments and sixteen (16) invalid comments were gathered from responses to the question "What is your overall impression about hindrances to women's career progression within your organisation?" Themes generated under this question and discussed below include: career stagnation, preference for external candidates, lack of role models, distrust in women's leadership abilities, people-related malpractices, male domination and male preference, lack of work-life balance support, and not prioritising women's career advancement.

8.2.4.1. Career stagnation

Women complained about career stagnation, with many only progressing up to a certain level within the organisation. Few comments relating to this include: "My career progression has not been moving as expected regardless of the fact that I put in the required effort every day", "Most women are on exactly the same level. I'd say we aren't receiving the support to advance our careers.", "Career growth for women is really slower compare to men.", "I feel like I'm just doing what they need and will remain in this position, I am not really progressing up the ladder." And "Even though I have more duties assigned

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to me I never really got a title to match. I also never get promoted or even after 11 years." Hence regardless of their efforts, women feel stuck in their position.

Previous authors have acknowledged that there are invisible barriers that block women from ascending to senior positions (Aeran, 2014; Boshoff & Bosch, 2012; Haffajee, 2015).There is also confirmation that women only progress to a certain level and remain at mid-career level due to organisationa barriers that block them (Kumar & Lenka, 2016; Lewis & Beauregard, 2018; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014), regardless of their potential and efforts (Davis & Maldonado, 2015) (refer to Section 5.2.8 above). Alnachef and Alhajjar (2017) and RSA (1998) reveal that it is the responsibility of organisations to create conducive workplace environments in which employees can learn (refer to Section 3.9 above). Therefore, the onus is on organisations to eliminate visible and invisible blockages to women's skills development.

Participants also commented that skills development are often not aligned with career. One woman noted that "the skills development offered to me is not properly aligned with my future aspirations." While another noted that "More research must be done on what skills need to be developed, and for who. Not use a blanket approach." Meaning skills development is not aligned to their growth, which could be the reason why they do not progress.

8.2.4.2. Preference for external candidates

One woman wrote "We stay in one position for the entire career. And they rather promote people from outside Instead of within and mostly men." Another participant commented that "They prefer to hire people from outside." Therefore, participants deplored their

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organisation's preference to hire senior candidates from outside over internal appointments resulting in career stagnation for women.

This finding coincides with that of Heathfield (2019) and Rohman et al. (2018) who recognise this challenge and advises employers to upskill internal candidates rather that bringing in new recruits (see Section 5.2.5 above). While hiring external candidates bring new knowledge into the organisation, the practice deprives existing employees from promotional opportunities.

8.2.4.3. Lack of role models

Women lamented the lack of role models within their organisations and stated that it impedes their career progression. Two women's comments were recorded as "I wish there were woman role model to help us in our careers" and "There are no female role models. I'm very much impressed, when women want to see other women progressing." Hence depicting the lack of role models.

This deficiency was confirmed in previous studies (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Khalid et al., 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Walsh et al., 2016) (see Section 5.2.13 above). Therefore, having female role models communicates to aspiring women the possibilities of their internal growth, while the lack thereof demotivates them from actively pursuing career advancement.

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8.2.4.4. Lack of trust in women's leadership abilities

"Women are not given the most senior positions." and "Woman are taken for granted." are some of the comments revealing the lack of trust in women's leadership abilities which make it difficult for women to be promoted to top positions.

Ensour et al. (2017) and Lerback and Hanson (2017) also recorded the perceived lack of leadership abilities in women and Mythili (2019) attributed this challenge to their lack of leadership preparation (see Section 5.2.17 above). Regardless of whether this perceived leadership deficiency is supported or not, it limits women from progressing to senior positions and needs to be addressed.

8.2.4.5. People-related malpractices

Nepotism and sexual harassment are the two people-related malpractices that emerged from the analysis of comments relating to impediments to women's career progression.

Two outstanding comments about nepotism in their workplace are "Sometimes at work place they use nepotism in appointments." and "People prefer to appoint their friends and relatives."

Other comments such as "My bosses like women." and "There is sexual harassment and I feel that some women still don't understand what sexual harassment entails. And because we're peers some of the things are just shrugged off as just being playful." alluded to the presence of sexual harassment behaviours in participants' workplaces.

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Although Zenger and Folkman (2019) did not specifically mention this practice, they stress on the importance of organisations eliminating all forms of bias in hiring and promotional practices (see 5.2.5 above). Pienaar et al. (2018) acknowledged that not all women easily identify gender malpractices such as sexual harassment and proposed that organisations should raise awareness about this and other discriminatory practices within the workplace, and educate women on these issues (refer to Section 5.2.10 above). When people are employed or promoted for reasons other than their professional competence, they limit the chances of capable candidates being appointed to those positions.

8.2.4.6. Male domination and male preference

Comments such as “Males are preferred for senior positions and jobs,”, “It's discouraging as it seems priority is given to males.”, “My company is still male dominated and favours males.” and “I'm not happy because most opportunities are given to men.” reveal that men are often preferred over women during promotion and recruitment into senior positions. This is the reason for which men dominate.

Previous studies have confirmed the existence of masculine superiority (Khalid et al., 2017; O’Connor, O’Haggen & Brannen, 2015) and male domination at senior levels (Islam et al., 2018; Zenger & Folkman, 2019) that result in biased appointment practices that promote men and keep women in lower positions (see Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.6 above).

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8.2.4.7. Inadequate work-life balance support

Women criticised the inadequacy of work-life balance support provided by their organisation. One woman noted that “Support is given but doesn't provide the means for a woman to be able to accommodate family/personal errands during out-of-work hours.” Another woman commented that “Women are expected to invest so much into the work as much as males are and it's close to impossible to fully invest if we have family responsibilities which we daily need to attend to. Males also do have family responsibilities but not as much as women do.”

Hence inadequate work-family support impedes women’s careers. Past research has confirmed the vital role work-life balance initiatives play in women’s careers and the impact of the lack thereof (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Mukanzi et al., 2014; Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014) (see Section 5.2.16 above).

8.2.4.8. Organisations not prioritising women’s career advancement

Women’s needs are often not prioritised by their organisations which impedes their career progression. This was reflected through women’s comments such as “They are not prioritizing women’s career advancement.”, “It's discouraging as it seems priority is given to males.” and “It is tough to work in an organization like mine that doesn't cater for women's needs.” If organisations want women to progress in the workplace, they have to prioritise women’s career advancement.

Coetzee (2017) and Walsh (2016) considered fairness for women in the workplace and highlight the necessity for organisations to prioritise women’s needs and their career

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advancement (see Section 5.2.2 above). By failing to prioritise women's needs, organisations limit opportunities to tap into women's potential to boast organisational success.

In conclusion the findings show that factors such as career stagnation, external appointments, distrust in women's leadership abilities, and inadequate career guidance limit women's career development. Furthermore, failure to eliminate male domination and preferential treatment of males during appointments and/or prioritise women's special needs limit possibilities for women's career progression within the organisation. The next section addresses themes relate to personal attributes.

8.2.5. Personal attributes towards skills development

The question "Please describe your attitude towards your skills development" recorded 223 usable comments and 11 unusable comments. The main attitudes reflected in comments were: continuous efforts, willingness to learn, energetic, eagerness, responsibility, investment in skills development, open-minded, determination, focus, enthusiasm, goal-driven, loyalty, hard work, visionary, self-motivation, inquisitiveness about learning opportunities, confident, humble, passion, hands-on, go-getter, optimistic, motivated, confidence, ambition, dedication, commitment and time consciousness. From these themes the attributes that warrant further attention are: effort, willingness, motivation, determination and optimism stand out and, hence, will be discussed under the heading 'taking personal responsibility'.

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8.2.5.1. Personal responsibility towards skills development

Most comments revealed that women understand that their skills development is their responsibility. Key personal attributes mentioned by participants reflect effort, willingness, motivation, determination and optimism. Examples of comments include: “I work very hard and I've learned more skills.”; “I've learnt the hard way that you drive your own career growth. You may work hard that is not enough for your growth. You must carve your own path even if it means exploring other opportunities elsewhere.”; “ I am extremely determined that's why I've decided to grow skills instead of waiting for the company.”; and “I take every opportunity that is presented to me.”

The necessity for personal responsibility towards one’s skills development has been highlighted in previous research findings (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Vnoučková et al. 2015) (refer to Section 3.6.2 above). Also, willingness and effort towards personal skills development was confirmed by Bosch (2017) and Łaba (2011). Likewise, determination was revealed by Gagné, Deci and Ryan (2017) and personal motivation towards development was confirmed by Vnoučková et al. (2015) and Ismail et al. (2017). In addition, the importance of optimisms in career was established by Van der Walt (2018). Similarly, hard work, drive and confidence was found in Ames et al. (2019) (see Section 3.9.2 above). Women, as agents of their careers, are expected to take responsibility for their skills development at all times.

8.2.6. Personal attributes towards career progression

A total of 180 usable comments and seven unusable ones were recorded for the question “Please describe your attitude towards your career progression”. Positive attitudes noted

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for this construct include: determination, passion, excitement, humility, confidence, perfection, knowledgeability, responsibility, focus, kindness, organisation, optimistic, impressive, inspiring, professionalism, hard work, dedication, commitment, strength, career-driven, hopefulness, energetic, hands-on, commitment to skills development, planning and following-up, openness, hard work, appreciation, punctuality, seizing every opportunity, boldness and ambitious. The main themes generated from these attitudes were: inspiration, determination, hard work, effort, taking ownership, assertiveness and eagerness to seize opportunities. These themes will be discussed under the heading 'taking personal responsibility'.

8.2.6.1. Personal responsibility towards career progression

Attitudes such as inspiration, determination, hard work, effort, taking ownership, assertiveness and eagerness to seize opportunities were mentioned as beneficial for women's career advancement. These were revealed through comments such as "You have to carve your own path and there are limits.", "My hard work has played a big role for my progression.", and "There's potential for career progression as long as there's willingness from the women to progress." Therefore, career growth requires personal responsibility. This result confirms that of Howson et al. (2018) and Rapuano (2020) who emphasised the role of personal responsibility in career progress (refer to Sections 5.2. 18 and 5.2.19 above). Inspiration is confirmed to be a vital attitude for women's career progression (Grant Thornton, 2016) while hard work and determination are highlighted by Khalid et al. (2017). The ability to plan and follow-up is synonymous with taking ownership (Faniko, Ellemers, Derks & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2017). In addition, results confirm the importance of expending effort towards one's career progression (Ames, Malloy &

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Coplen, 2019). Furthermore, assertiveness was highlighted by Hills (2015). Finally, the ability to seize opportunities is a vital career progress (Gipson et al., 2017; Kobayashi & Kondo, 2019; Prossack, 2018).

Some women noted that they were not aware of any career growth prospects in their current companies, which affected that attitude towards their career progression (e.g. “I always apply for jobs I want to advance but at the company I'm working at now I don't see it happening so it's discouraging”, “Moving to a different company will help me with career progression.”, “I am stressed and annoyed since I don’t progress into a higher position.” and “My career progression has not been moving as expected regardless of the fact that I put in the required effort every day”. These comments affirm that there are invisible blockages to women’s progress within some organisations (Kumara, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Moalusi & Jones 2019) (see Sections 5.2.7 and 5.2.8 above). One woman, however, stated that she is not interested in career progress (i.e., “I am currently not interested in career progression, due to old age”). This remark resonates with previous research findings that, for personal reasons, some women do not want the greater responsibilities that accompany promotion (Heathfield, 2019; Howson et al., 2018). Hence, organisations need sometimes to look beyond promotion (Rapuano, 2020) and offer other growth or career satisfaction incentives to women employees (De Vos, Dujardin, Gielens & Meyers, 2016) (see Section 4.2.3.3 above).

To summarise his section, it can be stated that women need to take active ownership of their skills development and career progression by pursuing relevant opportunities and putting in the required effort to succeed in their career. The section below considers the impact of family responsibilities on women’s skills development.

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8.2.7. The impact of family responsibilities on women's skills development

The question "Please comment on the extent to which your family responsibilities affect your skills development" produced 192 relevant comments and 35 irrelevant ones. Themes generated from relevant responses were: children, house chores, finance and support.

8.2.7.1. Children

The study findings revealed that working women with children experience strains in seeking balance between their development and their childcare responsibilities (examples of comments include: "To be honest it's not easy. I just recently completed my B. Tech qualifications. I would study while taking care of my daughter. To write my exams it must be around midnight when she's asleep in order to focus", "Sometimes I won't even have time for skills development especially at home due to young kids who need attention", "I spend more time tending the child so less time learning, studying and improving my skills", "As a single mother of 3 kids in school, I sometimes find it hard to study myself").

8.2.7.2. Home chores

Participants' comments revealed that house chores assigned by gendered norms within the African culture hinder women's skills development (i.e., "Most people think a woman's place is at home cooking and cleaning, that negatively affects her skills development", "The only skill you develop, as an African woman, is of taking care of everybody"). Household responsibilities deprive women of the time they could have used on their

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career development. A respondent wrote “House chores sometimes get in the way of skills trainings”.

8.2.7.3. Financial constraints

Some women participants are torn between using their financial resources to develop their skills and using their funds to cater for their family needs (e.g., “Financial constraints, where I have to either pay my own fees or my children's fees”, “Financially, I can’t go to school because every money I get needs to go to my siblings”).

8.2.7.4. Family Support

Key comments highlighting family support were: “My skills development is affected to a lesser extent because my family members greatly support me and are also keen to experience me develop my skills”, and” My family gives me time to study and help me with some home chores”.

Family responsibilities, such as raising children and completing household tasks reduce the time available women have for develop professional skills – an aspect confirmed by Bosch (2017) and Gipson et al. (2017), while Hills (2015) states that skills development requires time (refer to Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.2 above). It was noted, however, that, practical help and support from family members can lighten the burden of work-family conflict for women. Coetzee (2017) and Fallon and Rice (2015) emphasise the relevance of the provision of organisational finance in employees’ skills development. Availing funds for women’s development alleviates the financial burden of skills development and makes it easier for them to engage in such activities (see Sections 3.6.1 and 3.8.2 above).

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Conversely, evidence gleaned from quantitative research has failed to establish a statistically significant relationship between family responsibilities and skills development. The subsequent section discusses the effect of family responsibilities on women's career advancement.

8.2.8. The impact of family responsibilities on women's career progression

The question "Please comment on the extent to which your family responsibilities affect your career progression" received 127 valid responses and 50 invalid ones. The main themes generated from valid responses were: children, household chores, financial constraints, balancing work-family, family support and organisational support.

8.2.8.1. Children

Women participants raising children stated that they find it hard to focus on their careers, especially when children are sick. A woman commented that: "Taking my son to check ups and regularly fetching his medication (since he was born with chronic illness), and asking for unpaid leave now and then when he is not well affects my career"). Also, nursing mothers' careers are vulnerable because their infants place demands on them. This fact is reflected through comments such as "My new-born requires more time" and "My baby needs too much attention". Likewise, responses relating to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (characterised by children being out of school more often than usual, and some employers requiring employees to work from home), some women participants found it difficult to focus on work at home (e.g., "I can't work at home"). Furthermore, women who raise children on their own stated that they find it hard to cope with their career growth (e.g., "I am a single parent and solely depend on myself and

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assistance from family and therefore sometimes it does get in the way of my career"). Participants also stated that, when faced with limited childcare options, mothers try to adopt coping mechanism to deal with their situation (e.g., "Sometimes I work on weekends and I find myself taking the kids to work with me"). Children and family also limit women's career relocation opportunities (e.g., "I cannot pack up and relocate to another country without considering my son's visa requirements etc", "The only problem is that I sometimes find it hard to relocate to a new area for a new and better paying job because I do not want to leave my family"). These findings confirm those of previous research proving that child care responsibilities affect women's careers (Carlson et al., 2021; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; Rath et al., 2019), especially when the children are young (Malek, Hassan & Sabil, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Women have to divide their time between child care and work, making it difficult for them to attend fully to their career growth.

8.2.8.2. House chores

Women have to comply with work demands and, simultaneously, they are expected to fulfil gender-assigned roles at home. Some women participants commented that "It's not easy to push beyond the office hours, as I have to change roles when I get home", and "The thing is that I've to be home early to cook for kids, it really affects my career". Household tasks deprive women of the time they could have used on their career development (i.e., "More time spent at home means less time studying/learning or doing practical work"). This result concords with that of previous research that household chores encumber women's careers (Gouws, 2017; Stewart, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020)

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because these tasks occupy the time that could have been used for career purposes to be completed.

8.2.8.3. Financial constraints

Developing skills requires financial resources and participants' comments affirm that skills development is vital for career progression (e.g., "Since I cannot develop my skills due to family responsibilities", "family responsibilities have affected my career progression"). Women are torn between using their financial resources to develop their skills and catering for their family needs, hence limiting their career development (e.g., "I cannot take on some skills development programmes as they require funds that I cannot afford to pay due to family responsibilities"). Past research reveals that skills development requires finance (Nguyen, & Shao, 2019; Vnoučková et al., 2015) and, thus, can conflict with funds required to meet the daily needs of families. Women participants believed that failure to perceive benefits from their skills development could also strain their willingness to invest in their development (Chetty & Naidoo, 2017), resulting in their not wanting to forgo daily family needs to invest in their skills development relevant for career progress.

8.2.8.4. Balancing work and family

Balancing work-family life depends on the value a woman places on her career and family. Some women participants stated that they choose to prioritise their work (e.g., "Literally I'm self-driven so I tend to put my work first") mostly because they have to meet their family's financial needs (e.g., "Because they (my children) know that I must go to work in order for them eat and wear clothes", "We tend to give work more priority because we

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have to pay bills and neglect our families"). As a consequence, their careers weigh heavily on their families (e.g., "Family suffer more due to over commitments at work").

Other women participants placed more value on their families to the detriment of their careers (e.g., "My family comes first", "Taking care of family is my priority and as a result my career suffers", "I'm not even willing to be promoted as it might affect my family responsibilities and relationship").

Lastly, some women participants valued both their careers and families and strive for a work-life balance (e.g., "My family is important but my career growth is as important so I try to balance.", "I try to balance work and family very well", "I try not to let my family problems get in the way of my career progression by all means"). However, only 9.45% of participants indicated that they have successfully balanced their career and family roles. Comments from this minority group reflected planned actions (e.g., "I make plans and work smoothly in order for work not to interfere with family. I both scale them separately and perfectly"). Other comments reflected ability (e.g., "I'm able to handle my career and family", "I have a balanced lifestyle, I both can handle my family and work duties", "I'm able to balance between work and family", "Not too much is required from my family, I can balance the two"). Previous investigations also agreed that balancing work-family roles has been a challenge for most women (Athanasopoulou et al., 2017; Carlson et al., 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2019; PWC, 2018b). Hence career planning and implementation can help women 'climb the organisational ladder'.

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8.2.8.5. Support (organisational support and family support)

Participants' comments also inferred that support from family and companies is critical. Only 11.81% of them mentioned that their spouses and other family members were supportive of their career progression. Some of the comments noted for family members' support were: "I have my family and my spouse's family helping so my work does not get affected"; "They (my family) want me to make it big, so they support me", "My family does not interfere with my career, they help me grow as a person. They understand how much I love my job", and "My family is the reason I'm pushing hard to succeed". Likewise, comments highlighting the relevance of spousal support were: "I'm receiving a lot of support from my spouse", and "My husband always helps me around". Although only few women stated they benefitted from family support, comments recorded the importance of family support in women's careers. Past investigations likewise concluded that career success requires family support (Gerber & Schlechter, 2019; Khalid et al., 2017; Malek et al., 2019).

In addition to family support, organisational support is also vital because this help can limit the impact of family responsibilities on women's careers (e.g., "I'm progressing through the help of my company"). The necessity for organisational support in women's career was recorded in previous research (Glasgow & Sang, 2016; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Mukanzi et al., 2014) (see Section 5.2.16 above). The burden family responsibility places on women's career advancement is evident, therefore, this process will require both internal and external support.

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The time required to fulfil family responsibilities (such as household tasks and rearing children) often conflict with the time women need to invest in their career progression (Ensour et al., 2017; Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018; Khalid et al., 2017; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Woolnough & Redshaw, 2016) (refer to Section 5.2.16 above). Hence, the necessity to employ support strategies to help women balance their careers and family roles. The next section will address legislation on gender in the workplace.

8.2.9. Impression about workplace gender discriminatory practices

The question "What is your overall impression about gender discriminatory practices in your workplace?" recorded 212 valid comments and 18 invalid ones. Two groups of themes were generated for this question: one was related to practices that promote gender discriminatory practices and the other focused on strategies that combat gender discriminatory practices. Each group is discussed below.

8.2.9.1. Practices that promote gender discrimination practice

Themes formed from comments that inferred practices that promote workplace gender discrimination were: male domination at senior levels, gender inequality in opportunities offered, occupational segregation, gender pay-gap, hesitancy to promote women, reported malpractices not being addressed, racism, and treating women as men.

8.2.9.1.1. Male domination at senior levels

Male domination at senior level surfaced as a discriminatory practice which negatively impacts women's careers even in female dominated occupations like the service industry. This is reflected through comments like "Women are many in my work place but most

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men are in senior post." And "Men are still more dominant than woman. I think we are not given chances enough." This result is similar to previous research findings that confirm the negative impact of the masculine superiority mentality over women's careers (Ensour et al., 2017; Khalid et al., 2017; O'Connor, O'Haggen & Brannen, 2015), especially at senior levels (McKinsey & Company, 2019; Moalusi & Jones, 2019; Zenger & Folkman, 2019) (see Section 5.2.3 above). This result indicates that women may find it hard to progress in male dominated organisations.

8.2.9.1.2. Gender inequality in opportunities

One woman stated that "They should try harder women are not given enough opportunities in my organization." Another noted that "This is appalling because we don't get the same opportunities as men." Hence revealing the lack of career opportunities for women in favour of men.

Various researchers (Ames et al., 2019. Kurniawati & Sari, 2019; Shangase & Gerwel Proches, 2014) confirm disproportionate career-related opportunities in favour of men (refer to Section 5.2.5 above). Such discriminatory behaviour can discourage women from making the necessary investment in their careers or pursuing career excellence because they presume that promotion opportunities will always be awarded to men.

8.2.9.1.3. Occupational segregation

Participants noted that some tasks are considered women's tasks which cannot be done by men. This is reflected through comments like "Sometimes women are not given chance to implement certain tasks, which are considered as tasks for men." and "Women aren't

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on the same level as men in terms of the type of work we do." Occupational segregation is a practice that discriminates against women.

Babcock, Recalde and Vesterlund (2018) confirm that some menial tasks are considered women's duties and not men's. Occupational segregation was also confirmed by some researchers who revealed that women are often placed at the bottom of organisational structures (Ames et al., 2019; Kumara, 2018) and occupy inferior positions (Ensour et al., 2017) (refer to Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.17 above). Assigning non-career-related duties only to women deprives women of the time they could have used to complete career-related tasks that will advance their career.

8.2.9.1.4. Gender pay-gap

Women participating noted that gender pay gap exists within their organisations, with women earning lower salaries than men. One woman wrote that "Women earn lower salaries than men and this is not good." Another participant commented that "The gender pay gap existing in my company is so disappointing because if a woman can do the same job as men she should be given the same salary and opportunity." These comments highlight the negative perception women have about gender pay gap.

The gender pay-gap was also confirmed in previous studies (Boninelli, 2015; Bussin & Nienaber 2015; Chetty & Naidoo, 2017; Leuze & Strauß, 2016) (see Section 5.2.9 above). This phenomenon demotivates women from investing in their careers because they do not perceive receiving financial returns for their career investments.

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8.2.9.1.5. Hesitancy to promote women

It came to light that organisations often hesitate to promote women. Supporting comments include: “We are still perceived as weak, not strong enough to head some departments.”; “There isn't much evidence to support this but there is hesitancy to promote women.”; and “Hesitancy to promote women keep women in lower oppositions and create mental blockages that hinder women from putting efforts in their careers.” This could either be because of distrust in women’s professional abilities or misconceptions about their professional skills. Khalid et al. (2017) and Zenger and Folkman (2019) attest the existence of misconceptions regarding women’s ability to occupy senior roles. Oosthuizen et al. (2019) also reveal that women’s professional abilities are mistrusted, hence the organisation’s hesitancy to promote them (refer to Section 5.2.6 above). Such discriminatory ideologies also keep women in lower oppositions and create mental blockages that hinder women from expending any effort towards career development.

8.2.9.1.6. Racism

Comments specifically referred to racism within the workplace as a severe issue that needs to be addressed, alongside gender issues. One participant wrote: “White women are the ones in strategic positions and there are very limited growth opportunities for black Africans. Our team just celebrated the appointment of an African male to a middle management position. We really can't be celebrating such achievements in this day and age. White male supremacy in the work place is appalling to say the least.” Another participant commented that “There is less effort for black women.” while the other mentioned that “Race plays a huge role in determining how far an individual can grow

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and how much they are paid. At the top would be white males and at the bottom would definitely be Africans." A woman also noted that "Gender and racial discrimination are very present." These comments reveal that gender inequality in the workplace is subjected to race.

This finding concerning racism in the workplace concurs with previous research findings that revealed multidimensional issues that make gender issues complex, such as racial, cultural and social segregation (Hills, 2015; Łaba, 2011; Lwesi, 2019; Oosthuizen et al., 2019) (refer to Section 5.2.4 above). Racial discrimination among women slows down their fight against gender malpractices. It gives the impression that the contentious issue has been resolved, whereas it is only shifting gender malpractices to other groups. Thus, there is a need for all women to be treated fairly and receive equal benefit from initiatives aimed at promoting gender equity in the workplace.

8.2.9.1.7. Treating women as men

Participating women alluded to the fact that women are given the same treatment as men. This view is deduced from comments such as "There is no focus on a specific gender, my workplace only focuses on development of employees and is not gender Specific.", "They never favour women over men we are treated the same." Treating women like men neglects the burden of family responsibilities and other women-specific experiences on women's careers.

Previous research confirmed that women's dual role is not being recognised within organisations (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019; Gouws, 2017) or is being neglected (Alesina, Giuliano, & Nunn, 2013; Stewart, 2020) (see Section

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5.2.15 above). Although treating women as if they are men sounds acceptable, it is discriminatory in nature. Bosch (2017) reasons that treating women as if they are men denies women equity. This statement reflects a manifestation of gender malpractices that appear neutral and natural yet discriminate against women (Chanland & Murphy, 2017; Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011), while Pienaar et al. (2018) further cautions employers not to confuse equality with equity in the workplace because women are fundamentally different from men, hence equity should prevail over equality (refer to Section 2.4 above). Therefore, the fact that women experience a different set of challenges from men should not be undermined through organisational practices.

8.2.9.1.8. Reported gender malpractices not being addressed

Participants also reported that gender discriminatory practices are often not addressed, even when reported. This view is reflected through comment like “Gender discrimination is unfair, it's sad, we try to fight it but we never win.” and “They need to be more attentive and do hearings on gender discrimination complaints.” Not addressing reported gender malpractices could be the reason why some women are hesitant to report gender discriminatory practices. A participant commented that “You never hear of such things. Things are kept under the carpet. No one has ever come forward.”

Prior research confirmed that when gender discriminatory practices, such as sexual harassment, are reported women are not sure whether there will be effective investigations and sanctions (Lahiri-Dutt, 2015; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Pienaar et al., 2018) (see Section 5.2.10 above). This finding implies that gender discriminatory

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malpractices often are not taken seriously or appropriately addressed and, hence, are perpetuated.

8.2.9.2. Organisational efforts against gender discriminatory practices

Despite the above confirmation of gender discriminatory practices, some participants' comments inferred that some organisational practices discourage gender discriminatory practices. Themes formed from such comments included: prioritising women's needs, striving for gender equity, and having policies against gender discrimination.

8.2.9.2.1. Prioritising women's needs

Comments such as "My organization looks out for us women our needs are put in first." and "Most of the seniors in my company are women, they are prioritised to grow within the company." Reveal that prioritising women's needs reduces chances of gender discriminatory practices. Coetzee (2017) and Walsh et al. (2016) earlier confirmed the necessity for organisations to prioritise women's needs (refer to Section 5.2.2 above). Companies that prioritise women's interest consciously seek for ways to assist and promote women within the workplace.

8.2.9.2.2. Putting effort towards gender equity

"My organization is the best in a world, and they give women support and treat them equally.", "In my organisation we are treated equally so I am happy.", and "My company specifically ensured that when they promote a man, they do the same for women." These comments reveal the importance of efforts towards gender equity.

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Women also noted that practical steps are taken by their organisation to avoid gender discriminatory practices. This view is supported by comments such as “My organisation puts a lot of effort to address discriminatory gender practices.”, “There are proper structures put in place to address discriminatory practices.” And “My organisation has mechanisms in place to deal with discriminatory practices in the workplace.” Organisations which take steps to avoid discriminatory practices against women are less likely to witness or tolerate them.

Shangase & Gerwel Proches (2014) and World Economic Forum (2020) both attested to the existence of gender inequality and recommended organisations to strive towards achieving gender equity (see Section 5.2.4 above). Organisations that strive for gender equity are always on the alert for gender discriminatory practices in order to rectify them, hence such organisations are less likely to witness or tolerate discriminatory practices against women.

8.2.9.2.3. Having policies against gender discrimination

Comments inferred that organisations with policies against gender discrimination are less likely to engage in discriminatory practices. A woman wrote that “My company has a zero-tolerance policy on gender discriminatory practices hence we rarely have such cases.” Another woman commented that “There is a zero tolerance for gender discriminatory practices at my company.” Policies serve as guidelines and rules of conduct which anchor organisational actions.

To attest to these findings, previous research highlighted the importance of having relevant anti-discriminatory policies to address day-to-day discriminatory issues (Pienaar

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et al., 2018) and promote a safe and respectful work environment for women (McKinsey & Company, 2019) (refer to Sections 5.2.7, 5.2.1 and 5.2.10 above). It is less probable that organisations with policies against gender discrimination will engage in discriminatory practices because these policies serve as guidelines and rules of conduct that anchor organisational actions. Also, if the relevant policies are implemented, organisations are less likely to commit gender offences.

In summary, male domination, gender inequality in opportunities, occupational segregation, gender pay-gap, hesitancy to promote women and racism fuel gender discrimination within the workplace. Also, treating women as men is a deceptive practice in that it ignores the reality of women's daily lives. The extent to which gender discriminatory practices are addressed determines the degree to which it becomes extinct within an organisation. However, prioritising women's needs, striving for gender equity, and implementing policies against gender discrimination are precautionary measures organisations can use to eradicate gender discriminatory practices. The next section presents the results and discussions relating to the application of gender legislation within an organisation.

8.2.10. Compliance with gender legislation applicable to the workplace

Three questions sought to capture participants' impressions regarding organisational compliance with legislation on: gender equity, skills development and gender equity/representation at senior levels. The first question under this section was "Please describe your impression about your organisation's compliance with legislation on gender equity" and gathered 215 valid responses and eight invalid ones. The second question

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was “Please describe your impression about your organisation’s compliance with legislation on skills development” and captured 170 usable comments and 11 unusable comments. The third question read “Please describe your impression about your organisation’s compliance with legislation relating to gender equity/representation at senior levels” and recorded 162 valid responses and 18 irrelevant ones. All comments were analysed and grouped into two broad themes (i.e., practices that enable compliance and practices that promote non-compliance) as discussed below.

8.2.10.1. Practices that enable compliance with gender legislation applicable to the workplace

Themes that favour legal compliance were: having organisational policies around gender equity, and having strong organisational ethics. These themes are discussed below.

8.2.10.1.1. Having organisational policies around gender equity

Outstanding comments are “My company’s policies are in line with existing legislation.” and “Discrimination based on gender was rampant but our company is implementing some rules to lessen those cases.” Hence organisations with gender policies that facilitate adherence to gender-related legislation within the workplace are better placed to adhere to existing laws.

This result is in tandem with previous findings that confirmed the importance of organisations having the relevant policies that can facilitate compliance with existing legislation (Pienaar et al., 2018). Policies provide rules of conduct for organisations and

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having policies against gender bias is a critical step towards legal compliance, especially when these policies are drafted on legislative prescriptions.

8.2.10.1.2. Having corporate ethics

Comments such as “My company is extremely ethical with regards to complying with legislation relating to gender equity/representation at Senior levels.” and “My company is ethical, they follow the law.” allow the conclusion that corporate ethics is an enabler of legal compliance within the work milieu.

This result ties with past research that advocated strong ethical organisational practices that effectively deal with gender-bias related issues (Naudé, 2017). This finding implies that when an organisation operates on strong moral principles of gender fairness for all employees, it is likely to comply with related laws.

8.2.10.2. Organisational practices that promote non-compliance with legislation on gender applicable to the workplace

Some participants’ comments insinuated that certain practices promote non-compliance with gender legislation within the workplace. Themes formed from such comments include: not implementing drafted policies, coercive compliance aimed at meeting BBBEE targets, and discriminatory practices that exclude certain people.

8.2.10.2.1. Lack of implementation of policies

Some participants recorded the lack of implementation of existing policies on gender equity. This view is reflected through comments like “In theory policies are great but

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application is non-existent.", "It is just a policy with no compliance." and "I know there are measures in place however I do not have full information on how far everything is practised."

Even though such policies have been drafted, they are often merely a formality without any action being taken to implement them. The Employment Equity Amendment Act 47 of 2013 requires companies to have and implement policies to safeguard against gender discrimination, however, while some organisations may draft such polices, they do not implement them. Walsh et al. (2016) argue that even when ideal gender guidelines are in place, their implementation is a challenge (refer to Sections 2.5.5, 5.2.3 and 5.2.17 above). Lwesi (2019) claims that when this occurs, the documented policies do not contribute towards the achievement of transformational goals. Reitz et al. (2020) further deplored the use of outdated policies and obsolete assumptions that perpetuate gender inequality. Moreover, Warnich et al. (2015) affirmed the need for firms to commit themselves to implementing and upholding gender equity laws (refer to Sections 2.2 and 4.4.6 above). While making decisions to ensure gender equity and equal representation are positive actions, they remain useless if not implemented.

8.2.10.2.2. Coercive compliance

Women commented about coercive compliance "Only for BEE purposes" and "They are not really bothered unless they are forced to comply." Compliance aimed at meeting BBBEE targets without the genuine desire to see a change in gender equity at work.

Oosthuizen, Tonelli and Mayer (2019) previously confirmed that organisations often abide by gender-related laws solely for compliance purposes, thus, prompting Walsh et al.

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(2016) to advise them to move beyond compliance and to implement gender representation and equity initiatives in order to promote change within the organisation. When organisations are committed to gender equity, it is easy for them to go beyond mere legal compliance to address grey areas.

8.2.10.2.3. Exclusion of certain people when complying

Few comments noted are: “They follow the rules and regulations but do not follow when it comes to certain individuals.”, “They comply with it but not racial lines.” and “They comply with it for whites.” Analysis reveals the exclusion of certain groups when complying with existing legislation. Hence the progress of black women to strategic positions is limited growth opportunities are given to.

As revealed in this study, the persistent occurrence of discriminatory practices, despite existing laws, could infer that there is selective compliance in favour of certain groups of people (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Pienaar et al., 2018) (refer to Section 2.5 above). Efforts to make compliance inclusive require detailed examination of compliance reports to detect individuals or groups who have been omitted. Women participants also mentioned that skills development initiatives need to be personalised to avoid instances in which the development opportunities offered do not benefit the individual’s career. This finding confirms the need for personal development plans for all employees as previously stipulated by Anton and Shikov (2018) and Judrups et al. (2015) (see Section 3.5.2 above).

For organisations to comply with gender laws applicable to their specific workplace, they need to have relevant policies concerning gender equity, together with strong ethical

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standards that promote fairness for all and commit to achieving gender equity by implementing the laws in an inclusive manner. Compliance should be achieved with the aim of seeing change rather than just for the purpose of formality.

8.3. Chapter summary and conclusion.

This chapter presented, discussed and interpreted quantitative results analysed using the thematic analysis method. From the thematic analysis of open-ended questions, the following significant points that are critical for women's skills development were noted: empowering women, providing development and practice opportunities, availing resources to support skills development, giving rewards, helping women manage their careers and having fair internal systems. In addition, the following points required for prioritising women's career advancement: providing internal advancement opportunities, facilitating skills development, providing leadership opportunities, offering work-family support, having fair organisational practices at all levels, rewarding performing women and institutionalising mentorship programmes. Likewise, organisations need to strategize towards gender equity and put measures in place that will establish a gender-friendly culture. Practices that need to be eliminated are those that promote male domination, gender-pay disparity, unequal growth opportunities and practices that directly or indirectly favour one group over another. In tandem with organisational efforts, personal responsibility plays a crucial role towards women's skills development and career progression and include: determination, hard work, ownership, optimism and eagerness to seize opportunities. Furthermore, cognisant of the fact that a woman's time has to be split between work, family and herself, family and organisational support are required for her to balance her career and family life. Although having legislation seeking to enforce

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gender equity at all levels is vital, it is only a starting point towards gender equity. For change to happen, organisations need to have the right policies in place with the desire to see change. Unless there is organisational commitment to implement existing legislation, gender equity will remain ‘on paper’. This section marks the end of this chapter. The next chapter presents the concluding remarks from this study and provides recommendations.

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CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study, as stated in Chapter One, was to investigate factors that affect women's skills development and career progression in order to design a framework that will guide organisational policy makers, human resource practitioners and managers at all levels on initiatives they can use to support women in their skills development and career progression.

This study was primarily quantitative and used both a descriptive and correlational approach to gather information and identify relationships between the dependent variables (Skills Development, Career Progression) and the independent variables (Workplace Support Strategies, Workplace Impediments, Personal Attributes, Family Responsibilities, Workplace Gender Discriminatory Practices and Legislation on Gender Applicable to the Workplace). Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were used to gather data from women working within selected corporates in the service sector in Johannesburg, South Africa. Closed-ended questions were posed and followed by open-ended questions addressing each construct. The purpose of open-ended questions was to capture opinions that were omitted in closed-ended questions. Thereafter, the SEM and thematic analysis were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

This chapter presents summary of the study. It further provides recommendations, highlights contributions of the research as well its limitations, and makes suggestions for further research.

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9.2. Summary of the study

The sequence of chapters of the study have been presented in Figure 1.12 above. Chapter summaries and findings are presented below.

Chapter One: Introduction and background

Chapter One covered the introduction, background and problem statement for the study. It also presented a preliminary literature review (employee development, career progression, feminism, and the African context) that led to the development of the theoretical framework (refer to Figure 1.1), conceptual framework (see figure 1.2) as well as the research objectives and hypotheses of the study (see Table 1.1).

Chapter Two: Literature review - Feminist, social context and legislative scope

This chapter situated the study within relevant feminist theories (i.e., liberal, postmodern and African feminism theories), and social theories (i.e., social exchange, social comparison, equity and just world theories). It also highlighted issues of gender unfairness and inequality within the workplace and the family. It further provided the legislative context against which the study is conducted, being the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996, the Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997, the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 46 of 2013. This context provided the guide for subsequent chapters.

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Chapter Three: Literature review - Human Capital Development within organisations

Chapter Three unpacked the economic, psychological and system components of HCD. It further explained 'on-the-job' and 'off-the-job' development methods and development approaches within organisations. It also highlighted the rational for HCD, its strategic implications for organisations and made suggestions as to how organisations could become a 'learning organisation'. It also stressed that the development of women is vital for organisational and personal growth.

Chapter Four: Literature review - Women's career progression in the workplace

This chapter explained career anchors, career theories (work-adjustment, career motivation and the social cognitive career theories) and career models (traditional, modern and sustainable career models), prerequisites for career progression, benefits of career progression to employees and employers, and benefits of promoting women to leadership positions. It pointed out that women value career progression, hence to retain them, organisations need to provide opportunities for them to ascend the organisational ladder.

Chapter Five: Literature review - Challenges in women's career progression and best practices

The chapter covered challenges women face in their career progression and approaches to address them. Factors considered included cultural and societal norms, organisational support, patriarchy and gender power dynamics, organisational diversity, promotion

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malpractices, gender stereotypes, gender bias, the glass ceiling, gender pay gap, workplace sexual harassment, mentorship, sponsorship, mole models, the 'queen bee' syndrome, networking, work-life balance, education and skills, self-confidence and career ownership. This chapter confirmed that, despite the myriad of challenges women encounter in the workplace, organisations can use proven strategies to help women progress in their career.

Chapter Six: Research methodology

This chapter explained that the study embraced a post positivist philosophy, and primarily followed a quantitative approach. Descriptive or correlational approaches were used to investigate factors that affect women's skills development and workplace progression, as well as relationships between women's skills development and workplace progression and selected organisational factors, non-organisational factors and adherence to legislation. A convenient non-probability sampling method was used to gather 412 responses within the service industry within Johannesburg. The online self-administered questionnaire survey used consisted of closed-ended questions complemented by open-ended questions. In this chapter the closed-ended questions were analysed using the structural equation modelling while open-ended questions were analysed using the thematic analysis approach.

Chapter Seven: Analysis and interpretation of quantitative research results

Chapter Seven unpacked results from descriptive statistics such as demographic distribution of respondents, central tendency measures and normality tests. Most women sampled possessed the following demographical characteristics: African, single, young

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adult women, without children/dependents, educated with qualification in commerce, full-time employees with permanent contracts of relatively small companies within the accounting sector, at the lower level of organisational hierarchies, with a tenure of between 1-5 years. Most of these women disagreed with the statements that there are impediments to women's career within their workplace, their organisation supports women, and that there exist gender discriminatory practices within their workplace. Likewise, most women either disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements that their skills are being developed, they are progressing in their workplace, they take responsibility to move their careers forward, their family responsibilities burden their careers their careers, and that their organisation complies with gender-related legislation. These findings depicted a limited personal and organisational commitment to career development and progression of women. Further tests were conducted to establish relationships between variables in the study and, after the assumption of univariate normality was met, the maximum likelihood method was used to assess the model fit using the structural equation modelling.

The findings of these tests revealed that workplace support strategies and personal attributes were statistically and significantly related to the women's skills development. Contrarily, workplace impediments, family responsibilities, legislation on gender applicable to the workplace and workplace gender discriminatory practices had non-significant effects on the skills development of women. Furthermore, workplace support strategies, family responsibilities, personal attributes and skills development were shown to be statistically and significantly related to the career progression of women. Meanwhile workplace impediments, workplace gender discriminatory practices and legislation on

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gender in the workplace revealed a non-significant effect on women's career progression. Hence this chapter indicated that of the 13 hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the study, six had statistically significant relationships and 7 had non-significant relationships (see Figure 9.1 below).

Chapter Eight: Analysis and interpretation of qualiitative research results

This chapter presented results using the thematic content analysis approach. The themes that were generated for each construct and findings (see Figure 9.2 below) revealed that the organisational factors that improve women' skills development included: empowerment, development of leadership potentials, provision of skills development opportunities, funding women's for skills development, rewarding women who develop their skills, and facilitating networks for women. Contrarily hindrances to women's skills development within companies included undermining women's professional capabilities, unfair promotion practices, lack of support for women, absence of opportunities to apply skills, lack of career knowledge, inadequate reward systems, Covid-19, training women for functional roles and 'brick walls'/ 'glass ceilings' within the system.

Themes that were identified for factors that boost women's career progression within organisations included: prioritising women's advancement, building women's self-esteem, inspiring women, providing equal growth opportunities for women, giving women opportunities to practice new skills, facilitating networking opportunities for women, being intolerant towards for sexual harassment, assisting women to manage their careers, having work-life balance initiatives, implementing rewards systems, providing mentorship, and having fair organisational practices. Adversely, the identified organisational factors

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hindering women's career progression included: career stagnation, preference for external candidates, lack of role models, lack of mentorship, lack of trust in women's leadership abilities' lack of implementation of gender-based decisions, organisational malpractices, male domination and male preference, lack of work-life balance support, lack of career guidance and not prioritising women's career advancement.

The most common themes for gender discriminatory practices that were pointed out in this chapter were: male domination at senior levels, gender inequality in assess to opportunities, occupational segregation, gender pay gap, hesitancy to promote women, not addressing malpractices, racism and treating women as men. However, prioritising women's needs, having policies against gender discrimination, and striving for gender equity were said to have contributed towards eliminating gender discriminatory practices in the workplace.

This chapter also indicated that with regard to personal attributes, women's skills development requires personal responsibility, optimism, determination, work hard, confidence, drive and motivation. Likewise, it was stated that the career progression of women requires personal responsibility, inspiration, hard work, determination, ownership, assertiveness, ability to leverage opportunities and efforts.

The main restraints of family responsibilities to women's skills development and career progression were also provided and included: general family responsibilities, children, household chores, financial constraints, work-family conflicts. Family support and organisational support were the factors identified as vital for women's careers.

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Finally, this chapter discussed the participants' perception that compliance with gender legislation applicable to the workplace required policies around gender equity, strong ethics and strong commitment to achieve gender equity. They further stated that adverse behaviours that hamper legislative compliance included: not implementing existing policies, coercive compliance to meet BBBEE targets, discriminatory practices that exclude certain people, and skills development activities that are not needs-based.

9.3. Final models for women's skills development and career progression

This study intended to design a framework for the development and progression of women within the workplace. However, analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data yielded two frameworks, which should be used concurrently. Figure 9.1 below represents the predictive model from SEM (discussed in Chapter Six above), while Figure 9.2 below presents results from the thematic analysis (discussed in Chapter Eight above).

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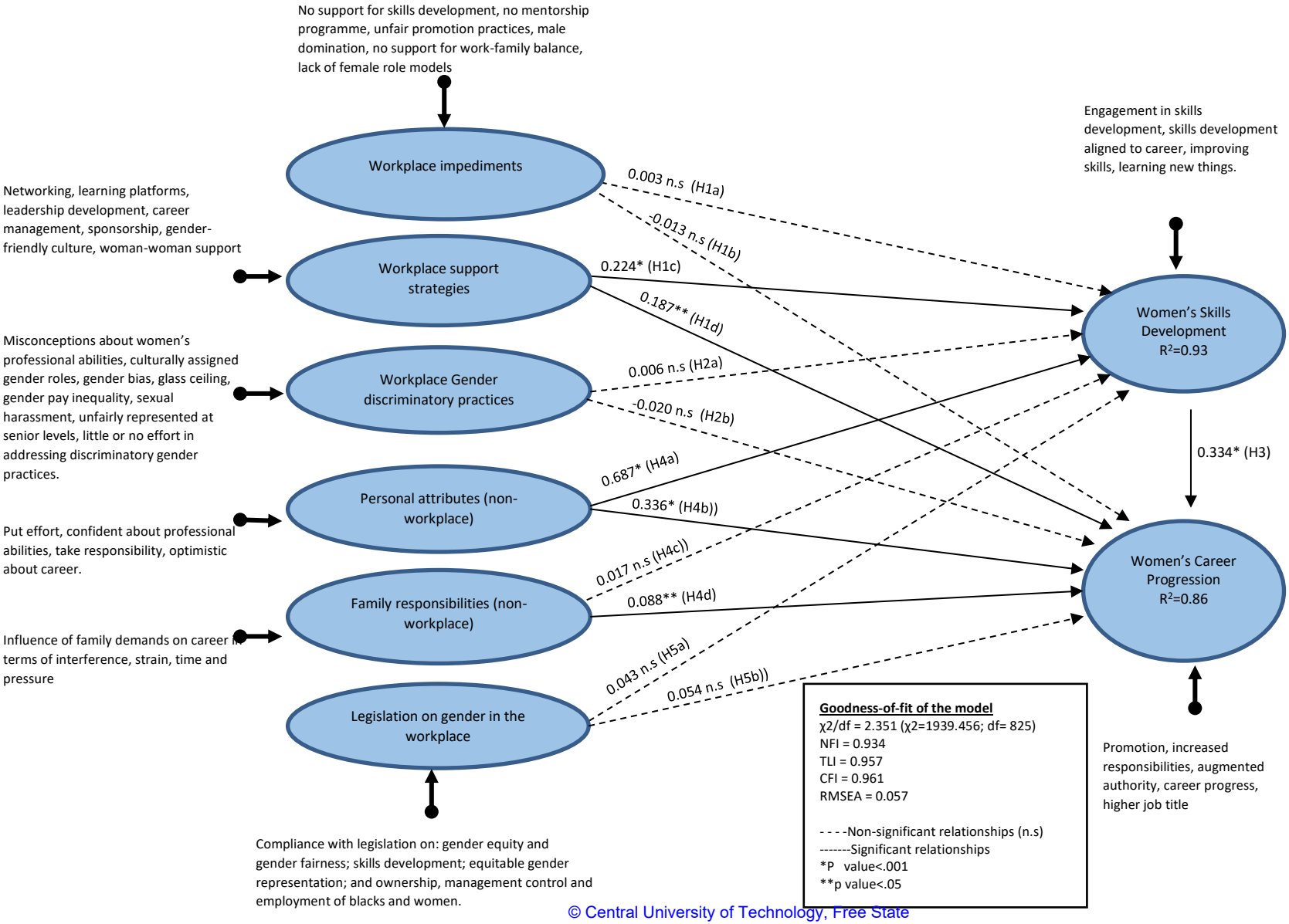
Figure 9.1: Framework for the Skills development and career progression of women



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Beta values in Figure 9.1 indicate the direction and strength of the relationship (i.e., positive values indicate positive relationships, and negative values indicate negative relationships). Hence the presence of impediments (Beta= -0.01) and gender discriminatory practices (Beta=-0.02) will hinder women's career progression. Also, the Beta coefficient compares the strength of the effect of each individual independent variable to the dependent variable. The construct personal attributes has the strongest relationships with skills development (Beta=0.69) and career progression (Beta=0.34). This is followed by the strong relationship the construct workplace support strategies has with women's skills development (Beta=0.24) and their career progression (Beta=0.19). Hence women's skills development and career progression are greatly dependent upon personal responsibility and organisational support. Moreover, workplace support strategies, workplace impediments, personal attributes, family responsibilities, workplace gender discriminatory and legislation on gender in the workplace explain up to 93% of the variance of the skills development of women (R2=0.93), and 86% of the variance of career progression of women (R^2=0.86), respectively.

Key themes generated from this study are presented in Figure 9.2 below.

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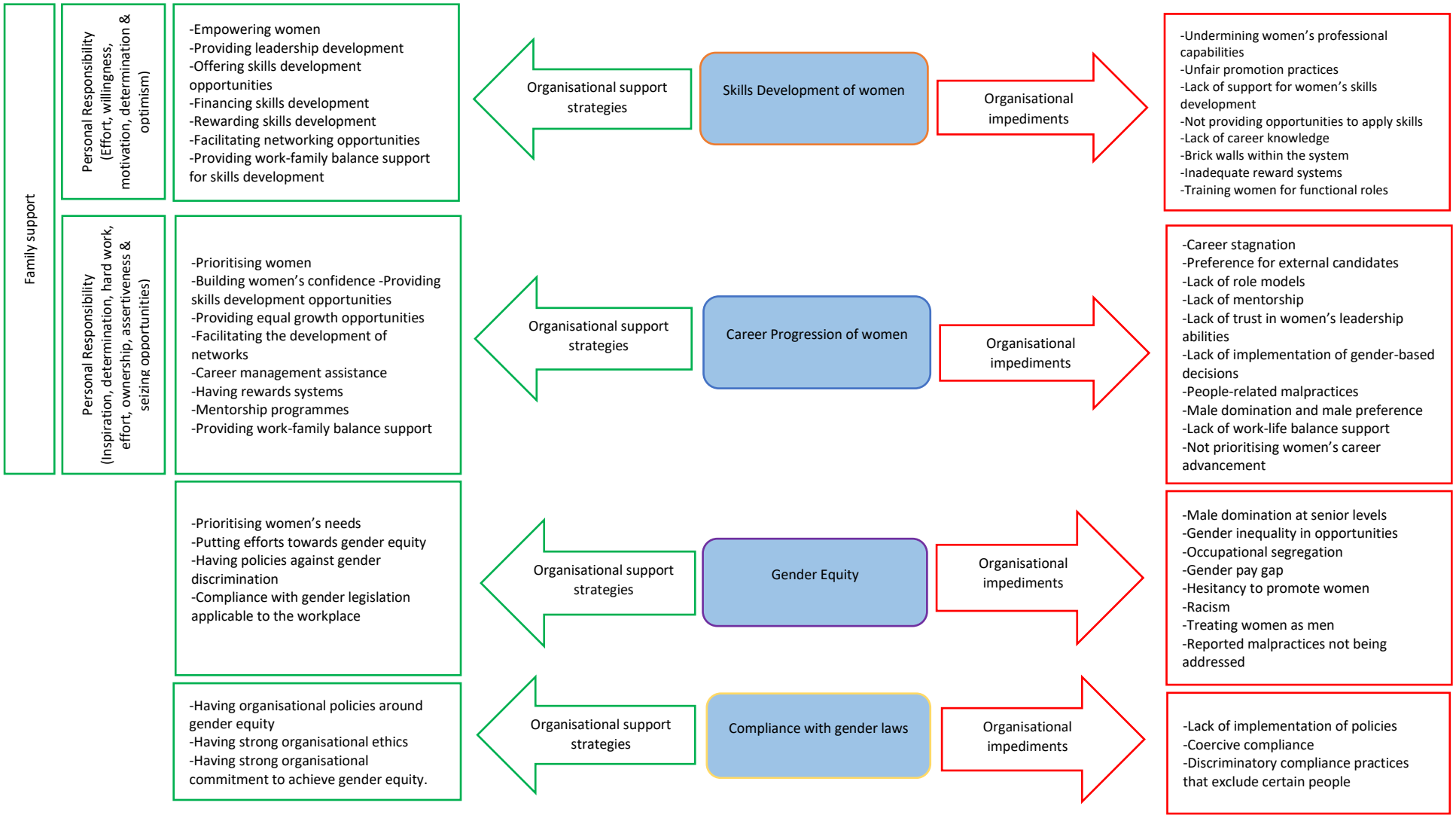
Figure 9.2: Promoting the skills development and career progression of women through gender equity strategies



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The qualitative findings of this study indicated that in so much as personal responsibility is of essence, women require assistance (from their organisations and families) to balance their family responsibilities with their work. Organisational support is key to women's careers and lack of consideration for women's needs and gender-malpractices limit women's careers. In addition, despite legislative prescriptions regarding gender equity, skills development and gender representation at senior levels, change will only be effective when organisations commit to implementing these existing laws.

Combined research findings from quantitative and qualitative data revealed that organisational support is critical for women's development and career advancement. Organisational support could be in the form of empowerment, networks, skills development opportunities, leadership development, career management, sponsorship, mentorship, reward systems, woman-woman support, gender-supportive culture, fair organisational practices and assistance with work-family balance. The lack of support structures seems detrimental to women's careers. It is also important for women to take personal responsibility for their skills development and career progression by expending the required effort, expressing professional confidence, being optimistic and taking personal responsibility for their career development and advancement. Equally important is organisational and family support to assist women to deal with interferences, strains, and pressures that cause family-work conflicts. Lastly, the study findings indicated that organisational commitment to implement legislation on gender equity, skills development and equal representation is vital for gender parity in the workplace. In the next recommendations drawn from this study will be discussed.

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9.4. Recommendations

A few recommendations are made to organisations, the state, individual women and researchers.

9.5.1. Recommendations to organisations

Organisations and human resource practitioners should become more aware of issues that impact women's skills development and career advancement and take the necessary steps to address issues that disadvantage women. These recommendations are discussed below.

9.5.1.1. Having a gender friendly culture

Periodic culture audits and review of HR practices are required to identify bias against women. Organisations should identify and address invisible obstacles and gendered assumptions that hamper women's careers. The purpose of these evaluations is to close existing gender gaps. Audits should be accompanied by appropriate measures that take into consideration gender differences and encourage initiatives that promotes women's skills development and careers such as career planning, reward and recognition of highe performers.

It is necessary to have the right gender bias related policies in place but these will not always prevent gender discrimination. Gender fairness could be enforced by communicating clear procedures to report gender discriminatory practices, and opening communication lines to challenge biased practices. It could also help to categorise gender discriminatory actions and assign disciplinary measures against each category. These measures should help to scare offenders and make them more aware of their offensive actions and also will help victims to feel more confident reporting gender discriminatory offences. Firms should show intolerance towards

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discriminatory practices and constantly reiterate their commitment to fair organisational practices.

In summary, organisations should strive for greater awareness of the cultural issues that encumber the career trajectories of women of all racial, gender and cultural groups. Anti-discrimination policies may not always be enough to prevent gender bias, hence more effort should be made to implement and monitor the effects of gender parity initiatives. Unless policies on gender issues, women's career development and women's advancement can be measured and tracked, the implementation of such policies could remain a mere 'wish-list' or something that is just undertaken to avoid legal penalties and litigations. Organisations should strive for diversity at all levels. A good start could be to train managers to identify and deal with issues around gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles.

9.5.1.2. Addressing women's unique needs

Women are different from men, and experience unique sets of challenges in their careers. Organisations should provide adequate organisational support for women and encourage them to seek external support (from family and professionals) when needed. Tailored support should be given to high potential women and women in senior positions. This support could be in the form of flexible working schedules, flexible locations, time off, and relationship-oriented leadership that caters for women's unique needs. Organisations should also address gender-specific issues relating to pregnancy, maternity leave, nursing mothers and menopause through the implementation cost effective and time-effective solutions. These practices could include on-site clinics, childcare facilities, flexible working times, psychological counselling, wellness programmes and other forms of support aimed at reducing

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stress, increasing productivity and helping women to achieve work-life balance. In addition, the introduction of support groups in which women can engage in work-life conversations, could help women to express themselves about discriminatory issues and seek help with the family-work challenges they face within the workplace. Also, eexecutive coaching could help identify women-specific needs and hep women navigate their way to the top.

9.5.1.3. Facilitating skills development for women

Skills development plays a key role in women's career progression, and organisations that seek to achieve gender equity at senior levels should take the skills development of their female workers seriously. Organisations should provide personalised career-based development opportunities and adequate support to aspiring women including: funding skills development, providing development resources, giving women time-off to participate in development programmes, providing avenues for women to learn and apply new skills, assigning stimulating tasks to women, offering equal leadership opportunities to appropriately qualified women and establishing reward systems for women who distinguish themselves in their career efforts. Reward mechanisms could could take the form of promotion, financial rewards, verbal rewards, public praise and recognition on social media, work flexibility, shared-work options, and career opportunities. Investments in women's professional development should be more responsive to women's needs and succession planning requirements. Training and development and coaching programmes should be strategic, sustainable and long-term orientated, with active monitoring, evaluation and review mechanisms that promote women's life-long learning.

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In addition to the recommendations suggested in the above sections, personal attributes play a key role in women's skills development. Firm, therefore, should seek to inspire, encourage and empower women to invest effort, take responsibility, build self-esteem, and develop professional confidence. Relevant mentorship support should be given to women in the form of motivational talks, sharing success stories of female role models or facilitating women's participation in industry networking programmes. Career-focused women are a rare species and organisations should leverage on the potential of successful senior women to increase its pool of female skills.

9.5.1.4. Having fair recruitments and promotion practices.

An employee's first job within an organisation usually sets the tone for future gender inequalities, thus, providing the reason why regressing gender inequalities in the workplace should start with recruitment because women rarely keep pace with their male counterparts. Organisations should adopt a proactive approach to recruitment and promotion. Job adverts and recruitments should be fair and gender neutral. Job titles should avoid man-suffix (e.g., 'Chair' instead of 'Chairman) because such terms are often deemed discriminatory. Wherever possible, blind evaluations should be preferred to limit any form of gender bias. Predictive tests, structured assessments and structured interviews with neutral questions should be preferred. Firms should favour independent and uncorrelated candidate assessments, over panel interviews. Evaluators should undergo unconscious bias training to eliminate misconceptions about women's skills and ensure recruitment and promotion practices are gender neutral from entry level to senior-level within the organisation. Companies should

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ensure that the applicants' pool for vacancies has a good proportion of women by encouraging qualified women to apply for advertised positions.

Promotions should not be left to the discretion of the manager. Organisations should publish detailed job requirements for each organisational level, such as qualifications, experience and skills. These requirements should be held to enable aspiring women to know what they need to accomplish to ascend the organisational ladder. When vacant positions arise, companies should prioritise internal candidates over external recruitment. This process will require upskilling and proactive succession planning. Sponsorship programmes that advocate for women should be introduced because these help to prioritise women's ascension to leadership within the organisation.

To deal with existing gender discrepancies at senior levels, organisations should specifically target women for recruitment into leadership programmes. This practice should be achieved by identifying high potential women, consciously developing and grooming them for top positions. Ideally, companies should assess women's suitability for senior positions based on their 'stay-exit' commitment, determination to progress, technical and behavioural skills and competences. Thereafter, organisations should map development paths for these women and assign mentors and sponsors to manage any 'roadblocks' that may occur along women's career journeys. Leadership development programmes should be personalised, and cover soft skills, digital skills, professional management training, high profile assignments and other company-specific skills required for growth. These programmes should to be accompanied by performance incentives for women who succeed.

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9.5.1.5. Considering gender matters as strategic

The vital components of an organisation are often reflected in its strategic plan. Hence, organisations that are serious in fostering gender equality should ensure that gender is reflected in their vision, mission statements, strategic objectives, strategic initiatives (projects) and assign people responsible for their execution. Firms should set targets, plan, track, measure and report on gender-related issues periodically. This element should also be measured like financial ratios and labour as cost of expenditure, otherwise gender transformation will continue to move at a snail pace.

Gender champions should be appointed as 'watch dogs' to ensure the organisation complies with gender laws, deals with gender related matters and tracks the achievement of gender-related objectives. These champions should be held accountable and their performance should be assessed against set gender targets. A gender monitoring and evaluation committee should be formed to oversee and examine periodic reports from gender champions. Better still, the gender equity agenda should be supported and driven by the highest official who have power, such as CEOs General Managers, and not the directors of transformation or gender champions who have limited implementation powers.

In summary, aligning gender quotas to appointment and retention strategies can help organisations to maintain their gender parity goals. It is important for firms to have fair practice, ethical management approaches, internal support and a conducive workplace for women to develop their skills, advance their careers and flourish.

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9.5.2. Recommendations to the South African government

As discovered in this study, compliance with legislation on gender equity, skills development and gender parity at senior levels may not necessarily result in women's skills development and career progression. Strategic initiatives should be put in place to develop women's careers and enable them to reach the top level of the organisational hierarchy. It is also recommended that the government should engage in the re-evaluation of existing laws, specifically with regard to targeted skills development and gender sensitisation throughout the country.

9.5.2.1. Targeted skills development for women

To facilitate women's progression in the workplace, the state should invest more time, effort and funding in the skills development of women. For example, the Sectorial Education and Training Authorities (SETA) should target more women in their development initiatives, and offer more development incentives to women in fields in which women currently are underrepresented. Special considerations should be given to Black women because they form the majority in the South African workplace, without excluding women from other races.

9.5.2.2. Sensitisation on gender roles within families

The government should consider policies around work-life balance to complement existing employment legislation. Although it may be difficult to persuade male partners to share in household responsibilities, the government could promote such behaviours through different sensitisation initiatives. For instance, TV advertisements and programmes that portray the sharing of household responsibilities could reach a wide audience and sensitise men about gender roles. Such advertisements could also

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promote the division of family tasks, promote external support for working women, and de-stigmatize the sharing of household tasks. More so, awareness programmes should be developed to educate working women about relevant gender laws and regulations, and encourage men to support their working female partners. The government should also encourage and incentivise organisations, especially major organisations, to provide work-life balance support services to assist working mothers through such initiatives as in-house child care centres.

9.5.2.3. Evaluating existing gender laws

The South African government should evaluate existing laws on gender related issues to determine whether they are serving their purpose. If problems are identified with these policies the government should amend the laws. In instances of subjective connotations, the government should introduce stricter and clearer interpretations. In situations in which the correct implementation of the law is a challenge, more stringent measures should be taken against organisations that violate the law. In addition, the state should introduce tools to track gender equity within the workplace. Such initiatives could include gender reports, as standalone reports or as part of conventional business reports, and the issuing of gender compliance certificates could help to induce organisations to comply with existing gender laws, especially at senior level. The government should also introduce control measures to address issues that may impact women's careers outside the workplace.

9.5.3. Recommendations to women

Women had limited access to senior leadership positions within organisations in the past. Government and corporate efforts are slow to relieve this situation. Hence, women should to take personal responsibility for increasing the rate of their career

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advancement. The following recommendations are made to assist women to accomplish their career goal timeously.

9.5.3.1. Taking personal responsibility

It has been established that professional development and career progression requires women to take personal responsibility. Hence women should take ownership of their professional development and career advancement. Women should be optimistic, determined, assertive, and expend maximum effort on achieving their career development and growth. They should plan their careers, set targets, monitor their progress and strive to achieve their careers goals. Moreover, women should not limit themselves to functional roles and administrative tasks within the workplace but should aim for higher positions. Women should take calculated risks in pursue of development and job opportunities that could lead them to top level management roles within organisations.

9.5.3.2. Voicing out career aspirations

Women should express their career interests and long-term aspirations early in their career development and align their actions accordingly. This practice will help to create awareness of their ambitions by their managers and organisation, making it easy for them to be considered for opportunities aligned to their career goals.

9.5.3.3. Engaging in strategic networking

For women to progress in male dominated workplaces, they should associate with dominating males and gain admittance to male dominated circles that will give them professional exposure. Although the ideal situation would be for male dominated groups to be eliminated within organisations, this practice may be a mere wish and is

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difficult to achieve. The onus is on the women to professionally navigate their way through organisational politics and deal with existing roadblocks by infiltrating male dominated decision-making circles. Women should develop acute self-awareness, self-confidence, self-development and continuous learning habits that could propel them to the top levels of management.

9.5.3.4. Combating gender discriminatory practices

Women should express their opinions in order to combat gender discriminatory practices and continue to do so until such behaviour is completely eradicated. Women should refuse to internalise culturally inherited beliefs that undermine their abilities and limit their careers.

9.5.3.5. Seeking work-life balance

Women should strive for balance in their multiple roles as professionals, mothers, wives and caregivers. Leveraging help from third parties, such as caregivers or relatives could have a positive impact on women's careers. Women should inform their employers of their challenges and request organisational support to balance their lives.

The next section highlights the contribution of this research study.

9.5. Contributions of the study

The study makes several contributions to science and business. First, it considers women's skills development and their career progression simultaneously, a practice that is unique because most previous studies primarily focused women's career progression. Findings from this study validate that women's career progression is

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dependent on their skills development, thus, implying that skills development is vital for career progression.

Secondly, qualitative research methods have been used predominantly to investigate gender issues within the workplace. This study initially tackled the issue from an empirical quantitative angle but then added a qualitative dimension to ensure balance. The combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions in the questionnaire provided a methodological contribution that yielded in-depth empirical knowledge about women's skills development and their career progression within the workplace.

Thirdly, this study adopted a multidisciplinary approach because it considered human resource management, career development, sociology, law and feminism holistically. Each of these disciplines is unique and complex; combining them unlocked previously hidden knowledge. Thus, this study has made a significant theoretical contribution to science, women's skills development and women's career advancement in the service sector in South Africa.

In addition to the above benefits, this study has provided an understanding of gender issues within the workplace and how organisational features, policies, daily practices and discourses affect women's skills development and careers. It also touched on the impact of personal attributes, family responsibilities and legal prescriptions on women's careers. From a practical point of view, the framework developed from this study may assist human resource managers, organisational development specialists and policy makers to develop women's skills and help them progress within the workplace.

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9.6. Study limitations and recommendations for further research

Despite the contributions of this study, a few limitations were noted. The purpose of this study was to gather data from women working in the accounting sector in Johannesburg. However, due to insufficient responses from that sector the sample was extended to cover women employed within the service industry in Johannesburg. The broad spread of the sample in the study makes it difficult to generalise the findings to the sector or industry. Further sector specific research is needed to verify the generalisability of current findings within different sectors.

In addition to the fact that the sample for this study was dispersed, the sample size was relatively small (412 women). A larger-scale research population, involving different provinces in South Africa, would yield more convincing results.

The population size of women working in the service sector in Johannesburg could not be accurately estimated, coupled with the difficulty in attaining respondents, therefore, a convenient non-probability sampling method was used. This process meant that the proportion of respondents for each professional category could not be calculated. A stratified sampling approach would have yielded more representative results for each profession. Further investigation should be conducted using a stratified approach. Studies could also be conducted using samples within specific professions for a deeper understanding of the issues women face in their skills development and career progression within those professions.

Likewise, the imbalanced racial distribution of the sample (predominantly Black Africans) does not permit generalisation of findings to all women. Further studies could consider proportional intersectionality such as race, generational influence as well as other demographic variables that are likely to impact women's career outcomes.

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Seven hypotheses out of the original 13 proposed were rejected in this study. The relationships between women's skills development and selected workplace impediments, family responsibilities, gender legislation or gender discriminatory practices were statistically insignificant. Similarly, no statistical associations were found between women's career progression and workplace impediments, workplace gender discriminatory practices or legislation on gender. This result occurred even though the constructs in the conceptual model were designed from existing literature, and the research instrument was reviewed by statisticians and piloted prior to administration. The problem could have been that theories on which this research was based did not work for the chosen research sample. Subsequent research should test the model in another setting, namely collect and analyse data from different contexts for the purpose of validating or modifying the conceptual model employed in this study

Furthermore, possible factors that could impact women's skills development and careers are extensive. However, only selected factors were combined to design the research constructs and questionnaire for this study. The combination of a different set of factors would most likely yield different results. Further research should consider deleting, reformulating or adding new items, constructs or theories.

The variables in this study were measured through a self-administered questionnaire, that could potentially have resulted in common method bias. Individuals' perceptions about what is happening in their workplace could have been subjected to their personality and their emotional state at the time they completed the questionnaire. In the same vein, skills development and career progression are processes that happen over time, hence the cross-sectional approach used in this study might not have fully

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captured this dynamic. A longitudinal study would probably collect more trustworthy information over time.

Lastly, the study mostly focused on women. Although this approach was informed by pro-gender literature and legislation, it would have been interesting to include men in order to compare the findings garnered from both groups. It is recommended, therefore, that further studies take this suggestion into consideration.

9.6. Conclusion

This study has presented the academic journey that led to the development of a framework for the skills development and career progression of women. This chapter has provided a summary of the study, main outcomes, recommendations, contributions and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes that the nation, corporates and women are responsible for promoting women's skills development and career progression, with each group having a critical role to play. The responsibility of the government is to prescribe and enforce measures that protect working women and promote their advancement within the workplace. Organisations should be more conscious of gender issues within the workplace, eliminate all forms of gender discrimination, and put support systems in place to assist women in their careers. Lastly, women should take change of their careers by seeking and engaging in career-related activities that can move them forward. This section marks the end of the study aimed at developing a framework for women's skills development and career progression within selected corporates in the service sector in South Africa.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Research ethics approval letter

Central University of Technology, Free State

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE
SENTRALE UNIVERSITEIT VIR TEGNOLOGIE, VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI E BOHARENG YA THEKENOLOJI, FOREISTATA

FACULTY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

Date: 2020-12-07

This is to confirm that:

Applicant's Name	Gaelle Fitong Ketchiwou
Supervisor Name for Student Project	Prof NM Naong, Prof F Van Der Walt, Dr LW Dzansi
Level of Qualification for Student	Doctor of Human Resources Management
Tittle of research project	A framework for overcoming impediments towards women's skills development and career progression - a case of selected South African Corporates

Ethical clearance has been provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016 with reference number [ETHICS NUMBER: GFK/2018].

The following special conditions were set:

[XX] None

[ ] Specific conditions

The following specific conditions apply: None

Please inform the committee of any changes to your study

Wish you success with your research project.

(FRIC Chairperson)

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Annexure B: Questionnaire

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE
SENTRALE UNIVERSITEIT VIR TEGNOLOGIE, VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI E BOHARENG YA THEKENOLOJI, FOREISTATA

Central University of Technology, Free State

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Dear Respondent

RE: REQUEST TO COMPLETE A QUESTIONNAIRE

I would appreciate it if you could participate in my research project – for my PhD in Human Resource Management – Central University of Technology.

This research attempts to develop a framework that can help eradicate all obstacles associated with impeding capacitation and career progression of women at the workplace. Hence the topic reads thus:

A FRAMEWORK FOR OVERCOMING IMPEDIMENTS TOWARDS WOMEN'S SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION - A CASE OF SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN CORPORATES

In spite of the existing employment legislations pertaining to women in the workplace, the exclusive social and workplace challenges women face within organisations are still being ignored or not properly addressed. Thus companies have failed to provide adequate support to women in these domains. This research will look at factors impediments and support strategies that affect ***women's skills development*** and ***career progression*** within organisations. The purpose is to develop a framework that will assist employers, human resource practitioners and government in this regard.

The questionnaire is ***completely anonymous***, and data gathered in this survey will be treated with ***strictest confidentiality*** and presented only in a summary form without the name or affiliation of the respondent. Please respond to all the questions with your first reaction.

Should you have any questions, comments, or other issues regarding the questionnaire and my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your valuable support and input.

GAELLE FITONG KETCHIWOU

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SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

1. Gender:

Male	**1**	Female	**2**	Other, please specify……

2. Race:

African	**1**
Coloured	**2**
Indian/Asian	**3**
White	**4**
Other, please specify ……	

3. Age:

Below 21	**1**	41 – 45	**6**
21 – 25	**2**	46 – 50	**7**
26 – 30	**3**	51 – 55	**8**
31 – 35	**4**	56 - 60	**9**
36 - 40	**5**	61 and above	**10**

4. Marital status:

Single	**1**	Divorced/separated	**4**
Married	**2**	Partnership/Cohabitation	**5**
Widowed	**3**		

5. Number of children/dependents within age groups:

0-5 years	**Please specify……**	11-18 years	**Please specify……**
6-10 years	**Please specify……**	Above 18 years	**Please specify……**

6. Job grade/level:

Semi-skilled worker	**1**	Middle manager	**4**
Skilled worker/ Junior manager	**2**	Senior manager	**5**
Manager	**3**	Top manager/Executive	**6**

7. Qualifications:

No matric	**1**	1st Degree	**4**
Matric	**2**	Honours/post graduate	**5**
Certificates/diploma	**3**	Masters and above	**6**

8. Field of your qualification:

Arts	**1**	Science	**3**
Commerce	**2**	Other, please specify……	

9. Number of years have you worked in your current company:

1 – 5 years	**1**	11 – 20 years	**2**	6 – 10 years	**3**	21 and above	**4**

10. Type of work contract:

Permanent	**1**	Limited duration/contract	**2**

11. What is the approximate number of employees working in your company?

Less than 10	**1**	Above 200 employees	**4**
11-50 employees	**2**	I don't know	**5**
51-200 employees	**3**		

12. In which category is your company?

Accounting/ consulting	**1**	Information Technology	**5**	Education	**9**	Marketing/ sales	**12**
Banking	**2**	Recreation	**6**	Insurance	**10**	Transport	**13**
Hospitality	**3**	Social Work	**7**	Healthcare	**11**	Law	**14**
Media/ Communications	**4**	Retail	**8**	Other, please specify……			

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SECTION B: Organisational factors that impact women's skills development and career progression.

The following questions ask about your own assessment of your organisation in terms of support women receive and impediments to their skills development are career progression.

Please rate your organisation in each of the following areas: do so by circling the number that best represents your opinion, for example 4 is 'agree'

5 = **'strongly agree';** 4 = **'agree';** 3 = **'neither agree nor disagree';** 2 = **'disagree';** 1 = **'strongly disagree'**

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding the *support* provided by your organisation to its women.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. My company facilitates the development of networks for women.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My organisation provides different learning and growth platforms for women.	5	4	3	2	1
3. In my organisation there are leadership development programmes which target women.	5	4	3	2	1
4. My organisation facilitates career planning/career management for women.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Senior executives in my organisation use their authority to promote women into higher roles.	5	4	3	2	1
6. The organisational culture/practices where I work are gender-friendly.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Successful senior women in my organisation support/promote the advancement of junior women.	5	4	3	2	1

What is your overall impression about

a - Your organisation's support towards women's skills development? _____

_____

b- Your organisation's support towards women's career progression? _____

_____

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding *impediments* to women's skills development and career progression in your organisation.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. My organisation does not support women who want to pursue formal qualifications.	5	4	3	2	1
2. There is no mentorship programme to help women in their career development.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Promotion practices are not fair or transparent.	5	4	3	2	1
4. There are powerful male domination cycles that exclude women from top positions.	5	4	3	2	1

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5. My company does not provide support for women to live a balanced "work-family" life.	5	4	3	2	1
6. We do not have female role models who have climbed the organisational ladder in the organisation.	5	4	3	2	1

What is your overall impression about hindrances to

a- Women's skills development within your organisation? _____

_____

b- Women's career progression within your organisation? _____

_____

SECTION C: Women's skills development.

The following questions ask about your assessment of your skills development within your organisation.

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding *your skills development*.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. At work, I engage in programmes/projects that develop my skills.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The skills development opportunities offered by my company are aligned to my career plans/needs.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My skills have progressively improved over time.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I continuously learn new things in my work.	5	4	3	2	1

Please describe your overall impression about *your organisation's efforts to develop your skills*:_____

_____

SECTION D: Women's career progression.

The following questions ask about your assessment of your career progression within your organisation.

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding *your career progression*.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. I got promoted into a higher position within my organisation.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My responsibilities at work have increased over time.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My authority in my company has increased over time.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am satisfied with my career progress at work.	5	4	3	2	1
5. My Job title has changed favourably over time.	5	4	3	2	1

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Please describe your overall impression about *your organisation's efforts towards your career progression:* _____

SECTION E: Personal attributes that impact the skills development and career progression.

The following questions ask about your assessment of personal factors that impact your skills development and career progression.

Please circle the number that best describes your approach towards *your skills development and career progression*.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. I put in the required effort to succeed in my career.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I am confident about my professional abilities.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I take full responsibility of my career growth.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am optimistic about the future of my career.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I talk about my career plans/aspirations to my manager.	5	4	3	2	1
a- Please describe your attitude towards your skills development: _____ **b- Please describe your attitude towards your career progression:** _____					

SECTION F: Impact of family responsibilities on skills development and career progression.

The following questions ask about your assessment of the impact of your family responsibilities on your skills development and career progression.

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding *the impact of family responsibilities /child care on your skills development and career progression.*	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. The demands of my family/home/children interfere with my career.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My family /childcare responsibilities produce strains that make it difficult for me to fulfil my career ambitions.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The time I spend on my family responsibilities cuts into the time I would like to spend on my career.	5	4	3	2	1
	5	4	3	2	1

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4. Due to all the family pressures, I am sometimes too stressed to engage in activities related to my career.					

Please comment on the extent to which *your family responsibilities affect*

a- your skills development: _____

_____

b- your career progression: _____

_____

SECTION G: Gender discriminatory practices in the workplace.

The following questions ask about your assessment of gender discriminatory practices in the workplace.

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding *gender discriminatory practices* in your workplace.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. There are preconceptions about women's attributes, characteristics or professional abilities in my organisation.	5	4	3	2	1
2. In my workplace, women are treated based on their culturally assigned roles.	5	4	3	2	1
3. In my organisation women are subjected to unfavourable perceptions when assessed for promotion.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I feel that women's careers are stuck at lower and middle management levels in my organisation.	5	4	3	2	1
5. In my company, women earn lower salaries than men for the same job done.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Cases of sexual harassment were reported by women in my workplace.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Women are unfairly represented (less than 50%) at senior levels in the organisation.	5	4	3	2	1
8. When reported, my organisation puts in little or no effort to address discriminatory gender practices.	5	4	3	2	1

What is your overall impression about *gender discriminatory practices* in your workplace?

_____

_____

SECTION H: Compliance with legislation on gender, skills development and career progression.

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The following questions ask about your own assessment regarding the implementation, legislation relating to gender, skills development and career progression in your organisation.

Please circle the number that best describes your opinion regarding the *implementation of related legislation* in your organisation.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. My organisation complies with gender equity and gender fairness legislation.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My organisation complies with legislation around skills development of designated groups.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My organisation complies with legislation that promotes equitable representation at all levels.	5	4	3	2	1
4. My organisation complies with legislation set to increase the ownership, management control and employment of blacks and women.	5	4	3	2	1

Please describe your impression about

a- Your organisation's compliance with legislation on gender equity_____
_____

b- Your organisation's compliance with legislation on skills development_____
_____

c- Your organisation's compliance with legislation relating to gender equity/representation at senior levels)_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, SUPPORT AND CO-OPERATION.

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Annexure C: Declaration of language editing

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

A research dissertation presented for the approval of the Central University of Technology, Free State, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Management

entitled:

A framework for overcoming impediments towards women's skills development and career progression – a look at selected South African corporates.

by Gaelle Fitong Ketchiwou

has been subjected to an English language edit by

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