



**EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR FEMALE ACADEMIC LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES
OF
TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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ABSTRACT

The relationship challenges faced by females in leadership ranks within higher education are seldom researched. There is a dearth of research that explores the relationships between females in higher education settings and their colleagues, along with their ability to climb the ropes of leadership. Females have become well equipped to compete in academia. However, many females in leadership roles in academia are not prepared for the lack of support and comradery from female and male associates, and this is why this study intends to explore the experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa. This research aim was achieved via a qualitative face-to-face interview of ten female leaders from six universities of technology in South Africa. The data collected were transcribed and reviewed for common emerging characteristics which were clustered according to common themes in order to explore common experiences of social aggression, perceived causes of these occurrences, along with their discernments of relationships with female colleagues in their respective universities of technology. These data consisted of a combination of primary data obtained from the interviews conducted from the ten female leaders', and secondary data obtained from the review of previous literature, newspapers and magazines.

Some of the findings of this study indicate a life-career advancement continuum as well as the absence of accountability on the part of higher-education institutions, which need to be considered in the implementation of national and international policy, in particular to females and leadership. The analysis of the interview transcriptions revealed five major categories in the participants' perceptions of their early leadership development: strong work ethic, academically driven, confidence, overcoming obstacles, and early leadership roles. Within the theme of career choices, the following categories emerged: sponsors, opportunities, timing, and professional growth. Within the theme of intersectionality, the following personality attributes dominated: gender, social norms, race, and age. Within the theme of leadership experiences, the following codes emerged: confidence, assertiveness, and role expectations. Within the theme of cultivating future leaders, the following codes emerged: pay it forward

and lessons learned. One of the limitations of this study is due to the fact that a purely qualitative approach was employed and this may result in inconclusive answers based on the analysis of the stories told by the respondents due to differences in the individuals, culture and the university atmosphere. The main recommendation of this study is that government drive accountability at higher education institutions to ensure the implementation of legislation and policy promoting access to women in leadership at the highest echelons.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, certify that:

- I am familiar with the rules regulating higher education qualifications at the Durban University of Technology and understand the seriousness with which DUT will deal with violations of ethical practices in my research.
- Where I have used the work of others, to my knowledge, this has been correctly referenced in the bibliography. Any research of a similar nature that has been used in the development of my research project is also referenced.
- This project has not been submitted to any to any other educational institution for the purpose of a qualification.
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30 November 2021
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SUPERVISOR'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT FOR EXAMINATION

Date: 30-11-21

Student name: Zanele Thandeka Mabaso

Thesis title: Experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis for examination. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis is primarily the student's work, and the student has acknowledged all reference sources.

The above student has also satisfied the requirements of English language

competency. **Supervisor: Prof Ivan Govender**

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late dad Mshiyeni Vilakati, my late daughter Phenyokuhle Mabaso and my first grandchildENZOKUHLE Dlamini. To my father, Mshiyeni Vilakati, for instilling in me the value of education and hard work. My children, Zwelakhe and ZANOKUHLE, personified courage, resilience, and unconditional love that I can never explain. Both my kids are a greatest influence in my life. I am who I am because of the two of you. To Phenyokuhle and my dad, I would like to say, "Thank you!" Although you are both late, I would also love to dedicate this study to you to show you that I continued being strong even when you gone because I knew you were with me spiritually. I promise to see you in the morning my guardian angels." To my first grandchildENZOKUHLE, I would like you to know that you are my everything; I love you so much You inspire me every day to be a better grandmother. You are what makes my life worth living".

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And finally, to the ten females who participated in this study, thank you for giving of your time and for sharing your stories. You have played a significant role in this study; I am also inspired and encouraged by your stories. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. To all the females that contributed to this study, I leave you with the following quote from Marianne Williamson:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frighten us".

<https://www.facebook.com/peacemakers.asia/posts/871320269587794>

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
CPUT:	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CUT:	Central University of Technology
CTP	Committee of Technikon Principals
CTP:	Committee of Technikon Principals
DoHE:	Department of Higher Education
DUT:	Durban University of Technology
DVC:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
GETT:	Gender equity task team
GEU:	Gender equity unit
GMC	Gender mainstreaming committee
GPF	Gender Policy Framework
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher-Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HERS-SA	Higher education resource services- South Africa
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
MUT	Mangosuthu University of Technology
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UoT	University of Technology
UCC	University of Cape Coast
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization
HWIs	White Institutions
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

While females make up 31% of full professorship positions at degree-granting institutions, Acker (2014: 73) notes that, a disproportionately small number have reached the senior leadership levels of these institutions. For the privileged few who achieve these positions, success requires a combination of personal adaptiveness and external support. In this study, I explored how females who are senior administrators and educators in higher education draw from their personal strengths and characteristics that assisted them to become successful despite the barriers they faced. In essence, I was interested in understanding what made them persevere and succeed in the midst of obstacles.

Yet despite significant progress, the proportion of women in senior management roles globally grew to 32% in 2022—the highest number ever recorded. Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions. The reality is we need more women in leadership positions (Kaiser and Wallace 2016: 75). Leadership is both contextual and situational (Algoahafaily 2019: 14). The rise of academic meritocracy is a huge step back for the aspiring female leaders in institutions of higher learning. While studies conducted by Cheteni and Shindika 2017: 5); Gandhi and Sen 2020: 16; Alsubaie and Jones 2017: 16 and Eustachio et al. 2020: 37) established that women have distinct leadership traits and skills in leading especially in educational institutions, they face certain difficulties and challenges that impede their leadership effectiveness. Some scholars argue that further investigations are needed to ascertain what enhances or hinders women's access to leadership positions. While numerous studies have a western centric focus, the popularising of the discourse that relate to women in leadership fails to take into cognisant class-based differences such race and belief systems. Suggesting that women are treated as a homogenous group who subscribe to a set of values or factors. Such type of research has been classified, constructed and theorised from a western hegemonic perspective. Western leadership practices orchestrate women in developing countries by silencing and marginalising them. Therefore, more diverse perspectives from developing countries contribute to the growing discourse about women

representation in higher leadership positions in universities. Researchers have found that females still face obstacles, including pay inequities and other forms of bias to spread the glass ceiling effect that continues for females in senior positions in higher education (Sanchez and Lehnert 2019: 22). Soleymanpour, and Alizadeh and Esmaeeli, Behrang (2015: 320) brought the attention of the gender and pay unfairness within higher education.

For decades, the entrance of females into higher education senior positions has been blocked (Moalusi and Jones 2019: 5). The challenges females face to execute their responsibilities successfully in such positions have been overwhelming, particularly for females who finally break the glass ceiling to occupy senior positions. This study explores these challenges as reported by ten female academics and administrators in senior positions from all six universities of technology in South Africa. Drawing from the females' narratives and employing the role congruence theory as a lens to analyse data, the study highlights that females in positions of power face obstacles related to voice and agency that is needed to develop professionally and personally at institutions of higher education. The study therefore intends to explore the possible obstacles that females in positions of power face compared to their male colleagues in similar positions.

Leaders in universities are supposed to further the purpose of higher education. The role of higher- education institutions is to contribute to the economy of the country, conduct research, enable student learning and enhance the body of knowledge. The leadership of these institutions is critical in order to fulfill these roles effectively. The leadership of higher-education institutions has been placed under growing scrutiny since the end of apartheid, where universities became accessible to all South Africans. The role of higher-education institutions has changed, these changes include growth in student numbers and revised funding models. These changes have also obligated universities to transform and develop their leaders to survive in a turbulent environment. The development of leaders has been a priority since leaders have to adapt to these changes. It is noted that transformation in higher-education institutions have not been as quick as expected. The inequalities are still major challenges (Riordan and Potgieter 2011: 157). Some of these include Institutional cultures, school curriculum, inclusive education, Remuneration of academic staff, creating a new generation of academics, Adequate state funding,

Differentiation and diversity, Further consideration of higher education realities reveals challenges and barriers that hinder female advancement into senior roles (Badat 2010: 12 and Dahlvig 2013: 93). Therefore, there is a need for relevant and adequate leadership methods that will be more inclusive at all levels.

However, statistics show that a female's journey into leadership is still challenging and the pathways into top leadership positions are still occupied mostly by males. There is continued under-representation of females at the senior levels in institutions of higher education in South Africa. In fact, according to a study by Statistics South Africa in 2008, even though black South Africans comprised almost 80% of the population they made up only 24% of academics, and women, who comprised 51% of the population, made up only 42% of academics' representation in the academic workforce (Seale 2017: 279). This study focused on ten females who occupy senior-level positions from six universities of technology (UoTs) in South Africa and explored their journey into senior leadership roles and their experience of being leaders in higher education.

This study aims to add to a deeper understanding of the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in higher education by offering more in-depth descriptions of the positive and negative aspects of being in a leadership role than have been reported before. The majority of the studies such as Shen and Joseph (2021: 5; Eagly and Heilman 2016: 349; Kezar 2014: 117 and Offermann 2020: 89 and Airini, Conner, McPherson, Midson and Wilson 2011: 50) have focused more on the negative aspects of female leaders. Many researchers have documented the negative aspects, but the female leaders need to show readers that those aspects are entrenched in higher education leadership, but they are currently manoeuvrable and could be navigated.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The literature indicates that women often face informal rejection, devaluation, and marginalization in HEI (Seale 2016: 235). Senior management teams in HEI are usually male dominated and new members come from their professional networks (Cama, Jorge and Peña 2016: 60). Men claim that few women choose to be there or have the skills and qualifications to reach higher levels of leadership. However, women confess that they

face multiple barriers on their journey to the top (Dahlvig 2013: 95) indicate that male leaders are still considered as 'default leaders' and female as 'atypical leaders,' since they are perceived to violate accepted norms of leadership, irrespective of the leadership behavior.

Moreover, female leaders face considerable difficulties in finding a female colleague as mentor as they progress in their careers, as senior leadership positions are still dominated by men (Mankayi and Cheteni (2021: 2). Women who are assertive are seen as too tough and neither likable nor feminine, while women who are compassionate are seen as too soft and not true leaders. Women must, therefore, abide by the socially constructed roles because, otherwise, this could be harmful to the perceived competence of any female leader (Ranft 2000: 157). Female employees in HEI are usually assigned more 'academic housework', that is pastoral care, mentoring and coaching, when compared to their male colleagues. Moreover, they face multiple challenges related to identity and stereotypes which prevent them from reaching meaningful leadership roles (Mulya and Sakhiyya 2020: 4). Not pursuing leadership roles early in their careers creates an experience gap that increases and becomes even more prominent as they progress to more roles that are senior (Wijaya 2019: 87).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH AIM

The previous studies have shown that when females participate in leadership roles including those in higher education, everyone benefits (Nikunen 2012: 713; Glass and Cook 2016: 51 and Redmond, Gutke, Galligan, Howard and Neman 2016: 332). In fact, it has been noted that females tend to include diverse viewpoints in decision-making, are also more likely to work through differences to form coalitions, have a broader conception of public policy, complete objectives, and bring disenfranchised communities to the table (Person, Saunders and Oganessian 2014: 10).

Therefore, having both men and females in positions of leadership working together will create a stronger foundation for innovation and prosperity. Work needs to be done to shed light on the ways women can overcome barriers to help mitigate these issues in higher education (Awang-Hashim, Noman and Kaur 2017: 2). Higher education as a

gendered organisation benefits from having men and women together in leadership positions, yet there are some women who continue to obtain and hold positions of leadership in higher education (White, Kate, and Paula Burkinshaw. 2019: 7). According to Acker (2014: 76). "In higher education specifically, the lack of women leaders can have implications not only on the institutions themselves, but also on the scope of knowledge and research that affects us all". Furthermore, according to Barnard (2017: 155), advancing gender equity objectives can improve the overall organisation.

In 1994, the higher education leadership landscape changed marginally yet stayed the same, meaning that more females are getting into leadership positions but not at a fast pace (O'Connor 2017: 255). The undesirable barriers that female leaders face, such as gender inequality, and unequal remuneration create complicated obstacles that lead to their leadership capabilities being questioned or undermined. These barriers are also transferred onto aspiring leaders who seek culturally relevant support and motivation to continue to take up leadership roles (O'Connor, Pat, and White. 2011: 905). Further, UoTs themselves should include females to senior leadership positions, with the aim of engaging them in strategic decision making and community engagement for the advancement of the institution in general. In post-apartheid South Africa, higher education institutions (HEIs) could not afford to be separated from the national development and welfare agenda of the country (Person, May and Mayer (2016: 134). Gender and cultural inequities are some of the social challenges faced by female leaders who are in senior positions today. Females need to work together and be major players in HEIs to overcome the negative forces that they face. There is also a need to develop females in senior leadership roles in higher education to work systematically and strategically with the government to achieve equity in higher education institutions (Moodly and Toni 2015a: 45).

The under-representation of females in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions continues despite the numerical dominance of females (Msimanga 2014: 2013. and despite the numerous government policies on equality and equity that are in place, and this seems to allude to the existence of identifiable factors limiting or hindering the inclusion of females in senior leadership roles in higher education which this study attempts to identify (Tran 2014: 305). In spite of the fact that more females in higher

education institutions are being promoted into senior leadership positions, there are still proportionately fewer than males and their advancement through the ranks is not an easy one (Moody and Toni 2015a: 46). Chen et al. (2022: 127) also point out that despite the increase in leadership opportunities, it is rare to find females in senior positions and those who have attained the positions receive a huge amount of negative media attention. Media coverage has historically treated female leaders differently from men (Morley 2013: 115).

According to Johnson (2014: 836) despite major shifts in the way that society generally views a female's role in the public sphere, the media continues to treat females and female leaders in a traditional gender role inappropriately. The gendered reporting inevitably affects the outcome of the leadership because it is one of the most powerful and influential sources of information for the public. This study attempts to prove that as female leaders continue to challenge traditional gender roles by occupying senior leadership positions, the media coverage of their leadership remains gendered in nature.

Higher education leadership research shows a huge gender gap in leadership roles in the field of higher education (Moody 2015: 229). There is no doubt that females have progressed in higher education concerning gender equality in the workplace where they constitute 46% of the labour force (Flower 2019: 132). However, females still experience stereotypes based on their gender (Shava, George and Chasokela 2021: 11). Moreover, in higher education females are consistently under-represented in the senior levels of leadership even though they have more bachelor, masters, and doctorate degrees than men (Diko 2014: 825). The data collected on American college presidents by American Council on education indicated females achieving the roles of executive positions in higher-education institutions nearly doubled from 9.5% in 1986 to 19.3% in 1998 (as cited in Cook 2012: 50). However, between 2006 and 2011, the number of females who attained senior positions at higher-education institutions slowed to a 15% growth rate. If the growth continued at the 1998 rate, females representing UoTs leaders would be approaching 50% instead of the 26.4% reported in 2011 (Cook 2012: 53). The reason for the slowing of the rate of females obtaining senior positions is unknown (Chin 2011: 73; Cook and Glass 2014: 94).

Upon reviewing the literature about the lack of females represented in senior leadership positions, the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders presented by Naidoo and Perumal (2014: 818) provided one possible explanation for the phenomenon of the under-representation of females in leadership in higher education. There is a conflict between leadership roles and prescriptive expectations for females' behaviour. This clash leads to prejudicial judgements and actions. This bias toward female leadership prevents the promotion of females into leadership positions (Moorosi 2014: 793). The specific problem is how stereotypical views of female behaviour affect females who occupy high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how stereotypical views of female behaviour affected females who are in high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Gaining new knowledge about females' experiences with gender bias and role stereotyping may benefit future generations of females seeking future leadership roles. This study explored the individual experiences of females who currently perform leadership roles at universities. The problem was explored by using a semi-structured interview approach. Researchers, such as Schmidt and Mestry (2015: 815 and Wolfframand 2018: 89) suggest this approach allows for a relaxed nature of the interviews by providing the participants with the liberty to express their views on their own terms. The story-telling aspect of females' experiences in leadership roles and the interpretation by the interviewer validated the analysis as a relevant method for discovering the difficulties females' leaders face along their career path in higher education (Salminen-Karlsson, Minna, and Nina 2018: 56). Looking for the complexities in the viewpoints of females who are currently performing leadership roles at UoTs in South Africa, female leaders were invited to participate in interviews concerning their experiences with stereotypical views of female behaviour as they journeyed through their leadership roles in higher education. Open-ended questions allowed the participants to describe their experiences through any changes in how they view themselves as females and as leaders, and what, if any significance they gave to experiences with stereotyping of their behaviour as they sought or upheld their leadership positions.

This study adds to the body of knowledge regarding stereotypical views of female behaviour and the effect it has on females who are in leadership positions and on those who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. The following research

questions explored females' individual challenges as they navigated through their leadership roles in the different UoTs.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa as regards the perceived barriers to leadership positions in UoTs. Readers are also reminded that the all-embracing goal of this study was to characterise how females in leadership positions in UoT settings respond to challenges experienced during their leadership journey. This study included Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Executive Deans, Deans, Heads of Department as well as Senior Directors and Managers in the respective institutions.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this study, the researcher recognised barriers, inequities, and under-representation facing females in leadership positions in higher education. What is absent from previous research in this area, however, is an understanding of the mechanisms that support females while they persist in senior leadership positions. Providing an understanding of what supports females in senior-level leadership positions in higher education will help to break down the barriers and contribute an understanding of the ways females have overcome and are successful in their current positions. This study adds to the body of literature and continues the conversation on gender bias in the academy. There may be ways others can use the findings from this research to be successful which will in turn help create a more positive work environment and lead to a more diverse work atmosphere in the academy.

This study emphasises how females experienced positive actions that contributed to deconstructing the barriers for advancement. Through this work, I hope to advance critical conversations around female leaders in higher education. In particular, I employed an appreciative framework in order to focus on what worked well for these females as they navigated the challenges inborn in higher organisations that possess a gender bias. Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a particular model that is beneficial for considering how female leaders employ their internal resources to achieve success. Psychological capital (PsyCap) was advanced as an application of positive psychology to individuals in the workplace. It is a core construct that consists of hope, efficiency, optimism, and resiliency

(Hall, Galinsky and Phillips 2015: 853). It is described as a state of being in which one is open to personal development.

Foundational to PsyCap is the work of psychology, positive organisational scholarship, and progressive organisational behaviour. Du, Bernardo and Yeung 2015: 228) states an example of how the factors of PsyCap interact would be that of optimistic persons who possess the agency and pathways to attain their goals will be more motivated to and proficient in overcoming hardships, and thus, more resilient. Confident persons will be able to transfer and apply their expectations, optimism, and resiliency to the specific tasks within specific fields of their lives. A resilient person will be skilled in utilising the adaptational mechanisms necessary for realistic and flexible optimism. PsyCap self-efficacy, hope, and resiliency can, in turn, contribute to an optimistic explanatory style through internalised perceptions of being in control. These are just demonstrative of the many positive outcomes that may result from the interaction among the PsyCap factors (ibid: 229)

According to Simons and Buitendach (2013: 8), people who have a high PsyCap tend to be more motivated to initiate additional tasks at work. Understanding PsyCap and the positive theoretical background help to conceptualise my study. Taking the four areas of PsyCap together and understanding the positive lens through which participants see their work shape this study.

PsyCap is an understanding of internal determination. Asking questions to the participants in a positive lens through PsyCap help look at this study differently way from previous studies. Individually PsyCap has hope which comprises both determination and pathways. When faced with difficulty, people are able to continue with the task and find an alternative pathway. All four areas have been documented with a theoretical background (Simons and Buitendach 2013: 8). Hope is a motivational state and ways that persons have willpower to achieve goals. Hopefulness is the way one internalises events of negative results as being temporary.

Resilience is the ability to “bounce back from hardship, conflict, and failure” (Simons and Buitendach 2013: 8). Self-efficacy is the belief we will be successful. It encourages you to use your powers when faced with challenges. It inspires and energises you to follow

your goals and invest the time and hard work that may be necessary to achieve them. It supports you to persist when you are faced with difficulties that may otherwise lead you to give up, and thus, it also relates to your hope, optimism, and resiliency (Simons and Buitendach 2013: 8). It inspires and energises you to chase your goals and invest the time and hard work that may be necessary to achieve them. It helps you to persist when you are faced with obstacles that may otherwise lead you to give up, and thus, it also relates to your hope, optimism, and resiliency (Simons and Buitendach 2013: 9).

The four components mentioned above are optimistic resource capacities that encourage positive organisations. I shaped the data collection around the dimensions of PsyCap. Fostering the positive outlook of one's career helps to emphasise a positive outlook and how participants' career PsyCap impacted them. The four areas of PsyCap all focus on the positive. The individual areas all have a universal understanding of positive thought. I studied participants trying to understand their outlook and how they persisted their leadership roles within their institutions. Hope, optimism, resilience, and efficacy: have an internal positive element with which people lean more toward the positive (Batel Hazan-Liran and Paul Miller 2022: 43). The female leaders have internal resilience within individuals and an inner drive to continue to find a pathway that will work when situations arise that may affect the outlook and internal struggle.

Focusing on the positive supplements to the literature on senior-level female leaders in higher education. Using PsyCap and the theoretical frameworks of a gendered organisation and feminist standpoint theory allows me to gather data on females and focus on their positive characteristics and mechanisms used to continue their work. Personally, I have been interested in female leadership since I started my second fulltime position in residence life in higher education. I noticed that men occupied both Dean of students' positions at the two institutions I worked for. The longer I worked in higher education the more I became aware of the virtual absence of females in leadership positions. Eventually, I worked at another higher institution and saw first-hand the daily-institutionalised gendered barriers for females at student, staff and faculty levels. Working on policies such as "stop the clock" which was a policy for faculty members who had kids and wanted to stop the tenure clock while they raised their kids, I noticed how often it was the role of the Women's Centre to speak out for females. It was also our occupation

to make sure positions of leadership had quality and a diverse applicant pool including gender. I have been interested in female's under-representation in leadership in the academy for over fifteen years.

There is little research in terms of female leaders at the top levels of higher education, "If knowing females struggle against the socially constructed views of leadership that assumes a masculine form, then we must build on what makes females achieve and maintain leadership roles" (Batel Hazan-Liran and Paul Miller 2022: 43). My research adds to the body of literature within higher education leadership.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this study, I applied the theoretical frameworks of both feminist gendered organisation and feminist standpoint theory to help shape my research. While a theoretical framework describes the theoretical underpinnings of your work based on existing research, a conceptual framework allows you to draw your own conclusions, mapping out the variables you may use in your study and the interplay between them. The theoretical framework provides a general representation of relationships between things in a given phenomenon. The conceptual framework, on the other hand, embodies the specific direction by which the research will have to be undertaken. Statistically speaking, the conceptual framework describes the relationship between specific variables identified in the study (Vinz 2022: 120). As discussed in the study, the trifecta entails the differences between a theory, a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework. The study will make it very clear that whereas the theoretical framework is drawn from the existing theoretical literature that the researcher reviews about the study research topic, a conceptual framework is a much broader concept that encompasses, practically all aspects of your research (Ibid: 121). I believe having the foundations of those theoretical concepts complement my study of the females who are in current leadership roles in higher education. Starting from a feminist framework and including other theories help ensure I understand, listen to and see the females whom I interviewed from an intricate view. The intersections of gender, class, race and other roles females have positioned in their lives have an impact and are important for the study. Having an understanding and a framework of the gendered organisation and examining the experiences of the participants from a feminist standpoint theory helped me to frame my research.

Collins (1997: 375) examined the feminist standpoint theory in the early 1970s. Smith studied the field of sociology and “females place” within the larger society. To this end, Smith writes, “Females appear in sociology established on the universe occupied by men”. Bourdieu (2003: 281) and Choo and Ferre (2010: 129) are dominant figures in standpoint literature. Harstock added the methodological understanding of opposing all forms of domination and Naples and Gurr (2013: 18) noted that Harstock described feminist standpoint theory that “stresses gender differences and attempts to emancipate females”. Standpoint theory gains insight to assist, define and theorise how to construct and maintain social order (Kokushkin 2014: 9). Intemann (2010: 778) concluded this by saying “Although all knowledge claims are determinately located, not all such social locations are equally good ones from which to be able to see how the social order works”. The researcher incorporated multiple theories to help build a foundation to explore and eventually interview female leaders, hear their stories, and analyse the findings.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study analyzes and describes the factors that women leaders in higher education in South Africa experience obstacles in their leadership positions, especially at the senior level. According to Cahyati, Hariri, Sowiyah and Hermanto Karwan (2021: 2), despite their lesser presence in academic and administrative senior positions, some research shows high levels of satisfaction among employees where women are leaders in organisations (Fritz and Knippenberg 2017: 87). Despite these encouraging research findings in other countries, there are still challenges that women face in such senior leadership positions in certain Universities of Technology in South Africa. This trend is continuing despite current legislative frameworks aimed at redressing these imbalances in the country. As Gartzia and van Knippenberg (2016: 458) found out, like any other sector, the higher education sector finds itself struggling to eradicate a very traditional and masculine culture and fail to implement structural changes for female leaders in universities to carry their leadership roles with integrity. The Higher Education South Africa found out in 2007 that only three female Vice Chancellors out of 23 universities in South Africa and five women registrars out of 23 in the country (HER-SA 2007: 55). Since then, the picture has not changed much and these inequalities are still in place.

focusing on women already occupying senior academic and administrative leadership positions, this study aims to explore the lived experiences, views and attitudes about challenges faced by women leaders in higher education leadership. Through this study, the researcher's objective is to ensure that transformation of higher education in South Africa included among others, force institutions of higher learning to implement government policies and come up with their own policies aimed at eliminating the challenges that females in their institutions currently face. The researcher explains that although the challenges to get to the desired government objectives are still there, universities have not been making a fast progress to deal with such issues.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research objectives of this study can be translated into the following research questions:

- What are the experiences of female leaders in a male dominated space? How have female leaders in higher education shaped the state of the field today, and what broader lessons can be learned from them?
- What challenges do females face in their quest for leadership and how do they exhibit resilience in the face of these challenges?
- Are there supporting mechanisms available to female leaders to acquire leadership skills, and if so, how effective are these mechanisms?
- How does the current legislative framework, particularly in relation to female leadership and employment equity, affect the overall experiences of female leaders in higher education?
- What recommendations can be made for the implementation of these policies?

1.8 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Given the limited research on the experiences of female leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa and the relatively small number of women who have advanced to top leadership in higher education, further insight on the personal implications of barriers may be collected from the stories of women who have attained such positions.

This goal of this study is to examine how women leaders in higher education experience senior leadership in Universities of Technology. This study begins to shed light on this question through an in-depth, semi-structured qualitative study of women in senior leadership positions in higher education in order to better lighten the little understood perceptions of leadership in higher education.

This study was motivated by a need to understand how female leaders, who are underrepresented in higher education leadership positions, perceive their leadership roles, and more importantly, how they experience being leaders in university environments that are predominantly male. Females' experiences of leadership in a male-dominated environment are highlighted in the study in order to draw attention to females' imbalanced social position (Creswell 2013: 29) and optimistically reduce the inequality. The researcher has been to all the UoTs and most of them are led by males. Similarly, at the Durban University of Technology, where I am currently working, I have observed that although there are more female appointments into leadership positions, females are still under-represented. That is why I became interested in investigating how these few females perceive and experience leadership. The main motivation for the research was the reluctance of females in my department to apply for leadership positions. Even entry-level Head of Department positions were of no interest to my colleagues. Therefore, I wanted to establish what the roles of leaders in UoTs were. I had gathered before the start of the study that even the females in senior positions were always complaining about the politics and racism at the institutions, and senior positions were pre-assigned to certain male individuals, way before they were advertised. Thus, the interest to find out from the females who were already in leadership positions how they perceived and experienced leadership in universities that were in transition. I was able to identify females who seemed capable of providing effective leadership; hence, it became important to understand their experiences in leadership roles from their own perspectives.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main delimitation of the study is that it is restricted to female participants holding senior leadership positions in the public sector UoTs in South Africa only.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were numerous limitations in this study. The first limitation was selecting only universities of technology from a pool of public four-year universities in South Africa. This limits the generalisability of the findings; the decision was made so that participants will currently be engaged in a similar environment. The second limitation was the ability to select an adequate number of participants because of the limited number of females in senior leadership position in UoTs. Generalisability is applicable only to females in senior leadership positions in UoTs; however, transferability can be drawn assuming a similar situation. The concern was that there are more males than females serving as senior leaders in UoTs (Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997, 2013: 48). The profession, gender, province, and experiences of the participants served as the delimitations to narrow the focus of the investigation (Sakhiyya, Zulfa, and Kirsten Locke 2019: 198). Additionally, females of racial/ethnic groups other than South Africans were not interviewed as the experiences of those groups are very different. Furthermore, although it is difficult to study a South African's journey without focusing on race, the researcher chose to focus on experiences not related to race. The researcher assumed that the selected participants in this study have faced difficulty during their journeys, due to South Africa's history of gender stereotyping and discrimination that has been documented in the literature on females in higher education leadership (Au 2016: 40).

A limitation to this study is one that is present in all qualitative studies. The results are applicable only to the group under study; and therefore, broad generalisations cannot be made. However, since an in-depth understanding will be gained from the phenomenon under study it would be enlightening for researchers and consultants interested in gaining insight into the status of females in higher education. While the scope of this study is on females in UoTs in South Africa, the library search for literature on females in UoTs in South Africa has revealed very little. Therefore, the present study is parallel to other studies in Africa and the other parts of the world as the background. An additional limitation is that the researcher will be the sole data collector and analyst. Lastly, the results of the findings were limited to the period in which the study was conducted.

1.11 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some of the following keywords and clarification of concepts have been specifically defined by the researcher for this study; others are well defined as they appear in the literature, and those sources are cited.

1.11.1 HIGHER EDUCATION

The definition of higher education differs from country to country and in this study, the chosen definition is taken from the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995: 7) where higher education refers to post-secondary institutions such as universities or colleges that offer qualifications such as national diplomas, degrees, honours degrees, master's degrees, and doctorates. In the South African context, higher education refers to all learning programmes leading to qualifications greater than grade 12 or which is equivalent to the National Qualifications Framework, as expected by the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995: 5).

1.11.2 INSTITUTIONS

North (1990: 97) defines institutions as the formal and informal rules that organise social, political and economic relations. They are the systems of 'established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions' (Hodgson 2006: 112). In this study, the institutions are the six universities of technology in South Africa.

1.11.3 ORGANISATIONS

Institutions are sometimes confused with organisations. One can think of the differences between them in this way: "If institutions can be defined as the 'rules of the game', organisations are how we structure ourselves to play" (Ligeikis 2010: 12). Organisations are shaped by institutions, and in turn, shape institutional change. "Organisations are the material expressions of institutions circumscribed by groups of individuals bound by a common purpose" (Conrad and Sollitto 2017: 2). In the case of this study, institutions are going to be used to refer to the different Universities of Technology.

1.11.4 TECHNIKONS

According to Arnold, Stofile and Lillah (2013: 3), a technikon was a non-university higher-education institution, in South Africa, focusing on vocational education. However, since 2004, technikons in South Africa have either merged with traditional universities or have become universities of technology. The study will specifically be about the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in universities of technology (previously known as Technikons).

1.11.5 LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the ability to understand your own talents and act effectively and efficiently within a team in a situation or institution. Northouse (2010: 16) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. It is assured that every society or institution will always need leaders; it does not matter whether it is in the political, social or religious field. In this study, the researcher aims to investigate the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in the higher education context. However, to understand the topic under investigation, it is important to know what leadership is.

1.11.6 GENDER BIAS

For this study, it is important to distinguish between gender and sex. When investigating gender bias, it is crucial to understand what is meant by the term. Sex is the physical, biological difference that divides individuals into one of two groups (male or female). While gender also divides individuals into groups of male and female, gender is a created notion based on cultural and societal expectations rather than purely on biological features. Bias is the inclination to favour one over another (Paleari 2015:6). Therefore, gender bias is the tendency to favour one gender above another.

1.11.7 EQUITY

According to McCarthy (2001: 3), "Equity in the workplace refers to the perceptions that employees have about the extent to which they are treated fairly by their supervisors and managers. This is with regard to disciplinary action; the type of work they are allocated;

the pay and benefits they receive; and the way the managers and supervisors relate to their subordinates”.

1.11.8 LABYRINTH

A series of complex barriers that include gender discrimination, work-life balance for females and sometimes the lack of self-confidence in women that prevents females from ascending to the highest levels of leadership. Eagly and Carli (2007: 11) define this as a metaphor “that captures the varied challenges confronting women as they travel, often on indirect paths, sometimes through alien territory, on their way to leadership”.

1.11.9 INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw 2008: 54).

1.11.10 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Refers to the norms, rules, policies formed by the company to achieve the objectives.

1.11.11 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Includes the value, behaviour and attitudes of the employees. These are equally important for the success of the organisation. Culture is the form of shared assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has functioned well enough to be considered useable, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems (Schein 2004: 10).

1.11.12 GENDER DISPARITY

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender disparity as any discrepancy, exclusion, or restraint made because of socially constructed gender roles and norms (Myers 2010: 15) and views gender disparity as a juncture of economic inequality and racial or ethnic hierarchy.

1.11.13 BLACK

The term “black”, as used in this study, refers to Black African, Coloured and Indian people collectively -- all the population groups that were categorised as “non-white” under apartheid legislation and policies. For this study, the term is used to refer to the black South African population (Alexander, Amy and Jalalzai 2020: 24)

1.12 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study is organised into five chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, discussion of results, conclusions, and recommendations. The divisions and outlines of the key contents of each chapter are set out in this chapter:

Chapter 1 Orientation and background of the study

This chapter introduces the study and provides a background to the study. It also focuses on the problem statement, research questions, significance of the study and delimitations and limitations of study. In addition to providing the position of the researcher and addressing the research questions, the research objectives, research methodology and the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are presented.

Chapter 2 Literature Review - Background of the South African Higher Education Sector

This chapter delivers a review of the literature where historical and current research supports the rationale of this study and describes the context of the study and the universities therein. It also provides appropriate literature on the key concepts: leadership theories that inform this study are also discussed the position of females within leadership historically, and in higher education; challenges and accomplishments of female leaders; motivations to remain in the field of leadership; leadership enablers for females and the impact of legislation on female leadership in South Africa.

This chapter provides an overview of previous research and literature concerning the experiences of females in the broad higher education sector in developed and developing countries, particularly the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. The chapter also focuses on other topics relevant to the study, such as the background

of females in South Africa, women and higher education in South Africa, and the theoretical framework for the study.

Analyses on how the theoretical framework of the study transmits to the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in UoTs is covered in this chapter. This chapter keeps in mind the research objectives of this study and directs the literature into achieving the objectives. The literature review related to the objectives of this study was done from a higher education perspective and narrowed down to UoTs. This chapter covers a review of the literature that exists in the field, as well as the gaps in the research that are identified by the study.

Chapter 3 Barriers And Challenges Faced By Female Leaders

This chapter provides a detailed account of the challenges faced by females in senior leadership positions in UoTs with reference to the government legislation framework. The researcher wants the reader to see that even though there are policies on equity in South Africa, some universities do not apply them and thus leading to the dearth of female leaders in senior positions in higher education institutions.

Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research paradigm, research design, selection of participants, sources of data, data collection procedure, an instrument used to collect data and the analysis of data employed in the study.

Chapter 4 Research Findings and Data Analysis

This chapter discusses the results of the study. It also presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 Summary, Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations

This is a closing chapter for the research and includes a summary of the study, a synthesis of the findings and presentations of recommendations. A conclusion of the key learning outcomes is discussed. The benefits and the contribution of the research along with recommendations for future research are presented.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The journey of females as senior leaders can be better understood by exploring the impact of gender as it relates to leadership traits, the barriers experienced, and the strategies employed by female leaders. This expanded understanding will enhance recognition of females who have achieved leadership positions and encourage future females to pursue positions of leadership and move towards the removal of gender biases and stereotypes. Overall, this study will facilitate an understanding of the broad concept of female leadership and the journey that females have travelled to achieve high senior leadership positions in higher education.

This chapter has presented the rationale/motivation as to why the study was conducted. It has provided the background and the framework of the study. Also highlighted in this chapter is the problem statement, the objectives the research questions, the existing literature and well as research methodology used to gather and analyse data. The next chapter deals with literature relevant to this study and contextualises the problem being investigated.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to present relevant literature on females who have had experiences in the areas of gendered organisations and feminist leadership that inform this study. This review will be presented under the following subsections and themes on female leadership: female leadership in higher education in south africa, current females in senior positions in higher education, conceptualising and defining leadership, social institutions and gender role attitudes, global and regional best practices on female leadership, importance of gender equality in higher education, and government legislation on female leadership. This chapter will also present some critical success factors and supporting theories for female leadership as well as the main barriers faced by female leaders.

2.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR AFTER 1994

When a new socio-political dispensation commenced in 1994, the new government formulated a new education policy, based upon the following four principles namely democratization, equity, desegregation and multicultural education (Wolhuter 1999). Furthermore, the entire education system should be geared toward the realization of the potential of the entire population, with the societal goals of economic development and the molding of national unity as final goals (Wolhuter 2009: 365). In the years since 1994, a major shake-up of the institutional fabric of South African higher education took place.

In 2003 the Minister of Education announced that the name “technikon” will be done away with and be replaced with “University of Technology”. All the technikons henceforth became known as Universities of Technology. Apart from this name-change, and the fact that they could from then on also grant degrees (up to doctoral level) and no longer only diplomas as in the past, nothing changed regarding the technikons. Since 1994 great strides have been made regarding enrolment growth. Higher education enrolments have swollen from 495 355 in 1994 (Wolhuter 2009) to 1 116 017 in 201 (UNESCO 2020). As

can be seen in table 1, on the equalisation front (at least at the point of participation in higher education) great progress has occurred since 1994, though the composition of the student corps still does not correspond one hundred percent to the population profile of South Africa.

2.2.1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

As noted in 2.2, South African universities commenced as a replacement of the Western (particularly the British) university. Part of that model was institutional and academic autonomy, as guiding principle in the governance and management of the university. One aspect of the history of South Africa was that since the country left the Commonwealth in 1961, its policies of racial segregation (Apartheid) resulted in it becoming increasingly ostracized from the international community (De Boer, Enders and Leisyte 2007: 27). It found itself at the receiving end of a wide range of sanctions and boycotts in the economy, trade, sports, politics and culture. The latter included an academic boycott. The extent of this academic boycott is well covered by Harris-Huemmert (2010: 112), and included a refusal to accept South African students and academics at universities abroad (be it for long term or short term visits of whatever nature), a refusal to visit South African universities by academics and students at universities abroad, a refusal to accept South African participation at conferences abroad, a refusal to attend scientific conferences organised in South Africa; and a refusal by scholarly journals to publish articles authored by South African academics (Smit 2020: 4). However, one often unnoticed and unintended part of this international academic boycott was that South African universities were shielded from developments taking place at universities globally. One of these developments was the creeping managerialism at universities that came in the wake of the neo-liberal economic revolution which (as outlined above) began in the countries of Western Europe and North America in the 1980s; and which carried into universities the principles of a free-market economy, such as the profit-motive, performance appraisal and performativity, quality assurance, and cost-effectiveness. However, when South Africa re-joined the international fold after 1994, and in the wake of the socio-political reconstruction that commenced at the time, for a combination of reasons, this wave of managerialism came down onto South African universities and the academic profession

at double speed and at double weight, compared to the outside world, where it developed relatively gradually (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019: 1095). This can be ascribed to a number of factors in the South African context. Government assumed a more commanding role.

South African academics, as far as (de jure and de facto) governance and management at their universities are concerned, find themselves sandwiched between two forces: from national and institutional governance on top, and the student corps from the bottom. Wolhuter, Higgs, Higgs and Ntshoe 2011: 107). The university, maintaining its integrity, and for fulfilling its unique role in society, as outlined earlier, is contingent on two principles: pursuing excellence and safeguarding its autonomy. These new poles of power structures which the South African academic profession finds itself squeezed in between, are undermining these principles, posing a clear and perceivable danger to the integrity of the university, as has been pointed out by scholars and education commentators across the spectrum: from conservative scholar and erstwhile rector of the University of Pretoria Flip Smit (Smit, 2020), to liberal academic and journalist RW Johnson (2012), to progressive scholar and erstwhile rector of the University of the Free State Jonathan Jansen (2017: 52).

Higher Education in South Africa cannot be an ivory tower amidst under-development, poverty, high unemployment etc. The study is only centered within Universities of Technology (UoTs) in South Africa. All the ten female leaders in this study are only from UoTs in South Africa only. The purpose of UoTs is not to replicate the Traditional University sector but to develop a distinct mission and build on its unique programs that have been historically offered in partnership/conjunction with industry (Fowler 1999: 45). Knowledge transfer and innovation is intended to be the foundation of teaching and learning in UoTs. This study focuses on the pre and post eras of the Higher Education landscape and the impacts that these UoTs have dealt with their leadership planning and development. In South African higher education there are three types of universities that emerged from the restructuring process. These universities are: Traditional Universities, Comprehensive Universities and Universities of Technology (UoT). Some also required mergers, others retained their previous status.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK WHICH UNDERPINS THE STUDY

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study have been informed by the previous research on women in higher education leadership. The complexity of the topic; one that integrates career development, institutional norms and structures, and the interactions among all these factors—calls for integrating several theoretical frameworks that provide perspective for engaging in thoughtful analysis and critique. Feminist theories have provided theoretical background for many studies of women's development and experience, and feminist theory provides a method for engaging an emancipation discourse (Pullen and Vachhani 2021: 16), for investigating distributions of power that marginalize some and reinforce the privilege of others (Hooks 2010: 1). Additionally, feminist theory helps understand how intersecting aspects of individuals' identities, including gender, history, class, race, and ethnicity, shape how reality is represented. Constructivism is a complementary paradigm that values the development of understanding, sophisticated reconstructions, vicarious experience, authenticity, and trustworthiness (Von 2011: 92). Under the paradigm of constructivism, reality is comprised of socially and experientially based mental constructions; reality is viewed as relative and knowledge as co-created via subjective interactions (Ibid: 300). Reality viewed through the lens of social constructivism is redefined as individual perceptions of experiences filtered through the lens of multiple intersecting identities (Stempel, Rigotti and Mohr 2015: 259). Theoretical frameworks that incorporate the complexities of identity development and the intersections of race, class, and gender provide crucial framework for this study. In the context of this dissertation, development refers to "the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment, and his [sic] relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties." (Carli 2015: 290). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development provides a theoretical framework through which I can better understand participants' experiences of the higher education environment and the interaction of the various contexts women must negotiate as leaders. Although Bronfenbrenner's theory is not particularly contemporary, the stated emphasis on perceptions, thoughts, and knowledge and how knowledge changes depending on exposure to and interaction with the environment (bid: 292), a perspective well-aligned with constructivist paradigms.

Throughout this study, the interplay of female leaders and leadership is underlined. In order to understand leadership in general, we have to understand specific leaders. At the same time, individual leaders help clarify the dimensions of leadership theory and research. There are many leadership realms in complex societies, and individual females have effectively stepped into all of them. The achievements of the female Vice-Chancellors we have considered, such as Professor Sibongile Mutwa from the Nelson Mandela University, help us understand the opportunities that recent history has opened for other females such as Professor Thoko Myekiso from the University of Mpumalanga and Professor Xoliswa Mtose from the University of Zululand.

While this study can only sample the kinds of leadership initiated by female leaders in UoTs, the details of what that these extraordinary females have accomplished make clear that female leadership will have a much greater impact in the future, as we face unprecedented global and national challenges. This study provides a historical background and theoretical context that will be helpful to students and scholars, business professionals, and any female whose goal is to lead.

2.4 HISTORY OF UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY

In terms of the National Plan Higher Education (2001: 56) some Technikons were either converted to Universities of Technology (UoT) or were absorbed into other universities and became Comprehensive Universities. Prior to this, Technikons were alleged to be substandard in status to Universities. During the nineties Technikon education became very popular with employers because of its career focused programs which made them unique in the higher education field (Civi 2000: 166). This resulted in this type of institution being strategically placed in not only increasing the participation rates of students but also ensuring that students are job ready when entering the world of work (Atkinson 2000: 49).

In the new reconfiguration of the higher education sector it became clear that, though the CHE (Council for Higher Education) proposed a unitary system, there were differences in the typologies of the institutions (Chesbrough 2003: 35). In 2002, the now defunct Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP), proposed that a sub-committee investigate the concept of a UoT to determine its associated classification/categories of such a

University in light of the opportunities afforded by CHE 's Size and Shape Report (2000: 6). Three distinct types of institutions emerged, namely UoTs, Comprehensive Universities and Traditional Universities. In this formation Technikons were stuck with their history as Diploma offering institutions. They are now reclassified as a UoTs. It is now expected to perform as a university. This dilemma forced UoTs to seriously evaluate and assess their mission and goals, in line with external environmental forces. These forces were characterized by a high rate of technological advancement and the need to develop partnerships with industry and community structures (Habib and Parekh 2000: 39). To regain their competitive advantage and build on the strengths of Technikons, it was necessary to determine their key deliverables that could distinguish the UoT sector from Traditional Universities. However, the leadership of these UoTs were not discussed or deliberated upon (Kalaitzi, S., Czabanowska, Fowler-Davis and Brand 2017: 457).

To face the challenges of the 21st century, UoTs needed to address problems experienced by the modern world. And one of the issues that was that of leadership. The nature of modern work is changing and continually increasing, with knowledge, information and education. As we move further into the information and knowledge age, UoTs require sophisticated education and training to sustain competitiveness and responsible development. In response to this challenge the Department of Education (DoE) restructured Higher Education to make it relevant to the needs of society and industry. In terms of the National Plan Higher Education (2001: 22) many Technikons were either converted to Universities of Technology (UoT) or merged into universities and became Comprehensive Universities. The Traditional University made up the third type of university. As a result, three distinct types of institutions emerged, namely UoTs, Comprehensive Universities and Traditional Universities. In this formation former Technikons were re-classified as a UoTs and were able to offer degrees also. This research studied the development of UoTs and its evolution to "University" status. After being classified as Universities of Technology, it soon became clear that these universities lacked a philosophy and leadership direction (Jansen 2004: 134). This is the reason why the researcher chose to concentrate the study in UoTs because there were leadership challenges in this UoTs (Ibid: 138).

2.4.1 TYPES OF UNIVERSITIES

Traditional Universities mentioned to the older established universities prior to the higher education restructuring exercise (Jansen 2004: 135). Comprehensive Universities were mostly formations arising out of the merger between Technikons and Universities (Ibid: 78). The third type was the re-classification of Technikons to become Universities of Technology. This study is investigation senior leadership within UoT as a new phenomenon in the South African Higher Education landscape. Notwithstanding the history and challenges that faced Higher Education (HE) in South Africa, the University of Technology is expected to be on a development path to position itself as a substantial new role player in the higher education landscape.

Knowledge is an exceptional characteristic of human beings with an incredible capacity to obtain and transfer knowledge from one generation to another, gaining importance with advanced science and technology. Higher education is the gateway to economic security and opportunity mainly for females in South Africa (Jansen 2004: 139). Females are part of the socio-economic system, and they uphold rich cultural and traditional values. Their progress is associated with the progress of the nation. Since 1994, many South African females are playing a major role as leaders in knowledge societies (Gouws and Kotzé 2007: 165): 165). These females address issues on creating and adapting information and ideas at an accelerated speed to support economic growth and improved quality of life in South Africa and thus addressing issues such as equity, quality, relevance and access, proving that South African females with any background can become contributing members of society through learning. The South African government has introduced policies and procedures with the goal of sensitising the higher education system, identifying gender equity and increasing the number of females enrolling in higher education (Birla Institute of Technology and Science 2017: 22) Higher- education for females in South Africa has witnessed an impressive growth over the years and the government is combining resources needed to promote female education at all levels.

A major change has been underway in higher education requiring more female leaders and an altered type of leadership at all levels. However, statistics indicate the females are underrepresented at the senior leadership levels (Manfredi 2014: 19 and Hames 2007: 55). This study focused on ten females at the senior levels of Universities of

Technology and explored their journey into senior leadership and their experiences of being a leader in higher education today. Semistructured interviews were conducted, coded, and analysed. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in higher education. The female leaders in this study provide more detailed descriptions of the positive and negative aspects of being in a leadership role than have been previously reported. It is significant to document the positive aspects of being in a leadership role to provide a balanced perspective on the experiences of being a senior leader and a female in higher education.

2.4.2 PROFILE OF UOTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the new reconfiguration of the higher education sector in South Africa, it became clear that though the CHE (Council for Higher Education) proposed a unitary system, there were variances in the typologies of universities and Technikons. In 2002, the now defunct CTP proposed that a sub-committee investigate the concept of a UOT to determine its associated classification/categories of such a University in light of the opportunities afforded by CHE's Size and Shape Report (2000: 44). Three supposedly distinct types of institutions emerged, namely UoTs, Comprehensive Universities and Traditional Universities. Comprehensive universities mostly arose from mergers of a university and a technikon. However not all such institutions were formed through such mergers e.g. University of Zululand is a comprehensive which was not subject to a merger. Comprehensive Universities should offer both UoT and traditional university programs. The UoT type courses include cooperative education as a component of the program. Traditional universities refer to Rhodes University, University of Cape Town, University of Witwatersrand, University of Stellenbosch, University of North West, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, University of Free-State, and University of Pretoria. UoTs referred to in this study are affiliated to the SATN (Jansen 2004: 136). They comprise of Durban University of Technology (DUT), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Vaal University of Technology (VUT), Tswane University of Technology (TUT), Cape Peninsular University of Technology (CPUT) and Central University of Technology (CUT). All these Universities were part of this research.

2.5 FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Women's journey into higher education has been fraught with difficulty and effort. Even though progress toward making higher education equally accessible to men and women has advanced in strides over the past century, it has been slow going and there is still much work to be done. However, the tide is turning, and more women currently hold high positions of leadership in higher education than ever before. As an example, a growing number of female presidents presiding over prestigious institutions are beginning to helm some of the most influential parts of our societal and cultural fabric.

With more and more females being educated, assertive, self-reliant, experienced, and competent their male counterparts in positions of power in universities are feeling the competition. However, sadly, despite all the existing legal provisions, females are struggling more than ever to reach and stay in senior leadership positions in higher education. This failure has been labelled the glass ceiling (Madsen 2011: 132). Research by the International Labour Organisation 'Breaking through the Glass Ceiling' (2004: 4), one of the broadest international studies, exposed that the attainment of senior leadership positions for females in the world, in general, is very complex. Over time, the number of professional females in the workforce has increased and they attained praiseworthy success in the male dominated field of higher education. (Ligeikis. 2010: 567). However, gender discrimination in the workplace has unpleasantly affected female progression into leadership positions and has also caused slow growth in the number of females motivated to take up leadership positions.

Although there is growth in the female workforce, professional development opportunities for them remain insignificant or not up to the mark. Thus, it is easier for females to enter into leadership positions, but it is a struggle filled with so many challenges despite them having the right credentials to lead. Females in higher education continue to move past gender barriers and attain advanced degrees in South Africa (Burkinshaw and White 2017: 4). New ways to close the gender gap between males and females in senior positions in higher education leadership are emerging through studies globally. Female leadership is slowly becoming part of boardroom agendas and not topics shared in secret or isolation. Females today, juggle multiple identities as leaders, wives and mothers, partners as well as professionals and aspiring scholars (Ford 2016: 500).

The barriers that females come across in leadership positions are connected to a large network of male meanings which is personified in a series of rules and structures that favour the male model of skilled development and achievement of educational leadership (Funnell 2013: 300). Gender stereotypes in terms of effective leadership are openly harmful to females since they only relate good leadership to talents that are considered masculine. The problem is that current gender stereotypes are widespread in society and often internalised by females themselves, as many studies have revealed. (Grant 2015: 168).

In general, most studies (Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci and Burke 2017: 35) have exposed that the concept of leadership, particularly senior levels in higher education, has been constructed based on a hierarchical and personal approach. However, recent research on leadership (Barrios-Arós et al. 2015: 230; Vieira and Maia Vidal. 2015: 32) proposes the need to eliminate these practices from our organisations in favour of shared leadership models.

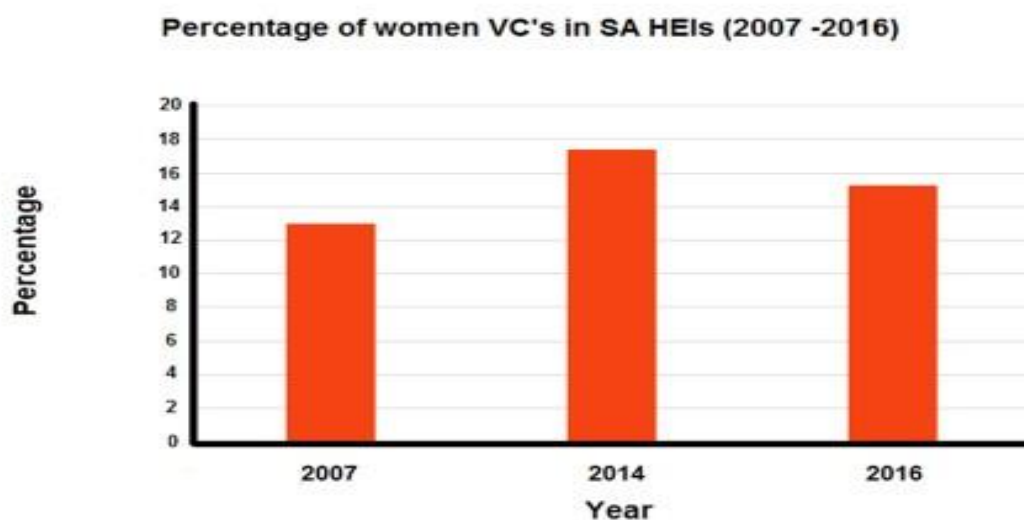
As Hong (2018: 345) suggest more studies that document the experiences of females in leadership positions to confirm and give greater substance to the suggestion and results obtained, and these should embrace not only access to the post of Vice-Chancellor but also its abandonment and progression. From the onset, the entirety of human history has been deeply designed by patriarchy. The current situation is one in which biased images of females not only persist but also continue to spread established roles that emphasise females' responsibility in the home rather than in leadership professions.

Thus, having females in leadership positions form one of the critical conditions for the practice of equality within universities. This is especially important because what future generations of men and females learn in universities does not just consist of what they are openly taught, but also, of what they perceive and experience regarding the organisation and operation of these institutions in which they spend an important part of their lives.

In spite of the path for academic leadership being modelled on a path for men rather than females, studies such as this one, are currently planning to bridge that gap. It is disturbing

to note that one of the barriers experienced by females was also an education funding issue, which hindered or stalled their path to academic success. Formalised training programmes is another issue that stalled female progression and that has been tackled by the Council of Higher Education.

It has been proven that irrespective of the steady increase of female enrolments and employment in higher education, there is still an under-representation of females in senior leadership positions (Gallant 2014: 205). It is for this reason that this study explores stages and related experiences and life/career paths of females in higher education. Research indicates that higher education leaders are usually obtained from within the higher education background and have come through the regular members in this regard. An overview of Vice-Chancellors in the 26 universities in South Africa (conducted in March and June 2016) indicated that 20 came through the academic ranks before taking up the positions of Vice-Chancellors in the respective South African universities. Of the 26 current Vice-Chancellors, four are female, totalling 15.38 per cent. These figures have dropped two per cent since (Moody 2015: 230). Gender equity in South African Higher education leadership: Where are we twenty years after democracy? (Janes, Carter and Rourke 2020: 37). Furthermore, though the number of universities in South Africa increased from 23 to 26, the number of female Vice-Chancellors remained at four (in 2014 and 2016 respectively). These figures are illustrated below:



**Figure 0.1 Percentage of female leaders in South Africa between 2007-2016
(Moodly and Toni 2015a: 140)**

Moodly and Toni 2015b: 45) assert that in spite of advanced policies in the South African higher education system, females are still confronted with the challenge of not breaking the glass ceiling when it comes to occupying leadership positions. This study, therefore, found it imperative to investigate the path of females' life and career evolving needs and achievements in their climb into leadership roles. It is also important to interrogate the various aspects and perceptions put forth as contributing factors to the scarcity of female leaders in higher education. The limited number of females applying for senior leadership positions (Seo, Huang and Han 2017: 35); inadequate support for professional effectiveness and career advancement; and institutional cultures that favour men over females (Johnson 2014: 835 and McNae and Vali 2015: 288), among others, are some of the causal factors. It is also argued by Johnson (2014: 836) that universities are gendered organisations. Johnson (2014: 866) speaks of females being downgraded to care work, and females themselves having to deal with knowing that being a female came with socially set work, activities and actions. Lee (2018: 257), in their investigation of the developmental needs and support of females in Australia observed a pattern of females mostly occupying the roles of DVCs of Community Engagement Departments or Teaching and Learning Departments instead of DVCs Intercontinental Affairs. The phenomenon is also obvious in the positions of Executive Deans of disciplines such as Sciences or Information Technology being occupied by mostly males (Gamble and Turner 2015: 85). These realities endorse the need to encourage females to expand their roles in areas that reinforce access to the hierarchy within higher education leadership.

Oftentimes these individuals are incredibly accomplished or decorated, having served in other elite political, academic, or international capacities before taking on their presidential positions. These women are helping to shape the future of higher education in real time. Their influence is and will continue to be a vital part of keeping our higher education landscape healthy and vibrant and navigating the future's uncharted waters.

2.5.1 TRAITS THAT MAKE EXCEPTIONAL LEADERS

Whether male or female, anyone who holds a leadership position will benefit from possessing or learning certain traits and skills that will enable their leadership to be effective. Without these attributes, it is very difficult to lead effectively. Conversely, when these traits are employed, one's impact and influence as a leader can be significant and long-lasting (Eacott 2011: 134).

Vision

This is a vital skill for leaders, and especially those that hold high positions in higher education. Especially when a landscape is fraught with uncertainty (like the field of higher education is at the moment), a leader needs to develop an in-depth understanding of the situation at hand and produce a picture of the place their institution could reach in the future that their colleagues and subordinates find compelling (Gigliotti and Ruben 2017: 98).

Humility

Humility is an imperative quality in leaders who want to build lasting, strong connections with those they lead. Humility allows others to be right, invites others to achieve, and supports and celebrates others' successes. This contributes to strong team culture and maximum team member contributions for the good of the organization as a whole (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse and Sassenberg 2014: 415)

Ethical Integrity

This is a multifaceted, complex leadership quality. Ethical leadership can be enacted in a number of different ways and should be approached and implemented with care. However, when done well, ethical leadership not only protects an institution from falling into trouble but creates an embedded culture that affects each of its members positively and helps propel more ethical decision-making, thought processes, and behavior (Harris, Hinds, Manansingh, Rubino and Morote 2016: 29).

Transparency

Transparency takes effort. However, for the leader who is willing to enact it and conduct themselves with transparency, there is much to be gained. This includes

fostering deeper trust and respect amongst colleagues and subordinates, inspiring greater transparency from and amongst organization members, increased learning, better decision quality, and more (Khan 2017: 179).

While stereotypes are only that, it is worth mentioning that many of these qualities and traits are ones that females stereotypically demonstrate in higher quantities, or are more likely to incorporate into their conduct, than males. Female leaders can often bring with them higher chances of leading with more humanistic qualities, person-oriented outlooks, and approachable interaction styles than the average male in the same position (Vann, Coleman and Simpson 2014: 29).

2.5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Women in higher education leadership roles can create observable benefits and impacts that are imperative for continuing to develop the horizon and strengthen institutions to weather the next chapter of history for the higher ed landscape (Wang, and Sedivy-Benton 2016). Women in higher education leadership positions inspire the next generation of females (and individuals of all types) to aspire to leadership as well.

Women contribute greater diversity of thought, problem-solving, and experience to organizations where they lead or hold decision-making positions. These promote and facilitate better decision-making and can refine the overall quality of an institution's performance and direction (Notgrass 2014: 607).

Women can contribute meaningfully to a healthier representative range of leadership styles within an institution. There are many ways to lead. When a particular style or flavor of leadership dominates a culture or an institution, it can become stagnant and stale. Refreshing that pattern with differences in leadership styles can bring health and vitality to higher ed institutions (Ibid: 608)

Diversity in leadership has many benefits; according to McKinsey & Company report (2009: 2) these are just a few out of many:

- Enhanced learning environments. Diversity in higher education enriches the learning experience for students, providing opportunities to interact with people from many different backgrounds. This improves collaboration skills and innovation.
- Improved cultural competency. Diversity in higher education prepares graduates for an increasingly globalized world, providing core competencies to navigate their careers in dynamic, multicultural work environments.
- Increased opportunity. Diversity in education increases chances for minorities to pursue high-level positions that may require advanced degrees, which give students from historically underrepresented communities opportunities to see themselves in their leaders.
- Stronger workforce. Closing the diversity gap can have an impact on the workforce in general. Diversity encourages coworkers to respect different nationalities and be more thoughtful of each other. This contributes to productivity and teamwork.

The reasons women leaders are stepping away from their senior leadership positions are telling. Women leaders are just as ambitious as men, but at many companies, they face headwinds that signal it will be harder to advance (Salminen-Karlsson, Minna, Andrea Wolfram, and Almgren 2018: 55) They're more likely to experience belittling micro-aggressions, such as having their judgment questioned or being mistaken for someone more junior. They're doing more to support employee well-being and foster inclusion, but this critical work is spreading them thin and going mostly unrewarded. And finally, it's increasingly important to women leaders that they work for universities that prioritize flexibility, employee well-being, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (Pyke, Joanne 2011: 445).

If universities don't act, they risk losing not only their current women leaders but also the next generation of women leaders. Young women are even more ambitious and place a higher premium on working in an equitable, supportive, and inclusive workplace. They

are watching senior women leave for better opportunities, and they're prepared to do the same (Harford 2018: 55).

2.5.3 WOMEN EXPERIENCE A WORKPLACE SKEWED IN FAVOR OF MEN

Higher education and research are key instruments for empowerment and social change. Universities can be powerful institutions for promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion, not only in the higher education context, but also in society at large. Nevertheless, universities remain both gendered and gendering organizations (Rosa, Drew and Canavan 2020: 17). The persistence of gender imbalances and pay gaps at both the top and the bottom levels of the academic hierarchy; gender segregation across academic disciplines and activities; the lack of integration of gender perspectives in teaching and research; reveal the extent to which gender still structures, in very significant ways, the divisions of academic labour and capital (European Commission 2019: 64; Hearn, Strid, Humbert, and Balkmar 2020: 55 and Husu 2020: 52).

On average, women are promoted at a lower rate than men. The biggest gender gap is at the first step up to manager: entry-level women are 18 percent less likely to be promoted than their male peers (Paoletti, Quintin, Gray-Sadran and Squarcioni 2020: 67). This gender disparity has a dramatic effect on the pipeline as a whole. If entry-level women were promoted at the same rate as their male peers, the number of women at the senior vice president and C-suite levels would more than double (Husu 2020: 54). And the disparity in promotions is not for lack of desire to advance. Women are just as interested in being promoted as men, and they ask for promotions at comparable rates.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, women are less optimistic about their prospects. They are less likely than men to aspire to be a top executive. And even the women who aspire to be a top executive are significantly less likely to think they'll become one than men with the same aspiration (Kachchaf, Ko, Hodari and Ong 2015: 175). Black women, face even greater challenges in higher education. The intersection of race and gender shape women's experiences in meaningful ways. Women of color face more obstacles and a steeper path to leadership, from receiving less support from managers to getting promoted more slowly (Ibid). For instance, according to Seale and FitzGerald (2016: 328)

women in general are more likely than men to report they never interact with senior leaders; Black women are the most likely of all to report they never have senior-level contact. This may affect how they view the workplace and their opportunities for advancement. Perhaps because of the challenges they face in the workplace, for example, Black women are also the most interested in going out on their own (Paoletti, Quintin, Gray-Sadran and Squarcioni 2020: 70) Compared with other groups of women, they're significantly more likely to say they intend to start a business when they leave their current job. And yet: despite facing more pitfalls to advancement, black women have higher ambitions to be a top executive than White women. Woods, Benschop and van Den Brink 2021: 12)

2.6 WOMEN'S IMPACT IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP ROLES CURRENTLY

Women's tenure in higher education institutions in the South Africa began much more recently than many people realize. In that time, the changes they've been able to create, assist, and inspire have often been formative and fundamental not only for their individual institutions but for the landscape as a whole (White, Kate, and Burkinshaw 2019: 200) Why is this? And what unique strengths and values do women in higher education leadership bring to the table? It is imperative for higher education institutions to answer these questions.

The very future of higher education is in tenuous balance. Institutions need to fill their decision-making positions with the strongest, brightest, and best fits for the job. There has never been a more pertinent time to examine how the process of inviting women into leadership roles has created incredible value for higher education as a whole (White 2011: 23). Current evidence from research has shown that the number of female promotions to senior positions in higher education is very slow (Schwanke 2013: 568). This has been an issue of concern for the past two decades and governments and institutions globally have developed several policies to support females in their professions. However, with these efforts in place, most females still dominate the middle and lower positions in the workplace (Grosser and McCarthy 2019: 1100 and Hearn 2020: 100). This implies that efforts at improving females' progress have not achieved substantial results, as most females still do not occupy top positions. This could mean

that policies are not achieving their objectives. Therefore, this study will discuss some of the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in UoTs.

It ruminates certain descriptive frameworks for the absence of females in leadership positions in the global academy including “the gendered division of labour; gender bias and misrecognition; management and masculinity and greedy organizations” (Ivancheva, Lynch and Keating 2019: 450). There are questions about institutional structures and how such structures discriminate and disadvantage females. The experiences of the females in this study will not only benefit them but will also provide support for females who wish to enter senior leadership. It will also enable senior leadership to be more attractive to females and to re-invigorate thinking on females in leadership to address contemporary global challenges in higher education (ibid: 452). However, the higher education background is going to set a pace for this study and enable the reader to understand the landscape of higher education in South Africa today.

Higher education is a crucial site of opportunities and promises. It is a place where democratic aspirations are turned into democratic practice, and as such, it befits universities to behave in such a way as to make an impact on a working democracy like South Africa. Previous studies have also discovered that universities are not as democratic as perceived, especially regarding their records and policies on the promotion of females. It is only in the last few decades that they even admitted females into their majestic leadership circles. Universities are the nurseries for tomorrow’s leaders, which adds another element to being seen to act out the principles of inclusion and getting rid of barriers that make leadership patriarchal. Democratic values start with the Vice-Chancellors, yet in many higher-education institutions, the VC is the most autocratic leader. This is unfortunate, even in terms of noble management practice. Equally, a research agenda that ignores the concerns and issues of the society in which the university is embedded is hardly promoting the characteristics of a vigorous and healthy democracy.

The current system of leadership seeks to provide females with equal employment opportunities. However, female leaders in higher education still have to navigate through numerous challenges because of historic discrepancies (Moody and Toni. 2015b: 10). It

is the role of government to promote equality and simultaneously guard against discrimination based on class, gender and sexual orientation. It is clear that in spite of educational advances, females are commonly employed in low-skilled positions in higher education.

2.6.1 THE INVISIBILITY OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND THE MASCULINITY OF POWER

According to the South African government's latest report on the status of females in South Africa, it is clear that in spite of educational advances, females are commonly employed in low-skilled professions. Gender inequality in South Africa differs across sectors, from 12th in the world in terms of political empowerment, to 83rd for economic participation, and 85th for educational attainment (Longman and Anderson 2016: 25). Even though statistical data is helpful, it is still inadequate. On the issue of females and leadership, words are more important, perhaps because the country has the figures and their power to speak often needs intensification. It is a fact that there are few female Chief Executive Officers (CEO), higher education management is slow to appoint females, and only the South African parliament can boast equality between men and females (Burke 2014: 336). In most cases, the figures paint a dismal picture, despite the triumphalism of our democracy.

The representation of females in government has made the world and the citizens of the country think that South Africa is doing much better than it really is in the leadership stakes. There are daily rows of females in parliament, some occupying prominent leadership positions. In the media, female leaders in the political and justice arena capture the imagination of the masses, who then congratulate the country on gender transformation. Of course, these accomplishments are essential, but in research and higher education, the picture seems very different, especially when one begins to disaggregate both females and leadership. The concern is whether all the demographic transformations translate to anything similar to equity in leadership. Even the positive achievements of females in government disguise the real relations of power within social and political movements. Hofmeyr and Govender (2015: 3) argue that questions concerning who has voice and agency, remain largely concealed. This is not to say that

females have not benefitted from the new institutional arrangements of the state after 1994, but to admit that this transformation is still a work in progress.

Ford 2016: 500) argues that black females, in particular, have suffered 'triple oppression': first, as deprived and marginalised in class terms; secondly as black in a racialised society that honours the white minority and thirdly as females in patriarchal African cultures. It seems that black females are also affected by the confirmation of Africanness which is a strong feature of existing politics because their promotion of pristine forms of African culture generally valorises patriarchal practices (Phakeng 2015: 1). This important return to heritage as a way of reinstating dignity to African identity sometimes portrays females in subject roles.

Feminism among Africans has also not advanced well because of its epistemological whiteness, which, clearly, has not had much purchase in South Africa. Feminism, therefore, often sets up a conflict between black and white females, because it has generally been soft on racial and class inequality (Chisale and Byrne 2018: 372). Behind the figures, there is an enquiry of the historical and contemporary status of females. I cannot speak for white females, but in universities, white females seem to have been the beneficiaries of democracy more than black African females. White females also rose to senior positions and even executive management positions, although there is a glass ceiling at the vice-chancellor level for almost all females.

Black females have had to work hard in to attain senior positions (Ibid: 380). However, it is clear that working hard is important, but it is not adequate in itself. Females have to be much better than men to land senior positions, they have to work harder, and this increasingly becomes a burden as more females attain senior positions because talented females are often constructed as ambitious rivals; and gender politics severely portrays them in patriarchal stereotypes, ridiculing their personalities to reduce their influence (Ibid: 362).

The 'Rhodes must fall' and the 'fees must fall' movement attacked the coloniality of power in universities, but there were no issues of gender equality being asserted during the movements. In this sense, gender was trumped by race, which currently tends to make

females compete with females and often leaves black African females at the back of the colonial convoy (Seale and FitzGerald 2016: 235). The invisibility of black African females in leadership and the masculinity of power needs to be challenged along with the coloniality of power in higher education and other sectors of the economy. Altering the numbers does not modify influence and leadership is not the outcome.

2.6.2 CURRENT SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

At the time of the changeover to democratic rule in 1994, South Africa's long, oppressive and conflict-ridden colonial and apartheid history left the higher education system deeply marked by its discriminatory and authoritarian inheritances (Higher Education South Africa 2014: 12). This included, inter alia, a system controlled along highly stratified racial, gender, class, cultural and spatial lines; lop-sided in its physical development; disproportionately financed; disarticulated from the most unrelenting economic and social needs of the majority; globally isolated and focused on the developed north with very few linkages with the developing world and the wider African continent (Higher Education South Africa 2014: 25). In short, the core common sense of this system was almost entirely opposed to the central beliefs of the new Constitution (1997: 5) that sought to create a non-racial, non-sexist, more equal and socially just social and economic order for South Africa (Higher Education South Africa 2014: 47).

At the time of the shift to democratic rule in 1994, South Africa's long, cruel and conflict-ridden colonial and apartheid history left a higher education system deeply marked by its discriminatory and authoritarian legacies. This included, inter alia, a system organised along highly stratified racial, gender, class, cultural and spatial lines; lop-sided in its structural development; unevenly financed; disarticulated from the most pressing economic and social needs of the mainstream population; and internationally isolated and engrossed on the industrialised north with very few linkages with the developing world and the wider African continent (Higher Education South Africa 2014: 48). In short, the essential reasons for this system were almost completely opposed to the central beliefs of the new Constitution (1997: 6) that sought to create a non-racial, non-sexist, equal and just social and economic order for South Africa.

Today, twenty-four years after the end of the apartheid system, higher education has shifted its physical characteristics, from a disjointed and organisationally racialised system of 36 public and more than 300 private institutions in 1994 to a relatively (at least formally) more integrated system of 26 public universities (traditional, comprehensive and universities of technology) and 95 private higher-education institutions in 2015 (Council on Higher Education 2014: 5).

Currently, more than 990 000 students are registered in the public higher education sector, and 120 000 in private institutions in the same sector, (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013: 22). The post-school education and training (PSET) sector is made up of more than 4 000 institutions. These are public and private higher education institutions (HEIs); public and private Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges; public and private Adult Education and Training (AET) Centres; and workplace-based education and training facilitated by Sector Education and Training Authorities (Higher Education South Africa 2014: 12).

Taken as a whole and associated with post-secondary education systems in similar developing countries, the South African system is similar to what is often referred to as an 'inverted pyramid' – dominated in size, funding and status by universities, with a badly deserted, ruptured and historically underfunded system of public and private sector colleges (Grant 2015: 172). This has only recently been fully documented by policymakers, as expressed in the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013: 30), which makes it clear that the long-term transformational requirements of the South African post-school education and training system need important reconstruction, integration and orderly development to address the socio-economic development needs of South Africa.

In 2017, higher education officials needed to deeply question how they are attempting to achieve unity and eradicate inequality in our universities. The realisation of Oliver Tambo's vision in higher education spaces demands the implementation of the transformation agenda in all efforts and engagements. The initiatives to eradicate inequality in all higher-education institutions lies in the ability of South Africans to understand that there is an urgent need to involve all genders for the radical

transformation agenda to be achieved. Transformation requires the absorption and the enablement of new players into the arena (Heleta 2016: 33). The responsibility just like opportunities requires all involved to step out of the ordinary and assume a radical and structural shift in developing an all-inclusive higher education in South Africa.

The crux of the transformation agenda rests on how more females can be given equal opportunities to lead and flatten the higher education landscape. For radical transformation to be successful in higher education, there is a need for deliberate interventions which require an intensive and collective effort from all players: higher education associations, private and public partners as well as aspirant new players. In this case, those new players are female leaders.

Therefore, this study will explore the leadership experiences of females in senior positions and bring to the fore the prevalent challenges which these females endure, as they negotiate a structure intensely rooted in a dominant ideology. The study will further observe how these females perceive their leadership experiences within their academic and administrative roles in order to shed light on the outstanding leadership experiences of females in their leadership roles as senior administrators and educators within higher education and to understand how their perceptions and experiences have an important impact on their present and future progression within the higher-education institution landscape in South Africa.

Given the lack of first-hand insight on the exceptional leadership experiences of female administrators and academics, there are areas, which are more important in critically analysing, detailing, and bringing voice to their experiences. The low numbers of females in senior positions in the academy intensifies the issue of equity and prospect in higher education in South Africa (Mate, McDonald and Do 2018: 857) These females have had a history of being sidelined and tracked into positions of low status, which prevented their route to senior leadership. Although there is a growth of such females taking up leadership positions, the issue of retention is serious in bringing voice to their experiences and strategies applied to remain and excel in leadership positions within academia.

The shortage of published literature does not infer a lack of activity of females in higher education in South Africa. The problem is that answers are narrow as it pertains to why there is an under-representation of females in senior positions, both in academics and administration; and we also need to examine access, the absence of females from disciplines and professions, and the factors in pre-tertiary education contributing to the low representation of females at the university level. Parker, Hewitt, Witheriff and Cooper (2018: 5) strongly argue that more female experiences, in their own words, are needed to get at female's constructions of their identities and self-images. It is, therefore, necessary to develop a better conceptual framework for addressing this important issue in the hope of developing potential strategies that might remedy the problem. Scholars have investigated some aspects of higher education, particularly cost, quality, and efficiency. It is time to examine the experiences of females and study gender equity in South Africa's educational system, both crucial avenues for female development. This difficult task needs policymakers and scholars to critically examine the real-life situation of females in higher education and modern society to obtain equity.

2.6.3 TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Despite, the transformative changes observed within and beyond the higher education sector in South Africa, it has become evident that policy reform alone is insufficient to realise the renewal and restoration required by a society, so steeped in inequality. It became clear that democratic departures, encased in transformative discourses are not enough to reach the lived experiences of female leaders.

In South African discussions on higher education, the term 'transformation' is commonly believed to refer to an all-inclusive, deep-rooted and ongoing social process in pursuit for the achievement of a fundamental reconstitution and development of our universities to mirror and promote the vision of a democratic society (Higher Education Transformation Network Report 2011: 7). This demands an immediate process of eliminating all forms of unfair discrimination and creating a higher education sector that gives full expression to the talents of all South Africans, particularly the marginalised and poor. The transformation of higher education thus refers to the active removal of any institutional, social, material and intellectual barriers in the way of creating a more equal, comprehensive and socially just higher education system. As such, my understanding of

the concept as a researcher is one of titling a range of social, economic, cultural and political conditions and their institutionalised settings that should be reconstructed if higher education is to fulfil its democratic mandates.

The strategically most substantial objects of HE transformation in South Africa, at the core, requires critical aspects, such as authority, management and leadership, student environment (access, success), staff environment (equity), institutional cultures, teaching and learning, research and information systems, institutional equity, and the political economy of higher education funding (Higher education South Africa 2014:2).

On the strength of the above, it is clear that one-dimensional or constricted formations of the concern and nature of higher education transformation cannot serve in our context. This was the case, for example, in the Equity Index Report (2013: 21), which provided what turned out to be a highly inconsistent and much questioned assessment of academic staff and staff equity, comparing this with research output, and projecting this as a measure of the state of transformation of universities. Whilst racial staff equity is essential for transformation, it has to be associated with, and facilitate the concurrent transformation of other dimensions of the system including gender, disability, and class, and the structures through which these relations are refereed. These take into consideration: curricula and epistemological frameworks; teaching; learning; research and engagement; student admission and success; governance and management; ethics of leadership; and the wider role of the university in society (Jordaan, van Heerden and Jordaan 2014: 1269).

A more complete framing of higher education transformation should unavoidably identify the interconnectivity and simultaneity of race, class, gender, disability and other markers of social consistency, and how such consistencies are constructed and reproduced in determinate relations of power and inequality in society and the economy (Badat 2020: 42). Therefore, this study rejects reductionist, essentialist and one-dimensional conceptions of transformation. In this study, the talk about the higher education system is suggestive of a more or less integrated, but inconsistent ecosystem involving different social relations, practices, traditions and cultures (Davids 2021: 240).

1.13.1.1 TRANSFORMATION CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Current Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, in his May 2015 budget speech in parliament, assured an uncompromising push for higher education transformation in the wake of numerous student-initiated movements, such as the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign at the University of Cape Town (UCT); the 'Open Stellenbosch' movement at Stellenbosch University (SUN); and transformation conflicts at North-West University (NWU) and the many 'fees must fall' protests in university campuses across the country. As Dr Nzimande stated, "Despite the importance of symbols, such as names and statues, we must not conflate these with more important matters of transformation. There remains an urgent need to completely change the demographics of our professoriate; transform the curriculum and research agendas; foster greater awareness of Africa; eradicate racism, sexism and all other forms of unjust discrimination; improve academic success rates; and expand student support" (Mouton, Louw and Strydom 2012: 1995).

Such a speech by Dr Nzimande clearly echoes strongly with the experiences of many black students and staff members at historically white universities, but they are by no means limited to these institutions. Higher-education institutions in South Africa, whether white or black, face the various, common, yet varied challenges of transformation. There have been notable breaks in the well-known glass ceilings to be found all across the sector, often steered by groups of academics, innovative managers, student organisations and leaders, however, there are also many other instances of intolerant and unacceptable practices living in the same system.

The transformation of HEIs is a process, and the term should not be used as an excuse for shifting responsibilities to an uncertain timeless future. Even changes that cannot be created in a short space of time have to begin somewhere, and that time is now. Taken as a whole, the state of change in the sector is extremely uneven, inconsistent and multifaceted ((Mouton, Louw and Strydom 2012: 1997). Thus, a better understanding of this landscape of change requires us to disaggregate the most vital areas in which a serious assessment should be made of the higher education's transformation balance sheet. This study believes that the most important areas include: the teaching and

learning environment; research and intellectual cultures; universities and their roles in society; the student environment; the staff environment; institutional cultures; governance, management and leadership; and funding and infrastructure.

Over a period of time, higher education has seen a steady change in its leadership form (Council of Higher Education 2016: 7). Leadership in higher education is very complex because it is different from other organisations, especially corporate institutions. Higher education in South Africa and globally is centralised on one person. It is effectively entrusted to and bestowed in a single person, the Rector or Vice Chancellor (VC). Additionally, it is based on personal authority, proficiency, experience, peer and professional knowledge and recognition (Funnell and Dao 2013: 300). Due to the ongoing transformation in UoTs, more females are being employed in positions of power, partly in line with government legislation that requires such inclusion (Sebola 2017: 180). UoTs are major social institutions, which produce the people who collectively act as catalysts for social change. The core of senior leadership in an academic institution is all about pursuing a certain line of scholarship rather than direction and control of academic work. This type of leadership could be shared with reciprocal support from staff, compromise decision-making and discussion with peers, as opposed to an organisational or rigid controlling environment or management.

The transformation has also been fired up by governments drive to restructure technikons into universities. A move towards becoming a university brings about a new emphasis on research, not previously held as important in the technikon context (Sebola 2017: 186). This has led to many technikons becoming universities and the consequential merger of two or more previously existing institutions have greatly transformed the South African higher education setting. This has also caused huge challenges for UoTs. It has implications for the kind of teaching and learning and research that is possible at these institutions (Luvalo 2019: 184), as well as impacting the leadership of these universities.

Current demands for transformation have been uttered in varied terms and come from a wide range of quarters, including students, academic and administrative staff and the broader public. They sometimes echo common themes and at other times raise institution-specific issues, often reflecting divergent views or points of emphasis. These

emerging voices, together with other serious voices in the sector, mark a significant moment in the history of the South African democracy, twenty seven years since South Africa's first democratic elections; a moment in which universities, possibly for the first time, are being compelled by progressive voices to gain greater courage, vision and commitment to both internally transform themselves to better reproduce the promise of the Constitution; to become supporters for a more socially just and equal social and economic order. In a sense, it could be contended that the existing legitimisation crisis of universities is also a valid crisis of the current social order.

It, therefore, comes to the front that due to different transformation requirements, policy instructions and the consequential societal structural transformation, the average academic leader felt overwhelmed by all this information, legislation, recommendations and requirements and did not know what was going on or where to start (Du Preez, Simmonds and Verhoef 2016: 66).

1.13.1.2 FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is disheartening that female leaders in higher education (after the abolishment of apartheid) still struggle to enter the very senior positions of universities. Although progress has been made, females today are still under-represented at South African universities of technology, particularly at the senior level. Out of 26 current Vice Chancellors in South Africa, it has been reviewed that only four are females. This amounts to a bleak 15.38 per cent (Moodly and Toni 2015a: 45).

Inescapable masculine attitudes, the lingering effects of apartheid and a female's childbearing responsibilities are the major challenges faced by female leaders as they climb the leadership ladder, and the statistics below show their situation has not improved much this past decade. Concerns of gender inequality in leadership have long been an important issue in universities of technology, as shown below:

Table 0.1 Vice-chancellors of UoTs in South Africa

University	Vice-chancellor	Male or female
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Dr Chris Nhlapho	Male
Tshwane University of Technology	Professor Tinyiko Maluleke	Male
Central University of Technology	Prof Henk de Jager (Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal)	Male
Durban University of Technology	Prof Thandwa Mthembu	Male
Vaal University of Technology	Proffessor Ntate Kgwadi	Male
Mangosuthu University of Technology	Professor Marcus Ramogale	Male

Source: Kele and Petersen (2015: 11)

There is no shortage of women with the skills required to lead at universities, but they are not ascending to leadership positions. South Africa has no women vice-chancellors out of 6 Universities of Technologies (Vice 2015: 46). According to the acting head at the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute, Dr Edith Phaswana, women are made to feel that they should be thankful just to be in the higher education sector and that they should not expect anything more (Naylor Jones and and Boateng 2019: 5). Phaswana said it was discouraging that academics had much to say when it was the government perpetuating inequalities, but that society learned about exclusion and inclusion from academia. “When it is reflected in our societies, we act as if we are surprised, but this is what academics live daily. We are all aware of the disparities according to race and gender, which continue in many of our universities. In terms of the workload, *“women pay a high price for unrewarded, unappreciated academic citizenship.”* (Naylor Jones and and Boateng 2019: 5).

At a webinar hosted by Higher Education Resource Services (Hers-SA), an organisation dedicated to development and leadership advancement in the higher education sector, and Universities South Africa (USAf), it emerged that since 2015 there have been 20 vacancies for vice-chancellors nationally and that only four women filled those positions (Bergmann, Conto and Brossard 2022: 28). “That tells us a story about how we view the role of women in higher education, particularly in leadership positions. This is something that we should not normalise (Ibid: 30). In 2020 we still have a picture that does not resemble the demographics of this country nor the demographics of higher education,” said the chair of the Transformation Managers Forum at USAf, George Mvalo. Mvalo added that there were more women in academia in terms of headcount and that more women held master’s degrees as their highest qualification than men (Makondo and Makondo 2014: 301). However, there are no female Vice Chancellors in UoTs currently. It is troubling that men have filled all vice-chancellor vacancies that were left by women over the past five years. “The argument that we cannot find women to lead universities is a blue lie, and it must be debunked” (Person, May and Mayer 2016: 135). There are more women than men in higher education. They are at deputy vice-chancellor, dean as well as head of department levels. So, there is enough capacity and talent that resides within UoTs but such women are not appointed to such senior leadership positions.” This is further explained by the graphics below:

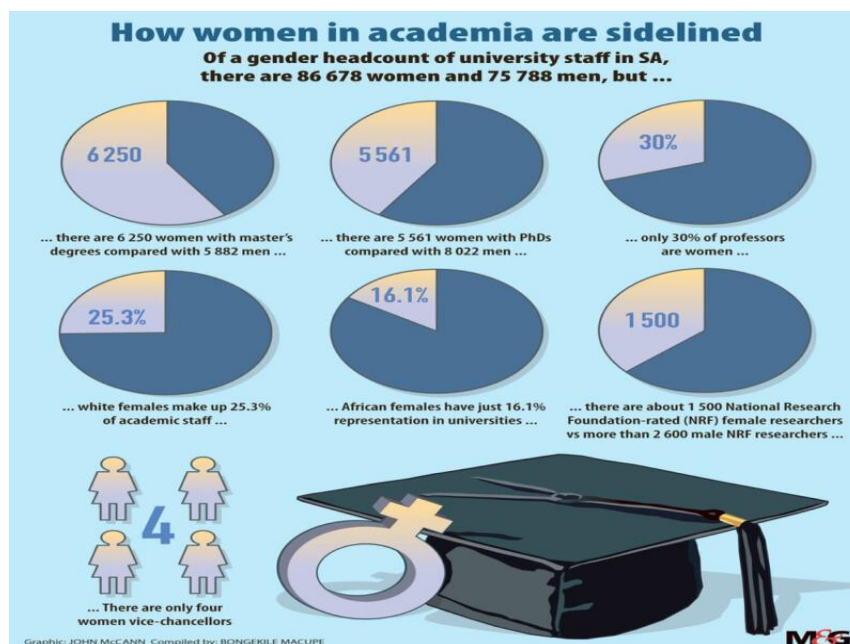


Figure 0.2 How women in academia are sidelined from senior leadership

Source: Makupe 2020: 3)

It is disappointing that female leaders who have navigated through numerous challenges as leaders still find it difficult to celebrate their leadership development and success. What is even more upsetting is that the institutions where these females lead do not celebrate or acknowledge what these leaders contribute to academia (Mayer, Surtee and Mahadevan 2018: 877). It is not a secret that some females (especially, black females) in senior positions become symbols of diversity and inclusion and they lead by default and not by choice (Cook and Glass 2016: 447). The success of female leaders is not always appreciated without being associated with past apartheid marginalisation, a result of affirmative action and tokenism. Female leaders who raise their distresses about these issues are often accused of being sensitive or playing the race card. When entering higher-education institutions to lead, females repetitively face conditions that require them to expose these myths or reveal the stereotypical imageries society has forced on them. This leaves them with no room to show and self-actualise as individuals (Hoyt and Simon 2016: 46). It is true that some females suffer from inherited racial and gender stigmas which continue to hinder their ability to find their identity and reveal agency in their quest for self-actualisation and success.

It is disturbing that most institutions of higher education go about their daily business without pausing to look into the concerns of gender, intersectionality, privilege and race or consider the importance of cultural diversity (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017: 78). This results in females in senior positions unconsciously because institutions are not aware of or choose to ignore the impact of privilege on their decisions. South African society's colour- and gender-blind culture is entrenched the apartheid system that marginalised females during apartheid.

Two decades ago, South Africa entered a new era of democracy. The early euphoria has been tempered by the hard work that followed in transforming and rebuilding the major social institutions of the country to address the gigantic challenges of inequality, poverty and the need for economic growth. Higher education remains, as it was then, central to the projects of modernisation, transformation and renewal in the country, just as it too is subject to those same forces (Ibid). In that encouraging year of 1994, more societies became modernised, and more agents acquired the ability to reflect on the social

conditions of higher education's existence and to implement change where necessary. The importance in a democracy is the ability to develop and analyse policy, and to influence the interventions that are designed to bring about a healthy and productive higher education environment (Govinder and Makgoba 2021: 109). Not only is higher education important in and of itself, but it is an indicator of societal content or discontent, as academics and students are perhaps the freest agents in democratic societies to think, reflect and act (Liu 2015: 80). It became pertinent at this juncture, therefore, to take stock of higher education in South Africa; to reflect on its leadership achievements, its shortcomings, its contradictions and its various roles and purposes, and to apply the wisdom of reflection, such that we may look forward more clearly to a re-imagined future.

Higher education has never been more unstable than it currently is in two decades into democracy. Despite the many advances and achievements of higher education outlined above, the student protests of 2015 and early 2016 have given expression to underlying faultiness in quite an intense way (DoE White Paper 3 1997 para .5 line 1). The pressures of deteriorating underfunding in the context of enrolment growth and snowballing of student expectations and frustrations with respect to access and financial aid, have led to gaps in the system (CHE 2014: 95) In addition to underfunding, the academic staff's confined capacity is a further crack in the foundations that threatens to widen and negatively impact the quality of provision. Instantaneous solutions to the particular crisis that higher education finds itself in need to be found but it is vital that any future course of action is informed both by a balanced analysis of empirical data, and reflection on and understanding of the directions, trends and routes of the system in the past DHET (2013: 297). The triumphs and limitations of policy in steering the system, the reactions of the system to global trends to which it is susceptible, and the agency of institutions in shaping the system, are all aspects which lend themselves to cautious unpacking from various angles, in order that the past may inform the future.

More than twenty years ago, South Africa entered the new age of democracy. The initial bliss of democracy has been mitigated by the hard work that followed in transforming and rebuilding the major higher-education institutions of the country to address the gigantic challenges of inequality, poverty and the necessity for economic growth. Higher education in South Africa today remains vital to the plans of transformation and

regeneration in the country. The importance of higher education in a democracy is to develop the ability to reflect on, analyse policy, and influence the interferences that are designed to bring about a strong and dynamic society (CHE 2013:7). This shows that not only is higher education important in itself, but it is a gauge of public content or dissatisfaction, as researchers, academics and students are possibly the unrestricted agents in democratic societies to think, redirect and act.

Thus, it is apposite at this stage, to look at higher education in South Africa; to reflect on its achievements, its shortcomings, its incongruities and its various roles and purposes, and to apply the wisdom of retrospection, such that we may advance more clearly to a re-imagined future. For the relevance of this study, which is nested in higher education, UoTs are the major forces needed to build a complete and diverse knowledge society and to advance research, innovation and creativity (Choi and Rainey 2014: 307). Kgobe and Baatjes (2014: 2), reiterate that higher education has a vital role to play in contributing to the growth and development of an information society and human resource development in South Africa. It is therefore vital to explain what leadership is and how it is important in higher education.

2.7 CONCEPTUALISING LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a concept that is closely related to the management or administration of organisations (del Carmen, Triana, Miller and Trzebiatowski 2014: 610). According to Northouse (2012: 23), both leadership and management involve working with individuals and are related to the influence over groups of individuals and to the achievement of goals. However, different writers coincide in mentioning the importance of differentiating between the two ideas (Eagly 2013: 6). While management and administration are related to discipline, order and solidity, leadership is associated with creative thought, tolerance of vagueness and the desire to generate constructive change. This work focuses on the study of the participation of females in senior management positions in organisations, which require a great deal of leadership capacity. We will use both terms practically interchangeably, without insisting on the differences that exist between them.

Leadership and management often go hand in hand in many studies. Although they are not the same thing, they are however linked and paired most of the time. Efforts to separate the two has caused more problems than it solves. Still, many researchers spent

a lot of their time explaining the differences between the two. The manager's job is to plan, organise and coordinate and the leader's job is to inspire and motivate (Sharma and Jain 2013: 309). According to Northouse (2009: 23), "leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent". This means that leadership is a process whereby an individual inspires a group of individuals to achieve a mutual goal.

It is thought-provoking to observe how in any auditorium when both females and men are asked to mention a leader, most people generally answer with the name of a male leader. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Winston Churchill and Barrack Obama, among others, are names that are linked with the word leadership, and all are male. Even though throughout history, certain females such as Joan of Arc, Winnie Mandela, and Mother Theresa have become important figures and leaders. In general, females have lacked the freedom to be able to develop their beliefs and ideas. This lack of freedom has served as an obstacle to the rise of females with the same qualities and potential as many male leaders. 'Power' belongs to men, and they take advantage of their power and freedom to implement their thoughts and ideas, both politically, socially and economically (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto 2017: 319386)

Van Dierendonck and Sousa (2016: 403) explain leaders need to define where they want the institution to go and how they plan on getting there. To know their direction, effective leaders must measure, analyse, strategise, assess and implement accordingly. However, to achieve such success in leadership performances, there needs to be a shift from hierarchical methodologies to leadership styles that inspire shared governance and enable staff empowerment. Therefore, effective leadership is not just the result of obtaining a position, but rather having the knowledge and understanding of successful leadership skills along with the peculiar ability to effectively implement those skills (Ibid: 405).

2.7.1 LEADERSHIP: WHAT HAS GENDER GOT TO DO WITH IT?

There is much literature that has highlighted how barriers or obstacles stifle women leaders in organisations. Aspects such as education are among factors that suppress

women aspiring to go up the leadership ladder. Although there are instances in traditional society where women are perceived unequal to men, they are crucial in ensuring a working society. Afasi (2010: 229) underscores the key role that African women play in the education of children as well as the transmission of moral values. Furthermore, Afasi (Ibid) points out that in traditional African societies the 'woman possessed the power that binds the society together. Afasi (Ibid: 230) argues that colonialism was the root of gender equality in Africa. During colonialism, women's complementary role to man changed to that of women subordination. When African cultures met the Europeans cultures, they encountered cultures where men were more powerful and dominant in social structures. Afasi also succinctly captures how colonialism demeaned the roles of women: the faces of African society on gender equality changed owing to the influence of colonialism. Women began to suffer oppression from men. The shackles imposed by law, custom, religion and attitudes forced women to play the second fiddle. In fact, women mostly remained relegated to the last rung of the social and political ladder. Women no longer were giving the opportunity to exercise any power except those supervised by men. Chukwu (2015: 38) contends that although the traditional society was patriarchal, there were gender specific roles, which complemented male roles. As pointed out above, colonialism and Western ways destroyed the traditional power of the African woman. The Western schools that were introduced and the type of work offered altered the role of women in African societies. Salim (2014: 714) contends that in traditional society women had an active role in sustaining the family. This author also points out that it had been suggested recently that women were inventors of agriculture. In the pre-colonial era, communities were mainly agricultural in which women played a crucial role. As people closer to the earth, various ceremonies and rituals in Africa needed the woman's role. Linked to Mother Nature, women were instrumental in growing and nurturing communities. Many researchers (Kawatra and Krishnan 2004: 6). demonstrate opposition to African traditional societies for demeaning the role of women. Northhouse (2016: 55). writes about traditional African women who are forced to be passive and submissive in marriage. Whilst Singh and Singh (2014: 247) writes about how African societies are biased against women as they are gender insensitive. Such researchers overlook the damage done by Western influences in post-colonial African villages. The Western influence created barriers for women in leadership. It is unfortunate that many people assume that the status of women in Africa is reflective of their status in traditional

African societies Nyanhongo (2011: 76). However, colonialism introduced barriers for women in various aspects of life. In Chinua Achebe's novels, such as *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart*, one can see how the women's role complements that of men, albeit in a seemingly patriarchal society. After colonialism though the scenario changed (Ibid). Elmuti, Jia and Davis (2009: 167). write about numerous obstacles that remain in preventing women from obtaining high levels of leadership. Among the obstacles they highlight are organisational barriers, workplace relationships, globalisation, internal motivation and lifestyle conflicts. Women have various other roles they need to play outside the workplace. They are caretakers for their families and work roles may clash with domestic roles. Kanyoro (2006: 111). also points out that women's leadership has been invisible over decades because it has been viewed through 'gender-biased lenses. Furthermore, Kanyoro argues that the challenge of society is to make women leadership visible as society magnifies women leaders' role (Ibid). This includes ensuring that women pioneer in leadership have space and voice to practice their leadership in positions that commensurate with their skills. Singh and Prasad mention sexual harassment and stereotypes as being among the foremost hindrances to women leaders (Singh and Prasad 2014: 53).

2.7.2 LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Before the experiences of female leaders absorb the study, it is important to start by defining the concept of leadership. The term leadership has been defined by numerous scholars and up to date, many definitions have been suggested. What Eagly and Chin (2010: 220) are saying is that leadership is about creating the right environment for individuals to develop as leaders. It is also about communicating clearly and successfully. Njeri Mwagiru (2019: 117) states that leadership involves three important tasks: (a) creating a holding environment (an environment that assists in the achievement of goals), (b) guiding, caring, orienting, dealing with conflict and shaping norms, and (c) upholding presence and dignity (Ibid: 119) Respectable leadership is about ensuring harmony and consistency of decisions up and down the line. Academic leadership is a special case of general leadership in as much as it refers to leadership in an academic setting or institution. There is also a need to explain the different settings present in academic institutions (whilst being likened to private or public sector organisations. Private organisations are guided uniquely by concerns of maximising shareholder value. The

government agencies and public sector organisations are guided by concerns of exploiting the value to stakeholders, which includes the community at large. In academic institutions, maximising stakeholder value speak of maximising value to stakeholders such as the students, workforce, community and agencies responsible for funding. As a result, the stakeholders in academic institutions are more diverse. These distinct features of academic institutions pose a different set of challenges to leadership. This means that although academic leadership has common qualities with leadership in general, there are special challenges involved in higher education leadership.

Twenty-seven years into democracy, higher education in South Africa is still a society in transition (Fitzgerald 2018: 54). The higher education system in the country is still processing change from being disjointed and segregated, to a representative and democratic one, guided by countless policies. Within this facilitative environment, the issue of female leadership when speaking about leadership is now common in many boardrooms. Previously, leadership has been blamed in many instances where things have gone wrong yet very little was said about it.

2.7.3 LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FOR FEMALES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Females working in higher education globally face similar problems as stipulated in Figure 2.3. There are also the issues of patriarchy, low research output; the absence of females in research and the burden of females are among the most important factors delaying females from making significant progress in higher education. Hong (2018: 345) however reveal that South African female leaders have achieved remarkable successes in higher education although much remains to be done to address the challenges that still hamper their full leadership participation.

The researcher is of the view that the challenges facing females and female leaders in higher education are not unbeatable. Promotion is connected to research output in universities. The over-emphasis of research output in higher-education institutions is one of the main causes of female under-representation in the higher levels of academia. Janes, Carter and Rourke (2020: 35) explain if females are not publishing as effectively as their male counterparts, they are susceptible to being denied promotion to senior levels. This, therefore, means that gender equity in higher-education institutions should

be tied to building research capacity through mentoring and other revolutions. Universities can stimulate gender diversity in research teams through a range of incentives or through the implementation of conditions for awarding research grants on the basis of gender diversity. Females should set the research agenda on females in higher education, as this will guarantee that their stories are told from their perspectives. Institutions also need to re-examine their promotional conditions to focus on the value of individuals' research outputs and their publications, rather than quantity. Most importantly, however, the growth and implementation of policy without the effort of the people it affects will not produce the desired results; therefore, females should be at the forefront of policy design that seeks to achieve gender parity in higher education institutions. Female leaders throughout their careers face many barriers because of various practices that occur at different stages of organisational structures. In addition, the different terms as illustrated in Figure 2.3 show how females are marginalised in senior leadership roles where the responsibility for leading and managing the entire organisation lies (Kataeva and DeYoung 2017: 250). Hence, female career development will be hindered by organisational practices that are supported by deeply entrenched assumptions of men as natural leaders. Females are seen not only as inappropriate for leadership, but also as unacceptable if, they attempt to show stereotypically "masculine" leadership behaviours (Ibid: 253). What appears to be gender-neutral rules related to everyone are actually words of the gendered university; a place in which the terms of hire, term and promotion, salary negotiation, and advancement to leadership positions are based on an out-dated male breadwinner model (Moodly 2021: 185). Females are systematically disadvantaged in this male-normed environment because they present a dissimilar lived experience (Ibid: 186).

This study addresses the gendered nature of higher-education institutions. It draws on lived experiences of females already in senior positions. It is very important to try to find answers to what should be the right target for female representation in higher education, what is the right objective and how fast can we attempt to get there but more importantly, to find out the difficulties that senior leaders experience and explain the reason for the persistent gender imbalance in higher education. According to the Gallagher and Morison (2019: 3), many obstacles contribute to the absence of females in senior leadership. The occurrence of "glass cliffs" is another danger to females entering senior positions.

Females are favoured for positions that are in crisis, creating a situation in which exhaustion or failure is a probable risk (Ibid: 4). Females who push through the glass ceiling are seen as appropriate candidates to take over in crises. Due to the narrow support network around them, females often find these roles highly demanding, so they often leave their positions. This exodus is often attributed to the female's lack of abilities or her reluctance to commit to the hard work needed at senior levels of leadership. Contrary to this claim that females who leave jobs are not committed to hard work, research has verified that 90% of females who leave their employment find work elsewhere, 70% of which is full-time (Monnapula-Mapesela, M. 2017: 69). Despite these inspiring figures, a consequence of a female's choice to leave is often a lateral move to a corporation where she must establish herself again.

2.7.4 METAPHORS OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Currently, there are more female leaders in higher education than in previous times. There are even more female leaders as heads of state and in other governmental roles. Females have also advanced in corporate leadership and are gradually successful in academic achievements and education. Attitudes toward females in leadership have also changed, as feminine features are now recognised together with traditionally masculine ones in leaders. Current studies show that male leaders are no longer perceived as being more effective than female leaders (Carli and Eagly 2016: 514).

Despite these improvements, there is still a gap between men and females, such as the pay gap and under-representation of females in senior leadership positions. Females are still perceived as having characteristics unsuited to leadership roles; females are promoted less often than men are and are offered risk promotions that have a higher chance of failure than men do. Females also receive less support in terms of mentors and improvement. New universities are currently more likely to have a male VC than a female one. All this happens in spite of legislative developments, improvements in family rights, the role of childcare and other domestic tasks in favour of females. However, more challenges are faced by female leaders which affect the way in which females lead. Men are also becoming harsher in judging females in terms of employment and advancement. Females are seen to do better in junior mid-level leadership roles and female-dominated

jobs. They are also more likely to be widespread in leadership roles in non-profit than for-profit organisations (Carli and Eagly 2016: 514).

Although there has been great progress made by females in leadership roles, there is still a long way to go before there is equality with men (Krishnan and Szczepura 2020: 1033). There are many challenges that females may face throughout their career paths. There is no direct path to leadership with obstacles at the beginning or end of the path, but a curving path with a variety of barriers to overcome along the way (Morgenroth, Kirby, Ryan and Sudkämper 2020: 800). The labyrinth metaphor is a valuable one, as it can reveal the erratic degrees of obstacles at different levels and different possible routes to successful leadership (Carli and Eagly 2016: 514). The journey can be more or less multifaceted. Females can still navigate effectively through a labyrinth, but it still takes more time and comprises more obstacles than the path to leadership faced by men. Unlike a glass ceiling that could be shattered, or a sticky floor, which could be removed, the labyrinth metaphor will remain appropriate until there is equality in leadership roles between men and females (Moody and Toni. 2019: 407).

Metaphorical language triggers much of our daily language and helps to organise opinions and experiences. While there are numerous metaphors used to explain the challenges faced by females advancing in the workplace, there are only rare ones that relate specifically to females in leadership and career progression. Females as leaders have made great progress over the past decade but still face many challenges – they still do not have equality with males. This section of the study will describe available metaphors that explain the challenges faced by female leaders. ‘Sticky floor’ and ‘glass ceiling’ do not fully represent the conditions of females as leaders. The term “labyrinth” best illustrates the challenges and opportunities of females.

To explain why females are so poorly represented in senior leadership positions in higher education, a growing body of research has studied the barriers female leaders face in accessing leadership and accomplishing their roles (Shinbrot, Wilkins, Gretzel, and Bowser 2019: 125). An investigation conducted by Eagly and Chin (2010: 216) found that females in senior leadership positions believed the indistinguishable and invisible barriers they faced were a lack of mentors, the good old boy network, gender inequalities, and

sluggish career paths. Studies on female leadership have also found that females may experience imbalanced employment opportunities and role conflict as well as patriarchal arrogances towards females (Surawicz 2016: 1433). These issues stem from culture, whether local or western and have created a glass ceiling (Toni and Moodly 2019: 175). for females who want career progression into senior leadership positions. The glass ceiling effect, societal barriers, and institutional barriers are the main identified barriers that females face on their journey toward senior leadership.

2.7.4.1 THE GLASS CEILING METAPHOR

Although there have been intensive efforts both globally and nationally to improve females' positions in higher education, gender disparities still exist especially regarding participation in senior areas of higher education leadership. Policies such as the White Paper on Education (1997: 55), the White Paper on Science and Technology and the National Plan for Higher Education 2001 are usually cited as providing females with support to accomplish postgraduate qualifications (Surawicz 2016: 1434) which enable them to apply for senior leadership positions. Nevertheless, Shinbrot, Wilkins, Gretzel, and Bowser 2019: 125) mentions that females in academia tend to cluster at the bottom of the organisational structure as junior staff members, research assistants and tutors – positions that render them an unrepresented and voiceless minority that contributes very little to the vision of higher-education institutions. Numerous studies have been carried out in South Africa to explore a variety of gender disparities in higher education. Researchers such as Monnapula-Mapesela (2017: 70; Naicker 2013: 325 and Boughey, and McKenna 2017: 968)) point out that the struggle for females in higher education is still ongoing. This suggests that there is a need to forge ahead by exploring the challenges that females still face in this context. Such serious reflection is the catalyst on which future recommendations and policies may be built and constructed.

Although more females are achieving leadership positions within higher-education institutions due to gender equity legislation, the unseen pressure of the glass ceiling phenomenon continues to add stressful advancement barriers to females' work environment currently. Working females feel the stress of having to choose between work and home commitments, particularly when offered leadership opportunities within the upper level of their workplace. The continuation of this glass ceiling is a significant factor

as to why females are not accomplishing senior positions within higher education or the reason why those females in senior positions are leaving the positions of leadership. Females are trailing behind because of gender associations and expectations. This problem is complex and needs to be understood from many angles.

To understand the barriers identified by female leaders in higher education this literature review will define the term coined the glass ceiling effect. According to the United States Department of Labour, the glass ceiling is defined as those fake barriers based on attitudinal or organisational unfairness that prevent qualified individuals from progressing in their organisation to senior and executive positions (Department of Labour 1995: 7).

The purpose of the goals was to identify the barriers that existed, where they existed, and strategies to combat them. Additionally, the perception of the glass ceiling is often a barrier that challenges previously disadvantaged groups in addition to females when trying to reach senior leadership positions in higher education. In most cases, the discrimination is not transparent, but it is extensively accepted as an off-the-record policy.

To understand the restricted movement of females into senior positions of leadership, concepts such as the “glass ceiling” have come into wide use. The term is normally used to describe the invisible barrier that blocks females' chances of further promotion or advancement up the corporate ladder. The glass ceiling is not simply a barrier for specific females, but it also applies to females as a group (Bombuwela and Chamaru 2013: 5), who are kept from advancing simply because they are females. Understated, indirect obstacles because of labelling or stereotyping place obstacles in the career paths of many females. There are many causes of the glass ceiling for females. One important cause is occupational segregation. The labour market, and especially senior leadership positions, remain segregated by gender (Hendra, FitzGerald and Seymour. 2013: 107). Females in senior positions are largely concentrated in specific areas, such as personnel, public relations, and even finance specialities, which seldom lead to the most influential senior or executive management posts. The path to power generally taken by executives is that of the business mainstream, a field within which the numbers of females remain largely small. While there are indeed females who have reached senior and executive

leadership positions, they are often viewed, given their scarcity, as simply tokens so that institutions cannot be indicted of discrimination.

Moodly and Toni (2017a: 140) contends, that not only do individuals doubt that females possess the appropriate competencies but also, they may dislike the overturning of the expected and usual hierarchical relation between the sexes due to the shattering of the glass ceiling. Brunner and Kim (2010: 276) in their study on female superintendents' climb to leadership noted that females took five years longer than men did to attain their first administrative post and that females were less likely to achieve senior executive positions such as the Vice Principal or Principal positions which provided the experience expected for executive leadership positions. Interestingly, these researchers found that once females obtained the superintendence position, there was no difference in their efficiency and performance as compared to their male counterparts who had been prepared for the position (Moodly and Toni 2017b: 158).

In a study by Davis and Maldonado (2015: 3550), the researchers discovered that in spite of the barriers female leaders encountered, they performed proficiently in an environment where inequities, negative norms and doubts were predominant. Even through hardship, the female leaders carried out their duties but often in an atmosphere where they regularly had to prove themselves. However, these female leaders persevere and continue to demonstrate their ability to rise above and perform with firmness.

However, females consistently earn less money than men in almost every industry (Naidoo, 18, July, 27). Lathabhavan and Balasubramanian (2017: 232) for example, reported on the gender wage gap in twenty-six European countries, considering the twelvemonthly earnings and hourly wages. In all these countries, females earned less than men did, and in only two countries females reported higher wages than those of men. South African researchers Searby, Ballenger and Tripses (2015: 99) reported that in 2007 the percentage of the average male wages is far higher than that of females. Females are still having glass ceiling problems because of the "barriers (they) often face as they climb corporate ladders" (Bendl and Schmidt 2010: 612). Despite progress with understanding the glass ceiling, this taxonomy of theory-based insights on glass ceiling shows that females still face numerous challenges as they attempt the leadership route.

Many females are still struggling with promotional policies and practices that suggest equality, but simply promote the importance of sameness for females and men when it comes to professional assessment. Some studies cloud the issue by grouping females in the studied group with token gender differences or attempts to eliminate the glass ceiling and work-home balance “by taking gender out of the equation” (Wohlbold and Chenier 2011: 14). Females are expected to adopt male stream behaviours to be considered effective leaders. They are not celebrating females’ dissimilarities in doing work and how she might present herself as an effective leader. That does not deliver effective solutions for organisations or females. Current studies need to find solutions for females in senior leadership positions and organisational brainwashing when it comes to understanding the requirements of senior positions and their own career options (Martin and Barnard. 2013: 20). Females need to be able to safely work hard, be grounded with motivation (Cha 2013: 12) in setting development goals and feel like they have no unfavourable gender barriers. Furthermore, this study will briefly discuss the labyrinth metaphor as a barrier faced by female leaders.

2.7.4.2 THE LABYRINTH METAPHOR

The purpose of this section of the research is to explore the most common general metaphor for women’s leadership: the labyrinth. Although other metaphors like the glass ceiling metaphor implies that women face obstacles once they have ascended to very high levels of leadership and the sticky floor metaphor suggests that women are prevented from any advancement beyond entry level; the labyrinth, however, reflects the numerous obstacles that women face throughout their careers. Carli and Eagly 2016: 514). If one has misdiagnosed a problem, then one is unlikely to prescribe an effective cure. This is the situation regarding the scarcity of women in senior leadership in higher education. Eagly, Alice and Carli, Linda (2007: 62) coined the term labyrinth as the most useful metaphor for women leaders in higher education, because although there has been slow steady improvement in women’s access to leadership, women continue to face challenges that men do not face: gender stereotypes that depict women as unsuited to leadership, discrimination in pay and promotion, lack of access to powerful mentors and

networks and greater responsibility for childcare and other domestic responsibilities

Figure 15.1 Understanding the Leadership Labyrinth



(Ibid). The labyrinth provides a more nuanced metaphor that centres on females' career journeys as a whole, not just at the height of their career, like the glass ceiling, or at the beginning of their career path, like the sticky floor. It suggests females face obstacles during the course of their careers whereby, there can be problematic winding paths to **CAPITAL DIFFERENCES, GENDER DIFFERENCES, AND PREJUDICE.**

Northouse, 2016: 99

take, dead ends or disappointments along the way, and it can take time. However, it is possible to navigate a successful path to the centre and reach high levels of leadership, and it is also possible for others to follow their paths to success. It is not as impossible to penetrate as the glass ceiling metaphor, in that it suggests females can reach the top leadership positions. The invisible barrier named the glass ceiling has turned to an alternative image of a labyrinth which is a passage through a journey riddled with challenges all along the way-not just near the top-that can and has been successfully navigated by women (Northouse 2016: 399) This picture of a labyrinth leads us to the question that we all ask which is why are women underrepresented in senior leadership roles?

With that said, women have less human capital investment in education, training, and work experience than men. This gap is largely due to the work-home conflict obstacle that women face with their responsibility for taking care of their children. As stated in Northouse (2016: 400), choosing “mommy track” positions do not funnel into leadership positions. In addition, the leadership gap revolves around gender biases stemming from

stereotyped expectations that women take care and men take charge (as cited in Northouse (2016: 404). This leads to women feeling less qualified when this is the perception. Gender biases can be unfavorable in the decision-making process for selecting elite leaders being the decision makers are influenced by the stereotypes and choose to hire others similar to themselves which is an organizational barrier.

Now that we have gone over the barriers that leader to the underrepresentation, how do women break the through these barriers that are in organizations and society today? In order to break barriers, women would have to counter the essence of what is holding women back from raising to elite roles. Women must build their social networks to be successful leaders, push for higher salaries, and promote themselves which will all show self-confidence and increase the likelihood of rising to the top. Also, Eagly's meta-analysis results on gender and leadership showed that women leaders tend to use participative/democratic versus men using autocratic/directive styles, female leaders are seen more negatively in male dominated leadership roles, and woman leaders seen more negatively when they lead in masculine styles (PSU WC 2019: 12). While showing signs of femininity is good, women must also assertively take charge and demonstrating competence. All of these actions will increase the number of female Fortune 500 CEOs as we can see is already rising reaching 33 in 2019 (Zillman 2019: 2).

According to Carli and Eagly (2016: 515), the best of intentions has misread the symptoms, and solutions that managers are investing in are not making enough of a difference. That there is a problem is not in doubt. Despite years of progress by women in higher education (as indicated in the Table 2.2), women leaders still remain remain as rare as hens' teeth (Maphalala and Mpofu 2017: 9216). Even those few women who have risen steadily through the ranks eventually crashed into an invisible barrier and seemed to fail to break through the glass ceiling. The women in senior positios are usually labelled as erratic and emotional. Men are erratic and emotional, too, but in a culture where such opinions were widely held, women have almost no chance of attaining or staying in influential leadership roles. Most of them are pushed out and replaced by a male or if they are black, replaced by a white candidate. This brings me to think of the former University of Cape Town female Vice-Chancellor Mamokgethi Phakeng who was just offered a R12 million retirement package to vacate her post. Phakeng said she had first turned down a settlement for stepping down but had "come to realise that her position

was unsustainable”, (Nkayeni 3 March 2023: 1). Phakeng was labelled as an intellectually arrogant leader on a live show (Ibid).

Times have changed, however, and the glass ceiling metaphor is now more wrong than right as it describes an absolute barrier at a specific high level in organizations. The fact that there have been female university Vice Chancellors in the past, who navigated through the challenges, made their leadership mark and took a bow out is commendable (Moorosi 2019: 145). At the same time, the glass ceiling metaphor implies that women and men have equal access to senior leadership positions; which of course is not true. The image of a transparent institutional culture also suggests that women are being misled about leadership opportunities; making females look naïve. Worst of all, by illustrating a single, consistent obstacle, the glass ceiling fails to incorporate the complexity and variety of challenges that women can face in their leadership journeys. In truth, women are not turned away only as they reach the pinnacle of leadership in their distinguished careers. They disappear in various numbers at many points leading up to that stage.

There is no direct path to leadership with obstacles at the beginning or end of the route, but a winding path with a variety of barriers to overcome along the way (Morley and Crossouard (2016: 149). The labyrinth metaphor is a useful one, as it can reveal varying degrees of obstacles at different levels and different potential routes to successful leadership. The journey can be more or less multifaceted. Females can still successfully navigate through a labyrinth, but it still takes more time and contains more obstacles than the path to leadership that men face (Ibid: 150). Unlike a glass ceiling, which could be broken through or a sticky floor, which could be removed, the labyrinth metaphor will remain suitable until there is equal opportunity in leadership roles between males and females.

The labyrinth metaphor matters because like other metaphors, bring out a part of the storytelling that can compel change in higher education institutions. If higher education wants to make better progress in female leadership, it needs to rename the challenges faced by females and tackle them. This goes to say that metaphors as the glass ceiling are fast losing their value, since there are currently more females in leadership in higher

education today. However, such females do not last in their posts (just like Pakeng) due to the challenges they face in universities. The glass ceiling precludes the possibility that females can overcome barriers and become leaders and fails to suggest that thoughtful problem solving can enable females' paths to leadership (Eagly and Carli 2007: 2). As females began to break through the glass-ceiling barrier, Eagly and Carli presented the idea of the labyrinth. The labyrinth implies more of a maze that females can navigate through, but they can ultimately reach the end (Morley and Crossouard 2016: 152).

To conclude, women cannot be expected to tear down the labyrinth on their own (Carli and Eagly 2016: 527). There are also external conditions that will finalize the obstacle to be broken. Organizations have to reduce barriers that favor men over women, men have to share more fully in domestic responsibilities, and society in general has to have a more open and inclusive understanding of what a good leader is (Ibid).

2.7.4.2.1 TRAVERSING THE LABYRINTH

Females navigate a more complex web of challenges that men do along their leadership journeys. Originally termed the glass ceiling, the new metaphor of a leadership labyrinth does not imply that everyone has equal access to lower positions until they hit the unforeseen barrier, but rather it suggests a journey riddled with challenges that can be successfully navigated. Within the leadership labyrinth, females come across multifaceted barriers that not only result in a lack of numerical parity between women and men in leadership but also dire gender differences in the nature of leadership positions. For example, research into the glass cliff shows that females, relative to men, are preferentially appointed to precarious leadership positions coupled with greater risks and criticism (Ryan 2016: 56).

Many obstacles that females come across stem from often-inequitable divisions of domestic labour and the structure and culture of current organisations (Eagly and Carli 2007: 64). Domestic and child-rearing expectations enforce an added burden on females climbing the leadership ladder. Females' participation in the paid labour force has increased intensely since the 1960s; however, females continue to do the majority, though not all, of the second shift of unpaid domestic labour (Bierema 2016: 119). Similarly, organisational factors can present key barriers to females in leadership; for

example, females are less likely than men to hold more visible line roles, have more responsibility, and often feed into senior leadership positions. Even when females are in similar positions to men, females often have fewer responsibilities, are less likely to receive formal job training, and are less likely to be involved in important networks. Moreover, females confront greater barriers to creating critical mentor relationships than men do (Powell 2014: 249).

Some of the most malicious hurdles females face stem from prejudice and stereotypical thinking. Explicit biases against females in top leadership positions have decreased dramatically over the last half-decade. However, there remain prevailing, and perhaps even more malicious, subtle biases that work to undermine the tenets of meritocracy and limit female access to power (Hoyt and Simon 2017: 22). The deeply entrenched stereotypic beliefs that females take care and men take charge give rise to crafty biases against female leaders (Eagly and Carli 2007: 67). Research Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Ristikari 2011: 616) demonstrates that “people's intuitive notions of leaders are culturally masculine”. According to the role congruity theory and the lack of fit model, bias against female leaders emerges from the contradictory expectations between the female gender role and the leader role (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr 2014: 1129). This bias results in less favourable attitudes toward female leaders than male leaders and females experiencing greater struggle than men in attaining top leadership roles and being viewed as effective in these roles.

Though these prejudices are hard for many of us to notice, both in ourselves and in others, social scientists have devised tools to do just that. In one clever experimental approach to revealing gender bias, people are asked to evaluate identical information, such as resumes, with one catch: Half the people are told it is a man's resume, the other half, a female's (Sandberg and Scovell 2013: 5). Overwhelmingly, when evaluating candidates for leadership positions, identical qualifications are deemed "better" or "more commendable" when there *is* a male name attached (Yang, T. and Aldrich, H.E. (2014: 303).

Moreover, the biases that influence who people see as "fitting" our notions of a leader, also shape the way female leaders behave and think about themselves. Gender stereotype-based expectations of inferiority can lead to damaging responses including

underperformance across many important tasks relevant to leadership and they can undermine females' sense of belonging in a field and their motivation and desire to pursue leadership success. At times, however, females are able to react to these negative stereotype-based expectations with more favourable responses such as engaging in constructive, counter-stereotypical behaviours. Whether females meet threats to their identity with more damaging or constructive responses depends on a variety of factors including their beliefs regarding their ability to be a successful leader and the presence of effective role models.

2.7.4.2.2 APPLYING THE LABYRINTH CONCEPT WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

As the labyrinth has been applied to female leaders within the business government sector and has also been applied to the higher educational setting. The labyrinth has been applied in a study on numerous higher education cases where females had to navigate the labyrinth of challenges in order to attain leadership. This study will mention two studies only.

The first study was a study of female superintendents within the Southwestern United States. Hanson identified various themes after interviewing three female superintendents (Davison and Burke 2000: 228). The participants in her study accepted the significance of building social capital throughout their career, one of the values Eagly and Carli (2007: 36) identify as crucial in navigating the labyrinth. However, Hanson's study uncovered other conclusions, overall, her study did show a tough route for the female superintendents as opposed to men, and that their journey included the need to construct social capital and demonstrate agency.

Yang and Aldrich (2014: 320), who applied this concept to female vice presidents from four-year public institutions within the Western United States, conducted the second study of the labyrinth within in higher education leadership in four-year institutions. In the experiences of these females, Byerly established that the labyrinth concept is valid, appropriate and useable. Mulcahy and Linehan (2014: 425), denotes that "the overwhelming results of the study demonstrated that females did not have an up-front path to their position", which is a basic principle of Eagly and Carli's definition of the

labyrinth. None of the females that Byerly studied had a straightforward route to their position and reported obstacles to their success. One area where Byerly's findings differed from that of Eagly and Carli was the issue of balancing family responsibilities and work. Byerly reported the participants found no issue in balancing family responsibilities with their roles in the leadership positions. Byerly (Ibid: 426) did also report that all of the participants married later in life or admitted having supportive husbands who supported and motivated the females as they navigated through numerous challenges. This, however, doesn't show Eagly and Carli's principle of balancing employment and family life as invalid but shows that these females can balance family life due to their decision to marry very late or having a partner to share the load of caregiving for the family. This can still be interpreted as balancing family life but can also be seen as a sacrifice by the females for the benefit of their career advancement.

The previous studies show the labyrinth concept used repeatedly in several settings. When applying the concept to various settings, it is shown that the labyrinth is an existent concept that must be navigated for females to successfully senior leadership positions. The higher numbers of females in previous studies on female leadership challenges indicate that the labyrinth may be more navigable. Despite the many studies using the labyrinth in higher education settings, there have not been studies completed on female leaders in UoTs. This idea of the labyrinth is therefore used to examine the experiences of females in senior leadership positions in UoTs in South Africa to determine its applicability to female leaders in universities in transition.

2.8 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES

Gender differences and leadership are topics on which a huge body of literature exists. However, the combined analysis of both phenomena is common. In this study, the researcher intends to analyse the association of these two phenomena, focusing on the interest in "female leadership", considering both whether a special female style of leadership exists and the possible barriers that females must overcome to reach senior positions of maximum responsibility in higher education.

The fact that societies assume socialisation to empower men and females to fit in their arranged roles, suggests that the institutional environments of universities play a major part in defining gender role beliefs. This also suggests that there should be disparity from one context to the other or between races in terms of gender role approaches and subsequently female access to senior leadership positions.

As stated earlier, societies develop gender role attitudes, and individuals conform to such expectations through the way they behave at home and in the workplace. Gender role attitudes are, therefore, a function of social institutions that endorse and transmit norms and values. This suggests that if social institutions change, gender role attitudes will change as well. This study argues that higher education with social institutions that place or enable less emphasis on traditional gender roles are likely to experience equality opportunities by both men and females. Undeniably, research suggests that the salience of a certain stereotype may be uttered by context (Leicht, Randsley de Moura and Crisp 2014: 1025). For instance, the stereotypical belief that females do or do not have the qualities to be leaders may depend on the institutional environment. In the context of this study, such beliefs may vary from one race and one institution to the next. Although females who highly identify with other females are more vulnerable to stereotype threat effects, females' identification might associate with bigger leadership aspirations dependent on counter-stereotype salience and feminist identification (ibid). When gender counter-stereotypes are salient, females' identification should associate with greater leadership aspiration regardless of feminism, while when gender stereotypes are salient; females' identification would envisage greater leadership aspirations reliant on a high level of feminist identification (ibid).

In this section of the study, three main social institutions have the potential to differentially shape gender role attitudes across universities, namely the political system (representation of females in parliament), the economic system and the degree of religion. Of the countless social institutions, the gender literature suggests that the three in this study are questionably the most important influences of the institutional environment for increasing the elements of gender roles in universities. Moreover, the evolution of economic and political systems in South Africa explains the levels of gender inequality across races and universities.

This study, therefore, assumes that the representation of females in parliament positively influences the prevalence of female leadership in higher education (Aghofaily 2019: 14). Drawing on the social role theory, this explains that the presence of female leaders in other strategic societal institutions and results in assisting in reducing traditional gender stereotypes and hopefully leading to acceptance of female leadership beyond politics (Flabbi, Macis, Moro and Schivardi 2019: 2390). The presence of females in parliament and, by extension, in government could lead not only to recognition of equal gender roles by both sexes but could also motivate females to aspire for higher leadership positions in several other sectors of society (Waheeda and Nishan 2018: 10). Therefore, there is a huge need to applaud the social institutions that promote the appointment of female leaders.

Given South Africa's apartheid legacy, the policymaking and legal rebuilding by the post-apartheid government have been engrossed with the eradication of race and gender discrimination in all spheres (Wenzel 2007: 49). Quantifiable objectives and disciplinary measures have been laying down the law in order to redress past imbalances in the state, academic, and private sectors. Further discriminatory practices, associated with, for example, same-sex orientation and disability did not receive as much attention, and campaigners for these distresses still unflinching lobby and advocate for the acknowledgement of their rights. Yet, there is the common widespread perception that South Africa has steadily addressed the concerns of the population that was excluded in the previous dispensation, including gays and lesbians (Parle and Noble 2014: 147). Higher education policies are silent when it comes to challenges faced by female leaders who are lesbians.

In the political territory, severe stereotypes about females and political leadership discourage females from entering politics and usually influence voter's perception of females. Some female leaders are still perceived as masculine and are sometimes negatively stereotyped as lesbians. Questions about Hillary Clinton's sexual orientation surfaced in the mid-1990s (Worthen 2014: 141), and she has been labelled (derogatorily) as a lesbian by several United States media channels (Wakeman 2014: 21, as cited in Worthen 2014: 224). One study found that female presidential candidates' campaigns

are often belittled (Ahl 2006: 595). The same happened to Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma here in South Africa in December 2017, during the ANC conference campaigns. Critiques have explored the relationship between the tone and content of media coverage of a female candidate and voters' assessments of her warmth and competency (Adweek Staff 2016: 42). Some behaviour that does not rise to the level of illegal discrimination nonetheless harms females. Just as small acts of kind-heartedness can improve group morale, small acts of antagonism can contribute to a hostile environment. Academics have devised the term "micro-aggressions" to describe small mean-spirited acts, such as exclusion and low-level oral harassment (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016: 111). At times, seemingly, gentle comments can take a toll on female leadership experience. In one study by Caleo and Heilman (2014: 277), female university leaders mentioned discouragement, sabotage, and prejudiced expectations as barriers to leadership. The females reported a lack of acceptance and support from family and colleagues, as well as different expectations for themselves and their male leaders. For example, female leaders felt overstretched to be present at public functions more often than men did. They also noted that certain roles are not reversible; for example, the "head of state's husband" is often not a conventionally accepted phrase, whereas the "head of state's wife" is acceptable (Bear, Cushenbery, London and Sherman 2017: 721).

Higher education has an obligation to promote females' career development due to its role in creating and distributing knowledge and educating future leaders. Universities must create a culture and infrastructure supportive of females. This means that the culture structure, policies and rewards must be stable with promoting diversity and females in the organisation (Lehmann, Meoli, Pleari and Stockinger 2020: 5). As Pletzer, Nikolova, Kedzio and Voelpel (2015: 14) noted, "We know that females have been marginalised historically through patriarchy. Marginality is made more difficult with the intersection of sexual identity". These challenges and obstacles are built into the higher-education institution's policies and processes (structures) and through the culture of the institution (sociocultural norms) (Pletzer, Nikolova, Kedzio and Voelpel 2015: 18).

2.8.1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL BEST PRACTICES ON FEMALE LEADERSHIP

There is a serious gender imbalance at the senior level in the United Kingdom's (UK) businesses (Klenke 2017: 487). This is simulated in the education sector, where females are under-represented in leadership roles both in schools (Chard 2013: 170) and universities (Morley 2013: 170). The dearth of inclusivity in senior positions applies also to ethnicity and disability (Caprino 2015: 12), though it is the issue of gender that forms the focus for this study.

In higher education, the most current figures (for the 2017/18 academic year) show that females comprise 45 per cent of academic staff yet account for only 22 per cent of professors and 20 per cent of vice-chancellors (Shepherd 2017: 82). In the UoT's higher education sector – the focus of my research – the proportion of female leaders in the institutions is significantly lower, at 24 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively (Shepherd 2014: 12). Remarkably, in four of these institutions, including some of the country's most prestigious, all the VCs are men (Shepherd 2015a: 84). This is despite the fact that the majority of higher education students (56%) and staff (54%) are now females (ECU 2015a; ECU 2015b).

The UK situation is not unique. Although international data on female representation in senior higher education leadership roles are somewhat sporadic, it is arguably an indicator of the relative lack of importance attached to the issue (Morley 2013: 170), the general picture that appears is one of a dearth of females in senior positions (Doherty and Manfredi, 2006: 553). Across the 27 countries in the EU, for example, only 15.5 per cent of all higher-education institutions and 10 per cent of universities that award PhDs are headed by a female (European Commission 2012: 56). Whilst acknowledging that the idea of representation – and what constitutes under- and overrepresentation is both multifaceted and disputed (Lumby 2011: 921), this relative dearth of females in senior positions reflects a failure to make the most of female talent. This state of affairs is problematic both from a social justice and an organisational viewpoint given the cumulative evidence that the more female executives an organisation has, the better it performs (Han, Soyoung, Noland and Marcusa 2019: 14).

Nonetheless, there is still an element of self-satisfaction amongst senior decisionmakers in higher education. Moreover, in a recent survey of university governors commissioned by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (hereafter, the Leadership Foundation), equality and diversity “barely registered as a concern” with only 3 per cent of governors identifying the issue as a key institutional challenge and only 17 per cent (compared to 42% of staff) believing that it is harder for women than for men to succeed in their organisation (Shepherd 2017: 83).

Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that progress towards improving female representation has been restricted and slow (Floyd and Dimmock 2011: 389) calculates that at the current growth rate of 0.75 per cent per annum it will take over 100 years for females to achieve equal numbers in the UK senior leadership ranks. At the executive management level, there has only been a 0.4 per cent annual increase in the percentage of female VCs in pre-1992 English universities between 2005 and 2013 (Shepherd. 2015b: 82). Furthermore, there is some evidence that the proportion of female vice-chancellors may be deteriorating (Bebbington 2012: 36).

2.8.2 REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE LEADERS IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

It is currently a fact that females are hardly represented in senior leadership positions in institutions of higher education in the Western world, although it can also be stated that in the transitional levels of the job ladder and positions with a medium level of responsibility; there is a greater balance between male and females. This study, following the approaches indicated by Hoyt (2012: 45), attempted to identify the factors that can have an influence on the rare existence of females in the senior levels of management and explains some of the reasons behind this situation. Over the course of history, an argument that has been presented to explain the rare presence of female leaders is that the objectives or purposes of male and female lifestyles are different. According to this idea, men have generally channelled their leadership technique to focus on the task, while females have done so to focus on people or the relationship (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto 2017: 323). Male task-centred leadership has been more visible, more formal and official, and female people-centred leadership, on the other hand, has been considered to be leadership of support. However, it is essential to analyse whether

females commonly tend to “focus on relationships” in their leadership style and whether men tend to “focus on tasks” (Hoyt 2010: 484).

The time has come to re-frame the gender issue. The Chancellor of Germany, the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the chair of the Federal Reserve in the United States of America (USA) are females (Manfredi 2014: 2). Sixty per cent of the world’s university graduates are females, and females control the bulk of consumer goods buying decisions (Settles, O’Connor and Yap 2014: 488). In the USA, females under 30 earn more than their male peers, and forty per cent of American households have females as the main breadwinners (Huffman 2014: 255). In many companies and countries, from Iran or Brazil to Russia, leaders are currently recruiting a majority of young females as they outperform their male peers (Hoyt and Murphy 2017: 349). Yet females continue to be under-represented in most businesses, especially at the senior levels in higher education. In fact, it is time to shift the discussion away from a persistent female problem or an issue of equality and instead focus on this as a substantial business opportunity. Instead of continuing to discuss the problem, there is a need to present solutions.

It is evident from research and evidence are clear on the performance of an inclusive leader in an inclusive organisation outperforms (von Alberti-Alhtaybat and Aazam 2018: 90). Yet females remain under-represented in all levels of senior leadership. The evolution in the under-representation of females in senior positions is designed to help uplift female leaders (Hoyt 2010: 485). This is achieved by supporting female leaders to navigate the institutional landscape, develop and pull their talents, and step into roles of superior influence. Despite the compelling case for equal gender representation at all levels of higher education institutions, even with the best of intents, unconscious bias can distort critical decisions influencing who moves ahead within an organization (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Risikari 2011: 616).

The presence of females, in both the field of education and in the world of work, has undergone considerable changes in recent decades (Williams, and Tiedens 2016: 165). Currently, most females encounter no obstacles to accessing higher education, and the upsurge in their level of education has been noticeable in recent years. However, it must

be stated that the preferences of men and females are still dissimilar when deciding upon higher education. As indicated by Vial, Napier and Brescoll 2016: 402), even though females are present at universities in greater numbers than men, in some scientific and technical degree study programmes the percentage of men remains greater than that of females.

The presence of females has increased not only in the field of higher education but their contribution to the workforce has also stretched to both lower- and medium-level positions of responsibility; however, females are still poorly represented in higher positions (Huddy and Cassese 2013: 475). The chapter will focus on some of the data collected in Europe and the United States.

EUROPE

The European Commission has established a database that gathers information about the participation of females in the decision-making bodies in different areas, such as politics and the economy. The aim is to provide reliable statistics on the evolution and current situation of women in different contexts. The business section of the database provides information about gender balance in the decision-making areas of universities in different countries. The figure below reflects the presence of females in senior leadership positions in the most important universities in some European countries in 2016.

The European University Association (EUA) has updated its latest data on females in leadership positions in Europe's universities. The results show that in the 47 countries with European University Association (EUA) members, only 12% of all Vice Chancellors are female.

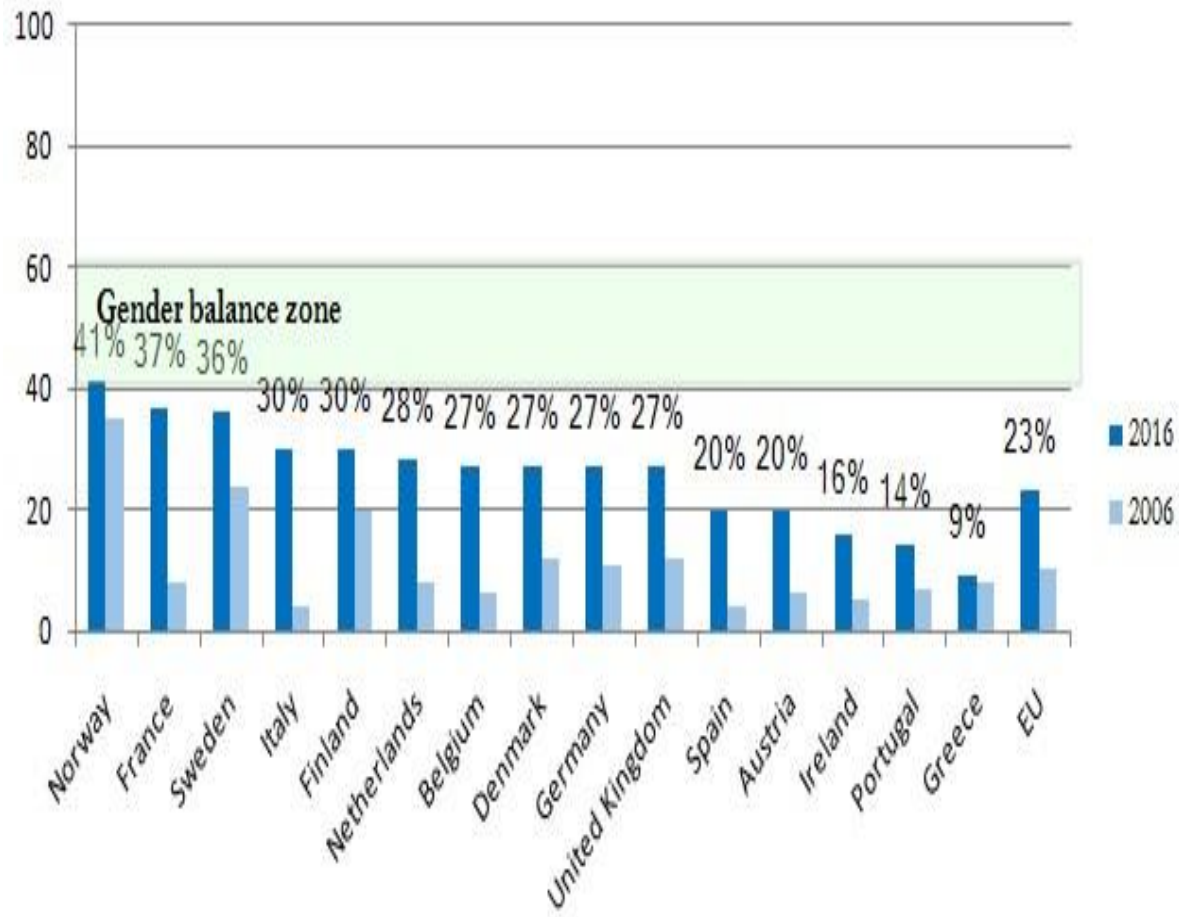


Figure 0.3 Presence of female leaders in universities in some European countries in 2016

Source: Hashim, Mohammad and Kaur (2016: 14).

The data offered for the different countries show that during the last decade, a significant improvement has occurred in the female presence in senior leadership positions in many European universities (Gipson, et al. 2017: 39) However, in most of the countries, females still do not represent even a third of the senior leadership positions. It should also be stressed that the statistics vary significantly, according to the country. In the Nordic countries, the situation of females in senior leadership positions in universities in those areas is generally better than in the rest of the European countries (ibid). Norway stands out in this regard, with 41% of females in senior leadership positions in universities in that country; it thus can be measured to be in an area of reasonable gender balance at the senior levels of universities.

Equally, it seems important to point out the motivation towards greater gender balance in universities in France and Italy. The report by the European Commission (EC) on the participation of males and females in senior leadership positions (European Commission 2013: 55) identifies the importance of both political and legislative initiatives to stimulate the change towards gender balance. According to this report, the most imperative progress in terms of the female presence in leadership positions has occurred in universities in countries such as France, the Netherlands and Italy, countries that have embraced binding legislation in this regard (ibid).

In general, the statistics on the representation of females in senior positions in European universities reflect that the processes adopted in the different countries have had positive results. However, even though considerable progress has been made, the average the proportion of females in senior leadership positions in most universities of the European Union is still far from a situation of gender balance (Eurostat 2016: 29).

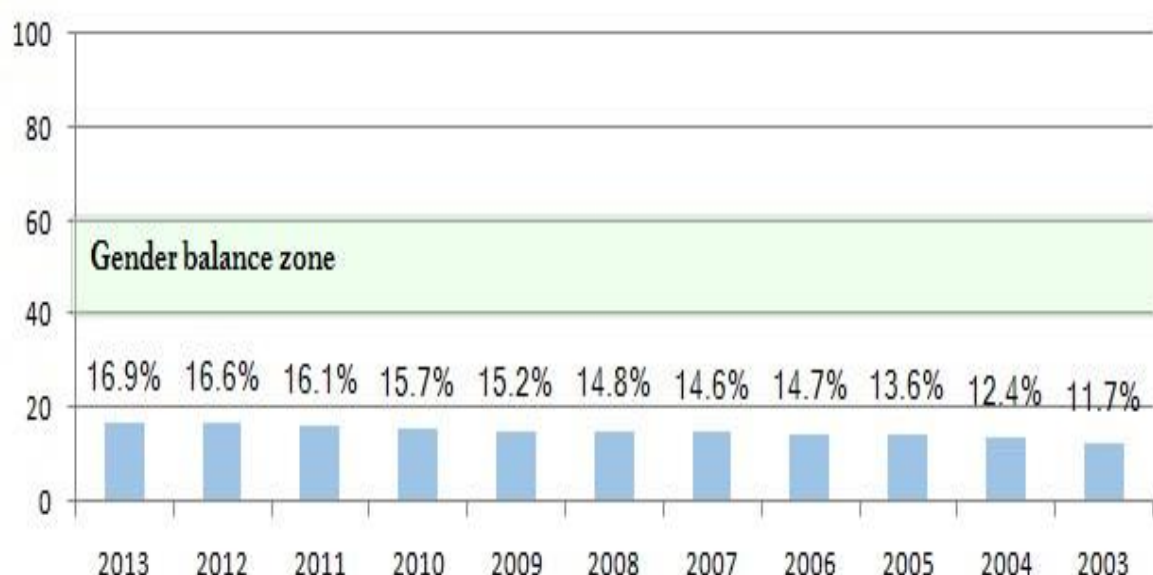
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Females in the United States of America (USA) are making historic progress in higher education leadership, with research linking female leadership representation to positive outcomes. However, men still dominate USA leadership, raising some key questions of whether the USA is closing the leadership gender gap in higher education (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto 2017: 319) reveals the scarce presence of females in leadership positions and reflects the variances that exist among different countries. In the following paragraphs, this section will attempt to update this information and validate the extent to which the “gender gap” separating men and females in terms of opportunities and access to senior leadership positions continues even today.

The situation is similar in other countries in the Western world, such as the United States, where females represent 16.9% of the senior leadership positions in the country’s major universities (Rincón, González and Barrero 2017: 330). In the case of the United States, the non-profit organisation Catalyst conducts an annual census in order to show the representation of females in senior leadership positions in the country’s main companies.

Even though the information collected in this census is not entirely comparable to that presented above for European universities, it gives us an idea about the situation of females in leadership positions in the United States. The following figure presents data on the participation of females in the senior leadership positions of the main universities in the United States of America over the last ten years.

Figure 0.4 Female leaders in major universities in the United States of America from 2003-2013



Source: Catalyst Knowledge Center 2016a

According to the data presented above, it can be said that the progress made in terms of the presence of female executives in large U.S. universities is occurring at a very slow pace. The participation of females in senior leadership positions in the most important universities in the United States during 2013 was 16.9%, showing hardly any improvement over the previous year, in which the percentage of females in senior management positions was 16.6%.

From 1970 to 2012, the percentage of females' total employment increased from 30.7% to 40.7 %. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percentage of females "working in leadership positions" expanded from 17% in 1971 to 51% in 2012 (Powell 2014: 249). This huge labour shift indicates a major societal movement for females'

status and roles in the workplace. Despite the upward trend in females' presence in the workplace, females remain under-represented at executive, senior and board positions (Baumgartner and Schneider 2010: 559; Metz and Kulik 2014: 258; Voss and Speere 2014: 272). Among the Fortune 500 companies, for example, females occupy only 14.6% of executive leadership positions (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak and White 2015: 65) and only 23 companies among the Standard and Poor's (S&P) 500 companies (4.6%) are led by female CEOs (Catalyst 2016a).

The current work shows the situation of gender imbalance in leadership positions in Western universities. Currently, even though females have the same level of preparation as men, they are still less present in senior leadership positions. The scarce representation of females in senior decision-making positions in universities throughout different countries proves that the current situation is far from a situation of gender balance.

Among the barriers that hinder the participation of females in senior leadership, gender stereotypes and prejudices are still common in universities globally (Post 2015: 1153). A great deal of the research on leadership styles links females to a democratic, participative leadership style fixated on personal relations. Similarly, several studies mention the inclination for females to use a transformational leadership style, which is often connected to effective leadership (Matsa and Miller 2013: 138). Nevertheless, this type of female leadership owes to the undesirable reactions and the social rejection that females must face when they use a command or authoritarian leadership usually associated with men.

This scarce presence of females in senior leadership positions represents an important cost for society as a whole. This constant discrepancy needs to be addressed by identifying the underlying mechanism entrenched in university structures. Structures that portray females as less suitable for senior leadership positions than their male counterparts, although evidence recommends that there is no significant gender difference in leadership styles or behaviours. Hoyt 2010: 490). The imbalance between the educational level of females and their career development indicates a waste of human resources that prevents taking advantage of the talent and abilities of extremely qualified

people. Furthermore, in terms of business competitiveness, universities with low numbers of females represented in senior leadership positions are foregoing benefits that gender diversity can offer for white-collar positions.

COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

In the current agenda dialogue on inclusion and equity, the gender equality issue remains critical and still captures the centre stage around the world. Despite some positive outcomes due to the insistent resistance to correct the historical exclusion of females in playing important roles in the leadership race, there still are challenges and barriers that female leaders in the area of higher education leadership have to overcome. Morley (2005: 211) reports on research conducted by the Association of Commonwealth Universities that show females are seriously underrepresented in senior positions.

According to Bevan and Gatrell (2017: 332), female representation in senior leadership positions is considered important for four major reasons:

- One, is for social justice that promotes universities to be impartial and treat people with equality;
- Second, for equity and parity that focus on the issue of gender-related pay and gender opportunity gap;
- Third, for improving the quality of leadership that can be facilitated by various diverse practices
- Fourth, for economy and trade as organisations with equality and inclusion are looked upon and perceived in an affirmative light.

Catalyst (2004: 1) suggests that having female leaders to lead higher-education institutions is much more than simple gender parity but having females as academic leaders will possibly have a major influence on institutions' knowledge and scope of research. The presence of females in leadership roles in higher education will contribute to positive and exclusive experiences, which they will not have under gender-homogenous leadership.

In addition, the White House Project (2009: 16) also states that female leaders will serve as "powerful role models and mentors to younger females starting out on the path to leadership themselves". Globally, females in leadership roles of higher education are

considered influential for the economic growth and sustainability of universities as they can contribute with a different angle to make a positive impact.

The race to senior leadership positions is not impossible; it is just not easy, due to the barriers females face. It is very challenging to get to the senior leadership positions and stay there. When a female attains a leadership position, it is upon her to pass the baton to other females. Female leaders are in a continuous struggle of breaking barriers to stay in leadership positions. However, female leaders have to continue working hard to prove themselves in this male-dominated society. Even though there are growing numbers of females attaining high qualifications, the number of female numbers is not growing as fast as expected. This is illustrated below:

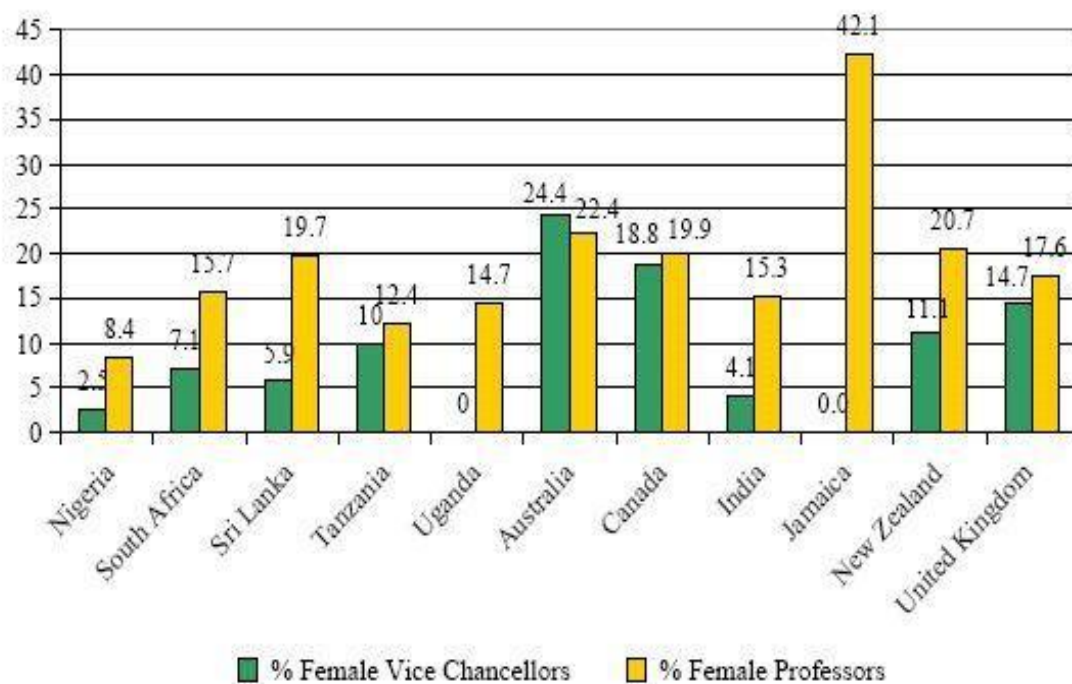


Figure 0.5 Percentage of female leaders in selected commonwealth countries

Source: Morley (2005: 15)

Some things are the same globally; for example, females may experience a clash between their domestic and professional roles. Universities too, tend to display resemblances in terms of workplace culture and structural practices that affect successful leadership and progression of females into senior positions. However, other factors are

extrinsic and relate to specific historical or social situations or conditions of a particular country.

One of the broadest pieces of research on females in leadership roles in higher education was done by Özkanlı and White (2008: 53), which compared female leaders in senior leadership positions in Turkey and Australia. While Australia had been the recipient of considerable equal employment opportunity and affirmative action, as well as an "Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities", Turkey has no precise equal opportunity laws although the Turkish Constitution promises equality. On the other hand, there are considerably more female leaders in Turkey than in Australia.

One of the reasons for this inconsistency between Australia and Turkey is that in Turkey higher education tends to be poorly paid. This then shifts the focus away from education profession and is hugely shunned by men, who favour more highly paid commercial careers (Özkanlı and White 2008: 53). Although there is slight legislation for diversity, selections are highly transparent and regulated in Turkish universities (Özkanlı 2006: 61). In Turkey, there has also been considerable growth in the number of universities, which has increased from 29 to 77 between 1990 and 2006, and the number of female leaders increased by 75% in that time.

It is hardly shocking that the authors of this study concluded that equal opportunities legislation has little effect on females' employment in Turkey. South Africa on the other hand is a society that is emerging from the infamous apartheid era to one which tries to be more equitable through legislative transformation. Although South Africa's attempts at equal opportunities legislation is assisting females in senior positions in universities, the country has to contend with an infrastructure that is based on the values of the old apartheid regime.

Idahosa (2019: 319 and Maheshwari 2021: 36). have all undertaken research on females in leadership positions in South Africa, and they report on how black females are still extremely disadvantaged and underrepresented in senior positions. Universities of technology are teaching institutions and lack a research culture, having been set up to train administrators for the new black homelands, and therefore keep the system in place, rather than as spaces of knowledge.

To conclude this section, leadership by females in South African universities, through the viewpoints of patriarchy, enculturation as well as the leadership labyrinth and glass ceiling, portrays a bleak but navigable picture. Bolden and Kirk (2009: 69) suggest an emphasis on the interpersonal, critical and constructionist theories in stimulating actions that promote negotiation and the sharing of experiences, with the goal of promoting new insight and understanding into higher education leadership.

Strategic agency is essential if individuals are to thrive in the academic game (Acker 2010: 152), and females have sometimes been seen as lacking in this regard and defiant in the necessary confidence and skills of self-promotion. Alternatively, it has been argued that females are choosing to opt out of senior leadership positions because they consider them unappealing and/or impossibly challenging. Whilst this is undeniably true for many academics of both genders, findings from a study by Shepherd (2017: 87) of the appointment of VCs show that female academic leaders are no less motivated or likely to apply for a more senior leadership position than are their male colleagues. This implies that females' missing agency is not in itself an adequate explanation for their continuous under-representation at the top of higher education. Peterson (2014: 395) stated several structural factors associated with the recruitment and selection process for senior posts, including lack of external career capital, conservatism and homo-sociability, may disadvantage talented and ambitious females.

This implies that efforts to 'fix' the females, for example, female-only development programmes like Aurora and Leadership Matters, are not likely to be sufficient to achieve gender equality (Smith, Simmons and Thames 1989: 15). Rather, a mix of change interventions may be required that also seek to 'fix' the organisation in terms of universal and procedural changes. More importantly, perhaps, the micro-politics and cultural assumptions that support these practices and procedures; for example, recruitment and selection need to be recognised and addressed.

2.9 GENDER EQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

I attended a conference of female leaders in higher education in Sandton in September 2017 and several female leaders addressed the issue of why gender equality is

important. They stressed that it is key to meeting effectively and successfully the many social, economic and cultural challenges of the future. Therefore, gender equity is “a matter of both social cohesion and economic development” (Akala 2017: 226).

This study makes arguments against homogenising people’s conditions and circumstances. In particular, the study acknowledges that the post-1994 reform agenda was intended to streamline the previously fragmented and segregated higher education landscape under the apartheid regime. Black females, who are part of this study suffered triple marginalisation – race, social class and sexism (ibid: 240). This study shows the tensions that exist within the White Paper: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE 1997: 5). The said tensions have muted the attainment of gender equity and equality; effectively broadening the gender gaps in post-1994 South African higher education. I argue that we should not take for granted phrases such as “equal opportunities” and “equal access” in policies. Instead, we should seek their meaning and achievement *inter alia* in earnest for the targeted group. Therefore, this study postulates that gender and gendering are complex and very fragmented. For this reason, formulating transformation interventions on the principle of equality for all does not necessarily promise gender equality or gender equity. With this in mind, a “one-size fits all” approach to redress gender equality is improbable and does not address noticeable gender injustices. I propose a multidimensional approach, which encompasses a realistic and holistic outlook on the different needs of black females in particular and females in general as a possible solution to the current challenges.

Debatably, preceding concepts that indicated South African females suffered greatly in the past are correct. The reform agenda was essential in addressing gender gaps in black female access to higher education. Notwithstanding all the gains, black females in higher education still struggle with a myriad of disadvantaging situations. The White Paper (DoE 1997: 7) conceived a higher education background that will be complete with equal standings for all regardless of gender, race, social status or belief. However, in spite of the assurances, race equity has outshined gender equity (Alexander and Andersen 1993: 527). Attempts to remove gender inequalities and inequities have not been very fruitful because the approach has tended to homogenous females’ circumstances and experiences. Finally, it is my proposal that although equality and equity convolute, the

two notions should be regarded separately, each one with clear goals. If possible, I suggest, in addition to existing interventions, a wider and multi-layered approach that reflects the different states personified by the marginalised females in higher education spaces (equity paradigm) to be considered as an instrument of eliminating gender inequities and inequalities.

2.9.1 GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMALE'S EMPOWERMENT

The world is experiencing technological change, social change and economic opportunity at a pace never experienced in human history; therefore, females in UoTs need to be part of this paradigm shift. Higher Education Resources Services- South Africa (HERS-SA) has an academy aimed at females who currently hold senior leadership positions or who wish to prepare for such a role. The academy seeks to empower such females so they may achieve their career aspirations. The academy gives females a rare space to reflect on their lives and careers (Shen 2013: 22). This shows that empowerment strides are being made by higher education in South Africa. However, as stated before, progress is slow.

This has led to the gazetting of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (2013: 12) as legislation that deals directly with females' issues in the place of work. The Bill strives to establish a legislative framework for the empowerment of females and to ensure the selection, promotion, appointment and representation of females in decision-making positions. Additionally, the Bill specifies that at least fifty per cent representation of females should be achieved, and plans should be put in place to attain this by both private and public entities (Department of Labour 2010: 5). However, due to the existence of the so-called glass ceiling, fifty per cent of female representation is still not achieved in South Africa (Nxumalo and Lethoko 2014: 93).

Now, more than any time in history, the world is working together in order to improve the lives of females in higher education and empower them to realise their potential. Seizing this pivotal moment can help realise meaningful change for a vast majority of females in UoTs. Despite changes made in the past 20 years, the recent UN 59th Commission on Status of Women indicated countries were still far behind in tackling structural issues such as female empowerment.

South Africa has seen significant progress in extending the participation of females in higher education. The role of the university is not only academic; it also has an important role in generating new knowledge which leads to influence on government policy at various levels. And lastly, universities are situated in society and should therefore engage with communities in meaningful ways. This is where higher education institutions should also exercise an influence in terms of the position and empowerment of females in society.

Gender equality and female's empowerment are fundamental in the promotion of a resilient and democratic society. When females play an active role in civil society and politics, governments tend to be more open, responsive and transparent. When females are at the negotiating table, peace agreements are more durable; even in higher education (Abalkhail 2017: 171). It is, therefore, important that females are empowered through equal rights and equal opportunities as they are key drivers of progress and growth. Since higher education as a social institution is an instrument that facilitates the reproduction of social structures, females in higher education need to be fully empowered for a 21st-century economy. Once they are empowered, females will be valued as leaders, peace builders and breadwinners in their communities and societies.

In the words of Dr Aggrey (1875 - 1927) if you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a whole nation. One of the most noteworthy transformations in education in South Africa over the past two decades is the drastic increase in female access to colleges and universities. Framing and implementing rigorous and influential laws and policies have addressed the wickedness of gender discrimination in Higher Education. Most South African females, with the possibility of economic independence, through reputable employment, have become the main earning members of the family. An educated female has the skills, self-confidence and power to be a better citizen. Females have all the power and ability as that of men and they are revealing themselves amongst different opportunities provided through higher education.

After the pronouncement of mergers, South African universities have experienced serious transformational changes in line with governmental requirements and policies

(i.e. The National Gender policy framework that is South Africa's framework for women's empowerment and gender equality). One of the changes imposed on universities was the insistence of the need to appoint more females in leadership positions. The government did not just impose this on universities, but also passed laws to assist females during this evolution. The Women Empowerment Bill, together with other bills was passed in 2003. Thus, the ascending of females into senior positions was put to the test. Good leaders known to be role models in their institutions were suddenly taking up senior positions in an environment that was known to be hostile to them.

According to Mathur-Helm (2005: 56), South African females have always been in the second level of society, regardless of their race. To counter this unfair practice, the government passed the affirmative action legislation as part of the national strategy to redress the discrepancies of the past. Female disquiets came to the fore, within government departments and the commercial sector. Issues like equality, human rights and empowerment got immense attention. With the help of the Gender Policy Framework (GPF), policies aimed at addressing disparities of the past were drafted and signed into law. Included in this route was the drafting of procedures and practices intended to guarantee females are afforded equal opportunities in all sectors of the South African economy (Nxumalo and Lethoko 2014: 89). The Bill on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment came into effect, to empower females and deal with gender equality (Nxumalo and Lethoko 2014: 90). Evidently, there is still a huge difference in percentages of females in leadership occupying senior positions in UoTs compared to their male counterparts.

2.9.2 GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

Gender equity and women's access to senior leadership and management positions in universities are a major challenge not only in South Africa but on the African continent, too. For women to take up senior leadership roles more potently, it is essential that they not only cope with and compete in patriarchal systems but more so, are equipped to change patriarchal hegemony and shift the management discourse and culture to a pluralistic leadership culture where transformational leadership becomes the norm and praxis (Seale and Cross 2017: 490).

The issue of female under-representation in senior decision-making and leadership positions in organisations has been well-documented and continues to be the main area in gender and leadership research in all sectors of education including higher education. White (Gallagher and Morison (2019: 5) states that 'academic females at senior levels in universities have not attained a critical mass, in spite of the existence of equity programmes in universities for the last few decades.

Machika (2014: 1) states that the position of females in higher education illustrates that universities continue to be a fortress of male power and privilege. Gender equity and equality in higher education management have been in the public eye in South Africa in current years. Universities locally and globally are under a lot of pressure to transform in all aspects of their business (Potvin, Burdfield-Steel, Potvin and Heap 2018: 5). Universities in South Africa have made great strides in improving gender representation in senior leadership levels; however, representation of females in the middle leadership- and professorial- levels are low at many higher education institutions. This is indicative of a gender leadership gap and a loss in possible impact on growth and development in the higher education sector. Consciousness of the female constituent of the academic society in leadership means underutilisation of existing talent and intellectual capital (Longman 2018: 8). It also infers the continuance of gender inequality in higher education. It is a serious indictment on humanity that in a world mainly populated by females, only a few of them are leaders in political, corporate and higher education organisations; despite equal opportunity regulations globally and in South Africa. It is, therefore, correct to wonder whether gender equality, but more importantly, gender equity will ever be achieved (Seo, Huang and Han 2017: 35).

Organisations entrusted with the attainment of gender equity in higher education are Higher Education Resources Services - South Africa (HERS-SA) in conjunction with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the former Higher Education South Africa (HESA) now named Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Department of Education. CHE is an independent statutory body established by the Higher Education Act, number 101 of 1997 and HERS-SA is a non-profit organisation aimed at improving the status of females in higher education.

The academic will to improve gender equity in senior leadership in higher education was conveyed clearly by a declaration made in 2008 (Rodrigo and Clavero 2022: 3). The conference was held to “explore how institutional cultures and gendered presumptions influence the lack of females in higher education leadership” (Ibid). It was also aimed to impact on institutional practice. What was important about this conference is that it recognised that although great progress has been made in the area of female participation in higher education in terms of student access, a lot still has to be done to realise gender equity in higher education leadership positions. The declaration made a calling on the department of education and CHE to encourage the importance of equity at senior leadership levels and to commit to detecting institutional barriers to equity of participation and success in leadership and assume innovative ways of addressing these obstacles.

Universities need to be at the forefront with efforts to achieve gender equity in senior positions (Dlanjwa 2018: 24) and be committed to equity in their vision and mission statements while continuing to measure success in terms of the numbers of female leaders (Potvin, Burdfield, Potvin and Heap 2018: 1). Universities need not ignore the wealth of female leadership that is available at their disposal and since universities are sources of knowledge and custodians of effecting change in societies, they need to acknowledge that females have a critical role to play in higher education. Unsurprisingly, an international collaborative research project conducted in 2015 and part of 2016 revealed females held only 3 (12%) of the Vice-Chancellor (VC) positions. When all senior executive leadership positions were considered, that is, VC and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVC), females occupied only 25% of those positions, while their male counterparts occupied 75% of senior executive leadership positions (Sun 2014: 55). These figures show that the gender gap at the most senior positions is still very wide (Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir and Stroebe 2019: 109). It also means that headway is sluggish.

There are numerous persistent factors that influence against equity and equality of females in higher education leadership, but there are also ‘facilitators’ or ‘enablers’ as Morley (2015: 8) reported in her findings from a large study on females in higher education leadership in South Asia. Many of the apparent factors are similar across

countries, cultures and geographic locations. Gendered organisational cultures and socio-cultural belief systems (Morley 2015: 8) are mainly responsible for the low numbers of females in higher education leadership in various countries. Discrimination and unequal power relations continue to hinder females' paths to promotion (Machika 2014). Institutions are perceived as unfriendly and unaccommodating' to females. Universities remain strongholds of male power and privilege (Hansard Society Commission 1990: 11: 68), thus making it difficult for females to enter and hold positions of power and perform their leadership roles with ease. The situation is aggravated by the persistence of stereotypical attitudes towards females (and men) as leaders, resulting in resistance to female leadership by both females and men. This resistance is still a reality in many higher-education institutions and continues to manifest in various evident and concealed ways. Carli and Eagly (2007: 129) believe that resistance to the female agency is especially evident in people's opinions of highly successful female leaders; females who prosper in male-dominated professions often provoke hostile responses. The fact is that the traditional notion of leadership as "male" is still firmly embedded in many people's psyches – both men and females, resulting in organisational practices not being as 'gender-neutral' as organisations would have us believe (Flabbi, Luca. 2015: 4334). Figure 2.5 shows the underrepresentation of females in senior leadership positions in UoTs:

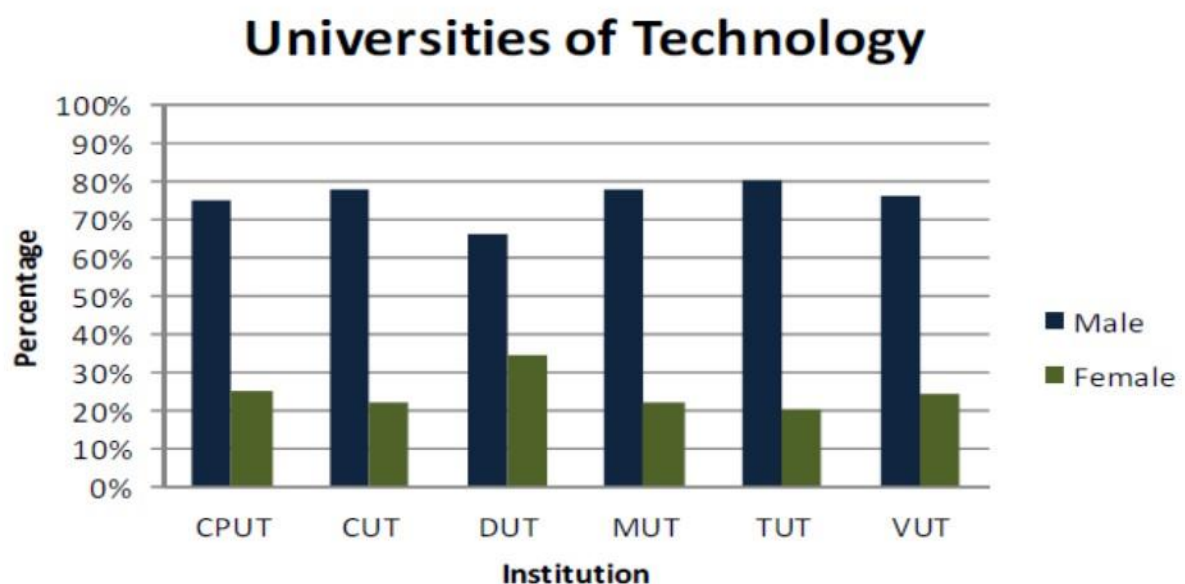


Figure 0.6 Male versus female leaders in senior positions in UoTs

Source: Kele and Pietersen (2015: 13)

However, there is a need to concentrate on the ripple effect of the march and see how far females have come in the last 62 years in instilling gender equality. This effect can be either positive or negative and that is why it needs to be substantiated with numbers. Currently, there are more females than men in South Africa (Viviers, Mans-Kemp, and Fawcett 2017: 2). Out of the country's population of 56.5 million, females comprise 51% of the total population (ibid). Despite females making up just over half of the population, they remain rather unrepresented in positions of authority and influence. The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, in particular, calls for 50% female representation in senior positions. Although South Africa has made great progress, gender representativity is still below the 50% mark for senior positions that come with a great deal of power (ibid). Moodly and Toni (2015a: 45) emphasise that in spite of advanced policies in the South African higher education system, females are still confronted with the challenge of not being able to access and retain senior leadership positions.

2.10 IMBALANCE AT SENIOR LEADERSHIP LEVELS IN UOTS

Despite numerous challenges including the slow pace of rising to senior positions and the low compositional diversity in Universities of Technology leadership, females are gradually visible in higher education leadership. This study investigates the phenomena of the experiences of the growing number of females in senior positions, with the aim of exposing the myth of the invisibility of females in leadership positions in higher education. Findings in a study by Perkins and Mainah (2015: 5) indicate that although females earn the majority of postsecondary degrees and 26.4% of college presidents are females, with 4.5% of them being females of colour. Females still have a long way to go before they have equal status with men in university leadership positions. Theories and practices of leadership now concentrate on experiences that have typically and traditionally been associated with females and are not valued as workplace leadership competencies. A beneficial increase in female leaders means these females bring a diverse level of knowing, pose different questions, and share different experiences than their male counterparts. Unfortunately, female leaders' experiences do not yet factor into public policies and decision-making.

Currently, females, in particular, are targeted for education due to the complex link between the education of females and sustainable development. The common expression, 'when you educate a female, you educate the nation', does not hold true in the higher education environment because females appear scarce, especially in senior leadership positions. According to Dlamini and Adams (2014: 120), a saying that can express this observation properly is: "When you educate a female, you pose a threat to male power". In essence, it means that the matter of transformation and equal rights should be extended to include patriarchy, particularly in higher education. Growing up, the teaching occupation was and is still associated with females because of stereotypes emphasising that females are the more caring and nurturing gender.

On the other hand, leadership positions are often associated with men because of stereotypes emphasising that men are the more leading and powerful gender. The pursuit for equal rights of females in South Africa dates as far back as the 1950s when females in the African National Congress (ANC) raised the issue of gender discrimination as a gross violation of human rights. As the violation of human rights was associated with apartheid, their pursuit for equal rights continued up to the time that democracy was achieved in South Africa in 1994. The United Nations Economic Commission (UNECE) for Africa (1995: 29) regarding females' rights states briefly that "parties should take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against females in order to ensure equal rights with men in the field of higher education". Twenty-four years after the dawn of democracy, it is fitting and necessary to examine the socio-cultural norms associated with patriarchy, as these threaten our democracy, particularly in higher education institutions. The South African Constitution considers equality of men and females as an essential part of its human rights, which should be observed in all sectors of the country, including higher-education institutions. However, despite the huge positive changes in South Africa after 1994, the country is still characterised by excessive inequalities (Pennefather 2008: 81). Inequalities due to persistent patriarchal attitudes are a major barrier to female leaders. These manifest in numerous forms, such as blocking females from climbing the leadership ladder, barring from research supervision, and the production of knowledge, among others.

In higher education, gender inequality exists when a large number of men and a lack of females in senior leadership roles are noticed. This inequality influences how students identify gender roles and promotes the persistence of gender inequality. Inequality has long been a major issue in universities, as is the case across most industries. This section explores the experiences of ten females who have successfully achieved senior leadership positions at UoTs in South Africa. While the experiences of these females differ in many ways, there are certainly similarities in the challenges and difficulties that they have faced and their opinions of what has allowed them to experience success in their leadership roles. A major gender imbalance remains at the senior level within higher education despite several initiatives to increase the number of females in the leadership pipeline and ensure they are better prepared for the leadership roles.

Educational transformation is an axiom in South African educational circles. It is driven by the expedition of South Africa on behalf of all citizens of the country, not only to access education in any institution of choice, but also to excellent education. Indices that underpin transformation include gender equality. Dieltiens, Unterhalter, Letsatsi and North (2009: 365) argue that gender equity is one of the fundamental principles underpinning the transformation of the South African education system.

There is a severe gender imbalance at the senior leadership level in UoTs in South Africa (Davies 2015). This is replicated in the education sector, where females are under-represented in leadership roles in schools and higher-education institutions (Chard 2013; Morley 2013). The lack of inclusivity at the top echelons applies due to gender, ethnicity, sexual preference and disability (ECU 2015a), though it is the issue of gender that forms the focus for this study.

While the South African legislation is an enabler for equity, all-inclusiveness, social justice and the advancement of females for academic leadership roles, institutional cultures and structures are often devastating. This study presents the development path of female leaders in South African UoTs. It examines structural and cultural issues acting as enablers or restraints to leadership development and career progression for females.

2.11 CONCLUSION

Extensive research has demonstrated that women aspiring to and serving as leaders face many barriers, which creates a glass ceiling effect for women's advancement into top leadership positions. The goal of this dissertation is to contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of the influences on women's decisions about pursuing senior-level leadership positions in higher education. In the following chapter, the researcher will continue with the literature review where barriers, challenges faced by female leaders will be discussed and government legislation pertaining the issue of equality in higher education will be discussed. This is to show that even though there are policies in place in universities to implement legislation of female leadership, this has not happened.

CHAPTER THREE

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, it is clear that there is no shortage of qualified females to fill senior leadership roles in higher education institutions. Females make up almost half of the workforce in higher education, however, men are far more likely than women to rise to the highest paying and most prestigious leadership roles. Despite decades of investment in female leadership programs, progress in advancing females has stalled; females remain underrepresented in senior leadership roles in universities. These days, just about every university has a diversity and inclusion policy. This policy typically lays out the institution's commitment to hiring and serving a diverse population. It might indicate that the institution is an equal opportunity employer, or that it encourages females to apply for any position. It all sounds pretty promising, yet recent figures show just how much further universities have to go to truly achieve diversity in higher education. A number of institutional issues in higher education negatively affect women's opportunities to take on leadership roles in the academic community. Even those who have attained senior positions are facing challenges which lead them to resign. Overcoming these challenges is only possible when both men and women shoulder the responsibility for increasing diversity in their ranks

3.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Women in higher education have made some gains and are now earning more degrees than men. In the 2016-17 academic year, 57 percent of bachelor's degrees were conferred to women, and according to the Pew Research Foundation, women now compose half of the college-educated workforce (Singh 2014: 247). While acknowledging gains made in numbers of women, it is equally significant to address the challenges women continue to confront: women hold the least senior administrative and academic positions and are the lowest paid among higher education. The picture is starker for black women academics and administrators in higher education institutions in South Africa (Ibid: 248). Women, black women in particular, are underrepresented in senior positions,

which in turn limits them opportunities to advance into formal senior and even executive positions in universities. The fact however is known that women who are qualified and ambitious are definitely not in short supply (O'Connor 2020: 304).

Often described in higher education sector as a glass ceiling; the symbolic obstacle women hit at mid-management- barriers to women's advancement could, in the context of higher education, also be thought of as a labyrinth (Ibid: 306). Women are not simply denied top leadership opportunities at the culmination of a long career, but rather such opportunities seem to disappear at various points along their trajectories. And even when women attain leadership positions, they face challenges embedded within institutional structures and systems and perhaps most important, mind-sets that require transformative change (Ibid: 309).

Compounding women's own difficulties as leaders in higher education is the reality that women are also serving as models for our students. Among the general student populations and especially the growing adult learner populations are increasing numbers of established women professionals who are returning for career advancement or self-development. These women often must balance the responsibilities of life with their education in ways that were perhaps not the case with students we may have seen in the past (Kinnear and Ortlepp 2016: 1359). If those of us educating such women are ourselves struggling with our own advancement, what example are we setting? Students whether traditional or non-traditional and across racial and ethnic backgrounds are struggling to get positions of power in higher education. With the increasing diversity of higher education and the corollary needs and expectations that accompany it, such triangulation is not only rare but important. Women, despite them serving in different leadership positions at different higher education institutions, with different disciplines and personal backgrounds, their experiences navigating leadership within higher education have been remarkably similar in certain ways (Alghofaily 2019: 14).

What this study is sharing is a drive to describe a phenomenon that women have identified and are currently examining; the persistence of systemic obstacles to women's leadership advancement in higher education that results in a loss of talent to institutions.

The literature for this study has identified interconnected imperatives why higher education institutions must remove these obstacles.

A study by Linden (2012: 5) indicate that the bulk of females in senior leadership positions in universities, particularly black females, have experienced rejection, condescension, isolation, dismissal, communication challenges, lack of support or appreciation, and failure to be given due credit. Ford (2016: 499) suggests that females would be more successful if organisational and national pay procedures (reporting and arbitration procedures, internal recruitment, advancement) and development systems and practices did not inhibit them from advancing professionally and equitably to their increasing numbers and higher education levels. In for-profit business organisations, females do not represent a significant number of senior leadership roles and therefore cannot access the legitimate power essential to gain considerable leadership, which then positions them to access more genuine power to advance organisations through their leadership. Currently, organisational leadership depends on male-dominated leadership teams to be more innovative, secure topmost clients, and produce increasing revenues from their male-dominated clients and business networks. Females are rejected and unequivocally underestimated in these male networks, yet they possess unique and diverse values that can be beneficial for the university.

Leaders of higher-education institutions play a crucial role in developing their countries and shaping future generations. Yet, in a system primarily built and represented by men, females continue to encounter barriers that hold them back from influential and senior leadership positions. Research has found that almost 60% of students in South African universities are female, but this number does not reflect the representation of females in the senior ranks of university management and governance.

The participation of females in higher education has been increasing steadily. However, most females are employed at the lower levels of organisational hierarchies (Hong 2018: 350). We still see only a few females in senior leadership positions. Men continue to be the leading group occupying positions of power in medicine, law, and business industries. The field of higher education administration is no exception in this regard. In this field as in others, females tend to be concentrated in the lower and middle levels. When females

do occupy a highersenior leadership position, it is often a position with little power, insufficient resources, and uncertainty in upward mobility. Since females are not naturally less capable than men, external elements must be examined to explain the low representation of females in senior leadership positions. If we can realise the influences that block the advancement of females in higher educational leadership careers, we can devise strategies to overcome these influences. This study reviews various barriers discussed in the literature that have kept females in senior leadership roles.

3.2.1 PERSONAL BARRIERS

A number of institutional issues in higher education—including in business schools—can negatively affect women's opportunities to take on leadership roles in the academic community. Overcoming these challenges is only possible when both men and women shoulder the responsibility for increasing diversity in their ranks.

These barriers are specific to the females aspiring to positions of higher educational leadership. Personal factors include personality characteristics, background influences, and socialisation patterns that represent many females, and serve to block their career progression. Each female brings these barriers with herself to the work environment.

As mentioned above that personal barriers are things that females bring to the work environment. Two types of personal barriers are discussed in this study. These are personality factors and background and socialisation factors.

3.2.1.1 PERSONALITY FACTORS

Many personality factors combine to reserve females' lesser roles. Primary among these are self-concept and opinions of one's ability, as well as ambition levels. It is well acknowledged that, as a group, females tend to have lower self-concepts than men do. Females are not as self-assured of their abilities as men are, and incline to attribute many of their former successes to external factors (such as a blessing). Men, on the other hand, are likely to attribute their successes to their own capacity and creativity (Adamma 2017: 8341). Since females tend to have low self-esteem, they are not as willing to volunteer for challenging and new tasks as men are. Females often tend to lag behind, where men can make the progress necessary for career growth.

Perhaps partly as a function of their lower self-concepts, females also tend to have lower ambition levels than men do. Where a male aspires to be a surgeon, a female aspires to be a nurse; where a male aspires to be an executive, a female aspires to be a clerical worker; where a male aspires to be a manager, a female aspires to be a schoolteacher. It is not that there is something wrong with being a nurse, a clerical worker, or a schoolteacher. Rather, it is that if females aspired to an extensive range of professional classifications instead of to a few low power, low-paying positions, their depiction in all levels of the organisational hierarchy may intensify.

3.2.2 SOCIETAL BARRIERS

As noted, women have made significant strides over the past half a century in terms of advancements into the workforce (Sule et al. 2017: 25). However, it is well-documented that women occupy top executive positions in politics and industry much less frequently than men (The World Economic Forum 2015: 6; Sui Chu Ho 2015: 85; Sule et al. 2017: 26). Bias and discrimination against professional females could take place when members of a society hold certain stereotypes that are in contrast with the actual characteristics of these women. These stereotypes can prevent females from achieving their goals as a result of the expected social roles they have to uphold. This part of the study argues social role theory and gender stereotypes to explain a deeper motive as to why women to some extent are being underrepresented in leadership positions. Moreover, this literature review provides a comprehensive overview of gender discrimination barriers to leadership.

Social role theory proposes that people's beliefs about social groups in their society come from associating specific behaviors to their normal social roles (Koenig and Eagly 2014: 70). According to Morris (1988: 16), socialization is the process through which a child becomes an individual respecting her or his social environment's norms, laws and customs. Thus, individuals conduct particular social behaviors once they have formed into a social group (Turner and Tajfel 1986: 10). A study by Schmitt et al. 2009: 125) found that these behaviors are enacted and reproduced in an effort to strengthen and protect a group's perceived collective identity. These leads to the constituted social group's identity; an inherent form of demarcating itself from other groups. Such

behaviors, partly because they de facto bar outsiders from access, contribute to maintaining the status of a social group so that the group's leaders can maintain control or power over a population as well as resources and established hierarchies (Tolbert et al., 1999). Among different social group identities, gender is a particularly common and potent one (Heilman 1983: 657). Indeed, most individuals tend to manage information with a certain level of conscious or unconscious regard for their gender as a method of differentiation from others (Morris 1988: 16). To understand the dynamics of gender interactions, this study draws heavily on Eagly's (1987: 86) social role theory and her research on gender stereotypes (Carli and Eagly 2007: 62; Eagly and Karau 2002: 537). According to Eagly's (1987: 7) theory, gender differences are a "product of the social roles that regulate behaviour in adult life". This theory explains that the differences between women and men in their behaviors are a result of the different roles the two genders play based on the expectations held by their society (Eagly 1987: 87). As a result of this theory, gender roles are the common beliefs that individuals in a society hold and behave accordingly to fulfil, based on their social identity, which means the ways that people's self-concepts are based on their membership in social groups. The social-role theory explains the common gender stereotypes society holds that organize men and female roles. It illustrates the differences in their behaviors and the division of labor based on stereotypes that are defined as "a set of attributes ascribed to a group and imputed to its individual members simply because they belong to that group" (Heilman 1983: 271).

One notion of Eagly's social role theory and gender stereotypes emphasizes that women are communal, and men are agentic. The communal aspect of the gender stereotype in social role theory is that women are believed to be helpful, emotional, kind, affectionate, sympathetic, and concerned with the welfare of others. While, the agentic aspect of the gender stereotype is that men are believed to be controlling, forceful, assertive, aggressive, direct, ambitious and independent from other people. These gender-stereotypic aspects divide female and male roles in family and work are responsible for the differences in their behaviors (Eagly 1987: 88).

Two key barriers are also pertinent here. The first has to do with the sex-role socialisation that a female receives from her primary childhood, and the second with the kinds of

experiences that she attains in her growth through her career. Most individuals agree that the sex-role socialisation of females is relatively different from that of males. Boys are socialised to be forceful, competitive, and achievement-oriented; qualities that come in handy as they progress up the ladder of their careers (Sui Chu Ho 2015: 85). However, girls are frequently socialised to be submissive, non-competitive, and nurturing. These qualities keep females from pursuing senior positions. They also aid men in the safeguarding of a status quo through their persistent progression up the organisational ladder. As sex-role socialisation has its influence through years of taming, its effects are mostly devious and difficult to neutralise (Ibid: 89). Females also have different experiences than men do. Particularly appropriate to our argument are work-related experiences. Within the field of higher education, females tend to have more instructional experience than men do.

Females also tend to have experience in support functions more than in management functions. Additionally, females' experiences in the job market often limit their preparedness to carry on seeking these positions. Truthfully, they do not want to court additional disappointment. All these elements indicate that many females do not have the "right" experience to advance in higher education leadership; those who do can be forced by perpetual failures to limit their drives. Due to socialisation patterns and work-related experiences, many females do not have the mental or academic preparation that they need for leadership in higher education leadership. The problem is compounded by the shortage of professional role models for females aspiring to be leaders. It is challenging for females to make objective career choices, as a consequence their career paths tend to be less directed and less forthright than those of men.

It has been explained that the societal barrier outlined how women face obstacles in different historical and socio-political contexts, limiting their ability to achieve empowerment by aspiring to and achieving leadership roles. Moreover, this part of the literature review has argued that a role congruity theory was an extension of Eagly's social roles theory (1987: 88), whereby both females and males relate to women's expected roles in the society. Therefore, gender stereotypes shape the unequal relationship between men and women and establish men's superior position over women in a society. Not surprisingly, such status affects both one's performance and perceived

status, which in this case is lower if they were women and higher if they were men. Furthermore, when women leaders try to exercise authority outside their gender stereotypes, they face support and negative reactions for their violation of gender stereotypes. It is clear that personal barriers of many kinds delay females' progress in higher education leadership. Personality factors consist of self-concept and aspiration levels. Background and socialisation factors, particularly sex-role socialisation and workrelated experiences, further restrict females' prospects to progress into leadership roles.

1.13.1.3 INTERPERSONAL BARRIERS

These barriers describe the connections between aspirant females and dominant power groups in higher education leadership. Sex-role stereotypes about the abilities of females, their motivations, and their commitment to their careers are patterns of interpersonal barriers that keep females "in their place" (Nicholson, Kuhl, Maniates, Lin, and Bonetti 2020: 122). Interpersonal barriers result from the interaction between females and their organisational environments and can occur between peers and across hierarchical levels.

Interpersonal barriers result from the vibrant chemistry between a female and her environment. These barriers arise because to get ahead in higher education leadership, females must intermingle with men who occupy most senior positions, and who bring their own personal and social prejudices to the work setting. Two major types of interpersonal barriers are sex-role stereotyping and inter-group polarisation.

1.13.1.4 SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPING

Myths concerning the work of females are abundant. There are myths about the capabilities of females, their commitment to occupations, and their prospective effectiveness in leadership roles. Prejudices about the "proper" roles for females are also widespread. These myths and prejudices are very powerful obstacles to female progression. With respect to capabilities, it is occasionally argued that females do not have the necessary skills and character to be effective leaders (Rayment-Jones, Harris, Harden, Khan and Sandall (2019: 461). They are supposed to be incapable of handling management, too sensitive to cope with conditions sensibly, and too fragile to make

tough decisions. At least numerous research studies of females in leadership roles have shown that females behave similarly to men in the same situations. Females are task-oriented and can initiate and lead others' activities when obligated to do so. There are also many myths about females' commitment to work and careers. It is argued that females take too much sick leave and that they always put their families before their careers (White 2017: 71). These statements probably do apply to some females. However, statistics gathered by the U. S. Department of Labour and other organisations show these statements to be, at best, 'half-truths' that are often fatal for a female's career ambitions.

Several myths also question the effectiveness of females as leaders. It is argued that men do not want females as supervisors. It is also argued that some females also do not want to work for other females (Wroblewski 2017: 49). There are also prejudices about the proper role of females in work settings. It is suggested that because females are nurturing, they do better in instructional than in administrative settings (Ibid). It is also argued that females' 'femininity' clashes with the masculine demands of leadership positions (Ibid: 51). Both men and women frequently share these types of biases. They arise from many years of conditioning, and they will take a long time to disappear. Overall, evidence suggests that myths, biases and sex-role stereotypes continue to flourish in spite of contrary evidence (ibid).

1.13.1.5 INTER-GROUP POLARISATION

When different groups of people are unfamiliar with each other, they tend to split variations among themselves. This means that differences between groups are blown up, and differences between individuals within the group are curtailed. In other words, a person's individuality is disregarded in the focus on the group label. Many females have suffered as a result of this interpersonal barrier. Instead of being treated as individuals with individual skills, talents, and experiences, they are treated as females' who are like all other females. Polarisation occurs, not because men know only a few females, but because they know very few females with leadership abilities. It is particularly demoralising because it brings into play all the biases and stereotypes that an individual may hold. If a female fails in a leadership role, her failure is then held up as a sample of what happens if females deviate from their correct place in society.

Two sets of influences concerning interpersonal barriers are applicable. Sex-role stereotyping, and myths and biases about females' skills, commitment, roles, and effectiveness constitute one major obstacle. Another is inter-group polarisation, which results in all females suffering from the errors and failures of a few.

3.2.3 STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

According to Eustachio, Caldana, Will, M., Salvia, Rampasso, Anholon and Kovaleva (2020: 3761), paid family leave and childcare assistance would make it more possible for females to meet their care requirements at home while also meeting their responsibilities in the workplace. Further, females without access to paid leave are more likely to quit their jobs after giving birth than those with paid leave. Equal pay would also help advance females in leadership. As females gain higher levels of pay, they are consequently perceived as better contenders for senior positions and are less likely to take time out of the workforce (ibid). By giving females higher pay and equal pay, it makes them less likely to take breaks out of the workforce, which means they will continue to climb ladders quicker.

Certain behaviours typically observed more in females are also said to undermine their career chances, such as reluctance to self-promote, limiting volubility (i.e. the time spent talking) and invisibility (i.e. 'states of exclusion' or difference because of a lack of females in leadership roles). In short, whether consciously or unconsciously, females tend to undermine their own efforts and contributions (Sanchez and Lehnert 2019: 22). Sanchez and Lehnert further argues that instead of training females to exhibit these attributes, the focus should be on making sure that the environment and the institutional culture structures are what they need to be to promote females in leadership. "I don't think the problem has ever been that females are not interested in leadership positions or higher-paying jobs, the problem is there are these really difficult layers of barriers and bias that are preventing them from achieving them" (ibid: 24). Sandberg, in her book "*Lean In*" interpreted a movement that suggested that success relies on individual initiative. However, instead of training females to have a 'leaning in' type of philosophy, lessons that are more beneficial could be offered in salary negotiation or helping females

understand the best process for requesting a raise or negotiating a higher salary when they get a senior role.

Whilst going through the research findings by Gallant (2014: 212), it is clear that the representation of females in senior positions is also based on the socio-economic status of the country. For instance, in Scandinavia, initiatives using local policies to drive greater equitability have proven successful. Many of the structural and workplace issues listed in the table above can be overcome by government or institutional policies (ibid: 222), for example, the introduction of family/childcare and shared responsibility policies enables females to go back to work after childcare and have the spouse/partner take over the responsibilities of childcare.

In the United States, single moms and the spouses or partners of the lowest-earning employees are the least likely to be working because they are unable to cover daycare costs. Therefore, the neediest are incapable of participating in the workforce, a longterm poverty trap and an extensive cost, both socially and to the government (Fritz and Knippenberg (2017: 1018). In the United Kingdom, all three- and four-year olds are entitled to 15 hours a week of free childcare and working parents have tax incentives to help with childcare costs (ibid: 1019). If such initiatives would be extended more broadly in higher-education institutions in South Africa, such a supportive policy would assist female workers and be an easy step for governments towards facilitating greater diversity and equality.

Many difficulties and drawbacks face females who aspire to be senior leaders in higher education. Barriers occur at the personal, interpersonal, and structural/organisational levels. The study has discussed some of the barriers that the relevant literature has addressed and the strategies that may be used to overcome these barriers. However, without careful attention to the specific barriers present in a particular agency, and matching approaches to these obstacles, the task of this study is incomplete. Females can be fairly represented at the highest levels only with much hard work and extra effort. Regardless of whether it has to matter, gender does matter for how people react to leaders and what leaders can bring to their leadership roles.

3.2.4 INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Institutional barriers refer to the organisational-level causes that are inconsistent in the hiring and promotion of men and females. While these barriers vary significantly from institution to institution, they can create a huge obstruction that makes the leadership experience challenging (Dunlop and Scheepers 2023: 437). Often cited, the experience of females in senior positions in higher education is a 'chilly climate' (Nicholson, Kuhl, Maniates, Lin, and Bonetti 2020: 91), whereby females in senior leadership positions feel isolated and lonely.

Formal and informal leadership development within any organisation is perhaps the most effective way to improve leadership capacity within any workplace. Moodly and Toni (2017: 138) report that leadership development programmes for females continue to be a critical element in teaching and supporting females in higher education to prepare for, accomplish, and maintain positions of influence within their institutions. The bottom line is that we need to help prepare (for example, increase aspirations, develop skills and obtain mentors and coaches) more females for leadership in higher education. Enabling structures might include career development support, coaching, training, advice and sponsorship, professional development, organisational change such as equity policies, advocacy and mentorships (Morley 2014: 330). Organisational leadership development programmes build the capacity and capabilities of groups of people to gain leadership skills and problem solve (ibid). While such programmes or structures enhance the leadership development of both genders, many organisations specifically promote female leadership programmes.

Perhaps the most common application of support for women leaders has been seen in mentoring programmes. Many females report that support through either informal or formal mentoring relationships has been beneficial and that in many cases it can be as beneficial for the mentors as they are for the mentees (Waheeda and Nishan 2018: 10). Encouraging current leaders, male and female, to serve as mentors promoting the accomplishment of females and providing guidance and tips for career advancement is noted as a key to successful support of females in leadership (Ibid: 12). Universities, like all other education systems, have the opportunity to make a significant difference to the effectiveness of women leaders through the development of resources and programmes

that directly support current leaders and those aspiring to take on a leadership role. This study describes the characteristics and experiences of seven senior female leaders in higher education.

Organisational/structural barriers exist in the institutional systems of higher education leadership. They are found in the policies and procedures of organisations and the formal and informal structures of the organisation. Organisational/structural barriers to the progression of females in higher education leadership can be found in many aspects of organisational functioning, including:

- recruitment methods
- selection systems
- evaluation systems
- communication systems

It is the objective of equal opportunity programmes to make recruitment as open and transparent as possible to ensure impartiality to all. Yet, the nation with the most transparent recruitment policy, is Turkey, despite having less obvious equal opportunities legislation than Australia, the UK, the USA and Europe. The Higher Education Council of Turkey provides stringent regulations for recruitment and selection, so everything is very transparent, which benefits females. By contrast, Australia does have equal opportunities legislation, but prescribed guidelines, according to Özkanlı and White (2008: 53) are open to interpretation, and the legislation can be 'got around'. Furthermore, management consultants often brought in to fill senior leadership positions tend to select for 'cultural fit'. All this creates an atmosphere where females can easily be sidestepped.

The trend to want to 'fit the job' as closely as possible can also act against females, as the qualities thought necessary often correspond to a predetermined, and male, pattern. The ACE study of college presidents found that because of the growing complexity of higher-education institutions, those selecting leaders tended to look for a similar experience of a senior management role, which discriminates against diversity (Gandhi, and Sen 2020: 63). South Africa still has a long way to go towards an unbiased promotion system. Currently, the promotional models are diverse, even at the same institution: in some departments, it goes on the recommendation of the head of the department; in others, promotions must be applied for and in others, there is no method or system at all

(Glass and Cook 2016: 62). Younger people are favoured which discriminates against those who have for good reasons taken longer over their career; all-male selection committees put more value on a female's ability to adjust to a masculine ethos than her academic qualifications (Gandhi and Sen 2020: 122).

Researchers of organisational leadership studied inspectors and bosses' opinions of promotability and found that role congruity is not always an obvious bias. It was often a subtle unrecognised undercurrent that limited females' potential to move up the corporate career ladder (Katuna 2014: 55). Lathabhavan and Balasubramanian 2017: 235) added that females are at a distinct disadvantage because senior leaders believe that men have more time to dedicate to the job and that females have to divide their time between their job, spouses, and children. Rather than be groomed for leadership like their male counterparts, young females are kept in place while being given added support duties. Kele and Pietersen (2015: 12) suggested that hiring practices might be a result of males mentoring males, male proximity to hiring leaders, and visibility at communal and athletic events rather than an open, intended bias.

1.13.1.6 THE ISSUE OF PROMOTION TO SENIOR ROLES

Another corporate issue is that promotion to senior positions entails more than superior skills and experience. It may be subjective through blurred guidelines and constraints such as friendly relationships with influential people or other unspoken expectations. Further, the ways to participate in opportunities for career growth in organisations, such as training or travel, are often veiled in private (Wolffram 2018: 88). This vagueness increases when the employee is female. When trying to navigate through the concealed expectations for job promotion, females limited natural relationships with men in senior positions impede their abilities to secure senior appointments.

1.13.1.7 PUSHING FEMALES TOWARD THE EDGE

The improved presence of female leaders has led some to claim that gender inequality in the leadership territory is no longer a pressing issue. However, current research has irradiated the need to examine not only the number of leadership positions being offered to females but the quality of those positions as well (Zippel 2017: 114). While the steady growth of females' occupancy in senior roles is inspiring, before we can definitively

conclude that gender inequity in the leadership field has been fixed, a closer look at the conditions under which females are promoted, the types of positions that females are gaining, and how female leaders are appraised once they do reach the top is necessary.

The phenomenon of 'glass cliffs' is another danger to females entering senior leadership positions. The glass cliff effect describes a real-world occurrence in which females are more likely to be employed in risky leadership positions in poorly performing organisations, while men are more likely to be appointed to stable leadership positions in successful organisations (Zippel 2017: 115). This effect represents a subtle, yet dangerous, form of gender discrimination that may limit workplace diversity as well as women's ability to become successful leaders.

Females are favoured for positions in units that are in crisis, creating a set-up in which burnout or failure is a potential risk (O'Connor 2017: 259). Females who push through the glass ceiling are seen as necessary candidates to take over during crises. Due to the narrow support network around them, females often find these roles highly stressful, so they often leave their positions. This departure is often accredited to the female's lack of abilities or her reluctance to commit to the hard work needed at senior levels of leadership. Contrary to this claim that females who leave jobs are not committed to hard work, research has confirmed that 90% of females who leave their employment find work somewhere else, 70% of which is full-time (Ibid: 255). Despite these inspiring statistics, a consequence of a female's choice to leave is regularly a lateral move to a corporation where she must establish herself again.

By regularly placing more females than men in senior positions when organisations are performing disastrously and more men than females in command when organisations are performing positively may confirm stereotypical, negative perceptions regarding females and leadership abilities. As female leaders are generally subject to more scrutiny and criticism (Ibid: 245), a lack of success in reversing the institution's performance may be emphasised as confirmation that females are not effective leaders.

Female leaders face a double bind with regard to exhibiting masculine and feminine attributes (Bruckmüller and Branscombe 2010: 433). Female leaders who display

masculine traits are habitually evaluated negatively for acting out of line with prescriptions of their feminine role (Morley 2014: 115). Equally, because masculine traits are considered to be better matched to leadership roles when female leaders display feminine behaviours, they are often judged as unskilled (Kulich, Gartzia, Komarraju and Aelenei 2021: 22). According to the 'think crisis-think female' phenomenon, females are more likely to be nominated for risky leadership roles because they are assumed to have the stereotypical, feminine characteristics traditionally not appreciated as essential leadership abilities. On one hand, this may represent a situation in which females can present feminine characteristics without accepting undesirable judgements regarding their leadership ability. On the other hand, this may mean that only females who achieve the female stereotype would be promoted in these dangerous situations and that females who do not conform to typical gender stereotypes would not be considered. If the latter statement is true, the glass cliff may represent yet another situation in which females are penalised for acting against gender role expectations.

Female leaders have huge potential to contribute positively to universities. New research on female leaders suggests that female leaders are associated with greater innovation and cost-effectiveness, comprehensive student and community outreach and stronger records on corporate social responsibility (AAUW 2016: 42). Female representation in leadership positions also increases opportunities for females in lower positions, thus decreasing overall gender discrimination within universities (Ibid: 57). Despite this evidence, females remain significantly under-represented in senior positions in higher education.

A great deal of research to date concerns the barriers that prevent females from achieving leadership positions. Sex labelling and gender stereotypes lead decisionmakers to view females as less skilled and competent leaders, while in-group preferential treatment leads men to prefer other men for senior promotions and appointments, a phenomenon termed 'homosocial reproduction' (AAUW 2016: 60). Aside from understated and unconcealed forms of bias and discrimination, females are less likely than men to have access to robust specialised networks, social ties to influential leaders, backing from within the workplace and insider information, all of which provide critical support to leaders' flexibility (Ibid: 66).

1.13.1.8 THE GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOUR

According to AAUW (2016: 4), if a person works in an academic institution, it is assumed that she/he does not have a personal life. Thus, if an academic assumes a leadership post, that person is devoid of familial and care responsibilities (Dunlop, R. and Scheepers, C.B. (2023: 473). It is through the assumption that since females cannot be separated from their familial responsibility, they cannot take up leadership positions. Even if they do take up those positions, their lives would be that of a battle to try and balance between work and family (Ibid: 473). This just proves that institutions of higher education, globally, are somewhat 'insensitive' to female leaders and to those who aspire to be leaders.

This insensitivity towards female leaders has been investigated and proven by many researchers around the world (Rodrigo and Clavero (2022: 3; Woods Benschop and van Den Brink 2021: 9). All these studies found higher education management and leadership as dissenting with female's private responsibilities. Airin (2010: 210) explain that this trend is true if a female's dominant role is at home, then the female will not have time for the demands of leadership. This is what Bardoel, Drago, Cooper and Colbeck (2016: 1537) term 'bias avoidance' which describes how females feel they have to minimise family commitment if they are to be successful in their careers or be retained in leadership positions. Hearn, Strid, Humbert and Balkmar (2020: 258) do not agree with this theme as it does not explain why some females who are single, childfree, childless or have no parents are also absent from senior HE leadership positions. Justifications that name the barriers as marriage, housework and childcare fail to challenge essentialist and heterosexist rules that all females live in nuclear families and that, within those families, females do and will continue to take total responsibility for domestic arrangements (Ibid: 252). Such theories also overlook today's trends where females are now heading some families and males taking care of homes. Today, forms of gender personality are more complex and diverse than they were a couple of years ago (Hearn 2020: 97).

Drawing from research on gender equity and academic leadership, the researcher argues that female progression calls for substantial structural changes to the career ladder of higher education, changes that apply both to men and females. In other words, the terms of an academic career must be rehabilitated considering the experiential truths of the

modern workplace where females and men are employed full-time. The entire career path must be re-imagined around vital human needs rather than essentialist models of the gendered workplace where every full-time worker is presumed to have a full-time caregiver at home. Similarly, universities need to critically study the gendered division of labour following tenure for men and females, guaranteeing that everyone shares in the duties so that both females and men can continue to pursue their careers.

1.13.1.9 GENDER BIAS AND MISRECOGNITION

According to this theme, the way in which the leadership role is assembled controls the selection process in so far as specific abilities are standardised and arranged (Doherty and Manfredi 2010: 150). It should be noted that gender bias has been theorised in terms of the dominant group cloning itself and appointing in its image to minimise risk (Wolffram 2018: 88). This cloning is often unintentional. Bias is more likely to ensue if assessments are based on unclear measures and the assessment procedure is private. Females currently are refusing to be tokens and are taking up positions that they would have previously not taken. Moreover, with many institutions being transparent in their appointment selection, females have a greater chance of success (Zippel 2017: 48). One can learn from the example of Sweden, which by 2010 already had 43% of female Vice-Chancellors (ibid) because there is a legal obligation for public universities to provide gender statistics on students, doctoral students, teachers and professors, deans and heads of departments (Zippel 2017: 50).

However, this is not to say that discrimination during the selection process is not an issue anymore, since most HEIs have a status quo that is often informally invoked to determine who would be a comfortable fit for a leadership position (Flint et al 2016: 674). Bias can be existent at different stages of academic life, with female's skills and abilities misrecognised. In all UoTs in South Africa, for example, for a person to be selected and appointed as a leader, that person must demonstrate excellence in publishing. Although females are now publishing in UoTs institutions, they still account for only 29% of the world's researchers (Kezar 2014: 117). That is why it is important to review research resource allocation processes in these institutions in order to ensure that the percentages of both female and male applicants for grants, match the percentages of female and men among the potential applicants for research grants, and ensure that females and men

have the same accomplishment rates and receive the same normal size of grants (Ibid: 118).

This study develops an intra-organisational power viewpoint on the dynamics of promotion bias to destination positions. The study proposes that social supremacy emerges as social classification based on a candidate's observable and invisible markers leads to slanted insights and stereotyping, which, when combined with group preference, favouritism, tokenism and conformity pressures within committee practices, stimulate the perceived degree of philosophical irregularity between the candidate and the organisation. It is the magnitude of the perceived degree of ideological irregularity that drives promotion bias. This bias has potent effects on the institutionalisation of power over time (Ibid: 120). This study's angle eventually offers new insights into the role of dominant organisational philosophy and dynamics of biases that continue to limit promotion opportunities of females to senior leadership positions in UoTs.

1.13.1.10 MANAGEMENT AND MASCULINITY

One of the major institutional obstacles to advancing female leadership remains the gendered nature of the university itself, which favours masculine traits and ignores the need for domestic labour. Gender stratification is a firm feature in universities thus making it a highly masculinised work environment situated directly in the public domain: "Founded by men for men, the academic world spreads career styles and rewards behaviours that are masculine in nature and origin, appropriate to the men who once exclusively pursued them" (Subašić, Hardacre, Elton, Branscombe, Ryan and Reynolds 2018: 707).

Northouse and Lee (2016: 225) state "it has been hypothesised that a good leader is defined according to normative masculinity, with maleness seen as a resource and femaleness as a form of negative equity". The focus should be on productivity, keenness, grading, policy, and the unchallengeable logic of the market and not on masculinity (Ibid: 227). Stereotypical theories that suggest that femaleness is perceived as incompatible with intellectual and leadership authority should be removed. These concepts of thinking of a male (and not a female) when thinking of leadership should be demolished (Kezar

2014: 120). The view that leadership is demanding, aggressive and authoritarian and more fitting for males is in itself a form of barrier for females who also have such qualities or of females who have other qualities which can make them good leaders. This is prevalent in Nigeria, for instance, where males are selected as leaders in universities because “they are masculine enough to deal with student unrests” (Madsen 2011: 131). That is why masculinity is not equated with caring in the way that femininity is, so men can practice care-less masculinity without moral disapproval. This stereotypical tendency is possibly one of the reasons that discourages females from applying for highly senior positions. Sandberg (2013: 145) comments on the dualism of leadership as masculine or feminine. Females and males lead differently, therefore, gender sensitivity should be more important in leading change than the biological sex of post holders (Ibid).

3.2.5 THE NEGATIVE PICTURE PAINTED ABOUT LEADERSHIP

It is also critically disheartening that to females, the process of career advancement into leadership is often experienced as a battle to be fought by as an individual. Many females have to fight their own battles. This means that whatever challenges they encounter, they have to manoeuvre alone. The likening of the process of being a leader to a ‘battle’ is quite disturbing as it is an indication of sadness rather than development and advancement. Female leaders are left to fend for themselves and because there is still a shortage of mentors for females, the female leader either has to manoeuvre or gives up the position of leadership. Leadership is, therefore, tainted as a struggle. It is something that is for the brave-hearted, as there are numerous potential threats of sabotage by colleagues. Thus, the overall picture of careers taken by females is tainted, as one that is filled with possible danger and that to thrive one has to be prepared to struggle.

Leadership is a process that is often most effective when there is a diverse mix of skills; discernments epitomised and able to work well together. When studying females in leadership styles, it is important not to concentrate on distinct characteristics and determine which gender has more or less of the anticipated characteristics since that can reinforce unhelpful stereotypes. Perhaps a more important emphasis for investigation is understanding how to increase effective leadership and how females in leadership positions can have a challenging but manoeuvrable experience.

There is a challenge in defining leadership styles because there are as many styles of leading as there are people who see themselves as leaders (Mncwango 2010. Book review: Ramphela 2008: 407). When studying female leaders, it is important to look at the motivations of females as a determinant of their methods of leading. As Moor, Cohen, and Beerli 2015: 8) pointed out in her study on pluralistic leadership, “female leadership is allied with a more hands-on, personal, and interactive style as well as with different types of power and stimulus strategies that accentuate mutuality and collectivity”. Many other dynamics also need to be well thought out when questioning the styles of female leaders; issues of race, background, aptitude, rank and sexual orientation make issues of leadership more multifaceted (Morley 2014: 115). For instance, in their study of leadership, Redmond, Gutke, Galligan, Howard and Newman (2016: 332), focused on varied voices within university settings and held that “females and people of color tend to have nonhierarchical views of leadership, whereas white men tend to be categorized”. Perceptions on leadership styles tend to centre on a concerted, shared decisionmaking leadership style as opposed to a more customary, top-down approach to leadership (Morley 2014: 116). How females are viewed as leaders often depends upon the perception of the style of leadership presented.

In the interest of one of this study’s interview questions, which investigated the reasons females prefer to become leaders, the techniques in which they approach leadership, Narayanan (2017: 5) indicated that females involved in leadership positions reap various rewards. The authors noted that females in leadership positions endured it because those leaders often experienced outcomes in increased interpersonal relations; they experience personal growth and become agents of change.

Gallant (2014: 203) states that:

“Gender may not be a contributing factor of style, but it has an influence on the self-perceptions of men and female as leaders and on their own professional and social experience”.

Although the style may be defined by distinct dissimilarities rather than gender, many studies expose the influence of gender on methods of leading others. In a study involving females in leadership roles (Gandhi and Sen 2020: 55) explains that the majority of females surveyed in her study trust their biggest stumbling block to advancement “was

the college board's mindset that was perceived as favouring candidates that fit in a male-dominated environment" This type of stereotypical image about leaders and effective leadership persists. This perception concerning preferred leadership styles also emerges in our staff meetings whereby masculine leadership behaviours remain strong. This kind of bias is explicit despite females being a majority in the meeting. It is unfortunate that even females value the input of a male colleague than that of a female colleague even if the two hold the same position or have the same qualification.

1.13.1.11 LACK OF ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS

Another reason for the internal barrier to women in leadership is the lack of senior or visibly successful female role models and mentors. Mentoring is a process whereby an individual who has the experience and knowledge in a particular field can actively help, advise, guide and offer support to facilitate the learning or development of another person. The process of mentoring involves two persons, one in a leadership position who guides and advises another who is currently in a junior position. Women in executive positions stress that the lack of mentoring among women has been detrimental to their climb up the corporate ladder. Because men can easily occupy the highest positions of leadership and are more likely to be in powerful positions to open doors for those with inferior status. This is a serious barrier to women's advancement.

Many countries place higher education at the centre of their development policies. The urge is to continuously change the face of higher education leadership in South Africa, to facilitate moving forward to ensure that higher education leadership in this country is not only suitable for integration within the African Continent but also relevant internationally. Despite their own challenges, are universities the desired agents of change by ensuring that females get appointed to senior leadership positions? Does the quality of females in universities provide a meaningful contribution to local, regional and global competitiveness? That is the reason why female leaders need to be capacitated for them to be of essence in universities.

Encouraging female leadership through higher education is most effective if skilled females are selected to senior decision-making positions through a credible process that ensures their rightfulness in the eyes of the public. The national government's style of

picking females for senior posts lacks trustworthiness and thus insinuates that those females are tokens (Moodly and Toni 2015: 45). The only way to standardise female leadership roles is for females to have legality and an empowering environment that protects that obligation; that is, through educational will, delivery of sufficient resources, and implementation capacity. Without these, the promotion of females to senior positions will continue to be merely symbolic. Females having a legitimate leadership role in higher education, will help to build a strong learning and working environment.

Females need to form connections and seek out a network since these groups are good because they are natural support systems for each other. To get more females in senior leadership positions, females need to help each other. Mentoring is an invaluable resource for the enrollment and preparation of females for the college presidency. Rincon, González and Barrero (2017: 320) confirm that females with exceptional credentials can find it difficult to rise and stay in senior leadership positions without having been vouched for by influential people in leadership positions. Senior leadership positions in higher education are dominated by men and, as a result, men have more prospects to have access to sponsorships and promotions, whereas females may be omitted from these types of influences. Mwangi (2019: 117) noted that mentorship could help aspirant females to replace senior female leadership positions of those who have impending retirement. It is critical that females help others to twig obstacles and show appreciation for each other by understanding females' resources, strengths, and skills.

1.13.1.12 THE DOUBLE BIND

The women's leadership literature helps to frame how we think about a key dilemma in women's leadership in the context of gender norms. Although we frequently conceive of gender as a property of individuals, feminist sociologists offer a more systemic view in which gender refers to a set of assumptions, ideas, beliefs, and expectations about the roles of women and men that serve as a basis of social organization (Adamma (2017: 8347). The gendered system is achieved through a socialization process that involves the development of masculine orientations and roles for men and feminine orientations and roles for women (Ibid) as well as a hierarchy between these two based on the dominance of masculinity over femininity.

Women leaders' double bind arises from followers' contradictory expectations that are rooted in the societal female gender role and the organizational leader role. Women's leadership is often analyzed with reference to what has come to be known as the double bind: when women leaders observe societal gender role expectations and exhibit feminine behaviors, they are seen as weak (Eagly and Heilman 2016: 350), but when they observe organizational role expectations and exhibit masculine behaviors, they risk being seen as aggressive.

Accordingly, females are often perceived as "atypical," even when they express behaviours that would be considered "normal" if exhibited by a man in a leadership position (Eagly and Heilman 2016: 351). Such predicaments make it difficult for female leaders to lead efficiently. Stereotypes influence our general perceptions of female leaders. When females do make it to the top, their performance goes through additional scrutiny and is more likely to be criticised than men leaders' performance. Females are evaluated more negatively on important work magnitudes such as performance, leadership ability, and problem-solving.

1.13.1.13 FEMALE LEADERSHIP ADVANTAGE AS A BARRIER

According to Rincón, González and Barrero 2017: 319), females may make better leaders than men. This theory stems from the assumption that females make greater use of transformational leadership, the use of which is linked to increased leadership effectiveness and organisational performance (Cook and Glass 2014: 91). However, a poll by Gallup found that most people prefer male bosses over female bosses (Elsesser 2016: 44). Considering females' seeming leadership advantage, the inclination for male bosses seems to be somewhat driven by bias than by merit. The topic of prejudice against females (and in favour of men) has received an extensive amount of research attention and has produced theories explaining the circumstances under which gender prejudice arises and how it is manifested.

Eagly and Carli (2007: 63) define prejudice as the unfair evaluation of people based on the stereotypical judgements of their group rather than the behaviour or qualifications of its individual members. In general, females are thought to be more interpersonally skilled than men, whereas men are considered to be more proficient than females (Santovec

2010: 1). These stereotypical conclusions represent beliefs about the qualities of men and females and are comprised of two intersecting, but different forms of stereotypes known as descriptive and prescriptive (Omair 2017: 15). Descriptive stereotypes describe what males and females are typically like, whereas prescriptive stereotypes describe what males and females should be like. In other words, the belief that men tend to be more capable than females would be a descriptive stereotype, whereas the belief that men should be more capable than females would be a prescriptive stereotype.

1.13.1.14 THE “OLD BOY’S” NETWORKS AS A BARRIER

The old boys’ club refers to the alleged advantage that males in senior leadership have over their female counterparts in interacting with a powerful network which is not available to females. For example, male employees may have a conversation with their leaders in ways that female employees cannot. Nguyen (2013: 123) has revealed that “unintentional exclusion, dwindling, and sidelining can function to exclude females from leadership positions” On the other hand (McNae and Vali 2015: 288) mention that men have boy’s clubs which are male-dominated and that is where potential leaders are discussed and selected from these professional networks. The networks selected for people in these positions often do not always adequately represent a range of identity groups.

This old-boy’s network comprises males who have been educated at the same institutions or who have climbed the corporate ladder together, and thereafter formed a network. Females are frequently overlooked when it comes to promotions because they are outside these networks. Given the fact that females traditionally have not been a primary force within institutions, they simply have not developed similar networking systems.

1.13.1.15 WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Another organisational barrier is the interactions many females have with their mentors, bosses, and female co-workers. Most work colleagues tend to bond through similar interests. Since there tend to be few females in senior leadership positions, many females are unable to find a female mentor. Females are intimidated in the workplace because of their limited access to capable mentors. Many people prefer to have mentors of the same gender because they tend to manoeuvre the challenges most commonly faced. Since

men do not face the same challenges and belong to boys' networks, many times they simply do not avail themselves as female mentors (Johnson 2014: 836).

Females also have fewer opportunities for mentoring. Some senior male leaders or corporate leaders do try specifically to assist young females in the advancement of their careers, but male bosses often find it easier to mentor young men, seeing them as future versions of themselves; they take them out for drinks or a game of golf, and for many reasons, find it hard to do this for young females (Acker 2014: 76). Many (not all) senior females are happy to mentor other females but, if any senior females are not available and the men are not considerate, females in leadership and those aspiring to be leaders do not get this support (Ibid: 79).

The needs of females from their mentors also tend to differ from the needs of men. Many females need more encouragement, an example to follow, and simply more tasks to complete (ibid). Male mentors tend to resist mentoring a female because they perceive females as more emotional, not as skilled at problem-solving (stereotype) and the risk of being accused of sexually harassing females (Mahope 2014: 288).

1.13.1.16 LACK OF INVESTMENT IN FEMALES

There is a deficiency of regulated intercessions to develop females in leadership positions. Successful senior female leaders during a conference on Women Leaders in Higher Education in Pretoria in 2015, discussed how females have had to learn on the job or seek out their own development (often from overseas mentors). There were no formal mentoring arrangements, very few development programmes and no regulated capacity building or career advice. This opened gaps for failure or stepping down of those females from leadership positions. During a meeting attended in my department, colleagues complained about their female leader and the response that they were given by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (who is female) was female leaders in higher education are not mentored on how to lead; therefore, staff need to be patient as the leader was learning on the job. This came as a surprise to those staff members who were complaining because they were hoping that the leader will be chastised. It was comforting to learn that the executive leader identified the challenges that the leader faced because

as a female leader herself, she was manoeuvring through numerous challenges without assistance as potential female leaders are not being identified and prepared any assistance.

There is evidence that when females do aim for leadership, they are often frustrated and challenged (Acker 2014: 78). However, this study also found that many female academics are reluctant to aim for senior leadership and perceive it as an uninviting career option. As an academic myself, this is true as females are always reluctant to do extra work which can be beneficial to their advancement. Some are even reluctant to take up free studying opportunities or attend conferences that can empower them into leadership roles. If institutions want to empower females, there is an urgent need to transform leadership and make it more attractive and friendlier so that more females can be enticed in becoming leaders.

3.2.6 CULTURAL BARRIERS FACING FEMALE LEADERS

Literature on the challenges and marginalisation of women in higher education and leadership has focused mostly on the voices of women in understanding their experiences. The structural and cultural milieu of the higher education landscape has continuously been put forward as part of a complexity of contributing factors to the challenges.

Most African cultures perceive females as citizens with secondary status (Mahope 2014; 290). Changing this social approach may take a long time. A substitute frame of leadership that enables females' space to exercise leadership beyond the confines of access to power may hold more immediate promise. Even in other countries globally, the problem of female under-representation is prominent. Just three per cent of vice-chancellors in India are females, and six of India's 13 female ViceChancellors run female-only institutions. Few females hold leadership roles, and new research has found that in South Asia, female academics are not being identified and prepared for leadership (Mc Nae and Vali 2015: 288). This is a long-term, global problem: men outnumbered females at a ratio of 5:1 at middle management level and 20:1 at senior management level, according to the UNESCO World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education (2012:5).

Morley and Crossouard (2015: 9) showed complex social, cultural and economic barriers to female leadership. These included the organisational culture within universities; discrimination in recruitment and selection for jobs; and unequal power relations. Females who desire leadership are frequently prohibited from senior positions. Many other females do not aim for senior leadership roles, as they perceive them to be unattractive career options (Ibid).

Females do not exist in a vacuum. Men and fellow females each of whom has opinions driven by their culture, education, religion and personal bias. Their resulting behaviour affects opinions about gender roles. In South Africa, just like in many African and Asian countries, this starts at birth, when the birth of a boy is celebrated, and the birth of a girl is mourned (Mahope 2014: 290). The boy child often gets first preference of an education. Therefore, after struggling to get an education, a girl child continues to struggle to be recognised as a leader, even if she proves that she has leadership qualities. In today's world, the environment needs to support a female's motivation to lead and encourage others to recognise and inspire her efforts even if she does not look or behave like the existing group of senior leaders.

The issue of gender diversity in senior and leadership positions is fascinating. Studies show that institutions that have the top records for promoting females outshine their competition on every measure of success (Morley and Crossouard 2016: 149). Yet more females unreasonably are failing to attain senior positions in universities. Reviewing current data on females in the workplace, findings of studies on the relationship between gender diversity in senior management and company performance, and the literature on gender behavioural differences and the workplace, this article explores the possible reasons for the persistent wage and gender gap between women and men in senior leadership positions and discusses possible remedies.

3.2.7 GENDER RELATIONS AS A BARRIER

Some females in leadership positions in UoTs have already taken control of their lives in many factions of the global society. They have proved that they can be trusted, and this

has built confidence and trust in them as born leaders. Despite the progress made towards gender equity, deep-rooted cultural beliefs concerning the roles of men and females in society continue to be played out in institutions. Institutional methods, work practices, standards, and discourse reveal manly experiences, manly values, and men's life situations (Gallant 2014: 207). This not only restricts the quality of work experience for men and females, but it weakens their possible contribution.

It is, however, fortunate that some females in senior leadership positions in UoTs have taken all the criticism and negativities thrown at them very positively and have transformed all the so-called weaknesses into strengths and have also tried their best to construct the missing balance between the masculine and feminine dynamics in the workplace (Gamble and Turner 2015: 87). Such females believe strongly that they are exceptional and must not be likened and compared with men for their influences and ability. Females of the present times are making the world think wider and smarter by accepting the natural variety of the systems and their evolutionary character and changing organisational structures to accommodate more females.

3.3 MANOEUVERING THROUGH THE CHALLENGES

Despite the obstacle's existent within the current institution of higher education, females still aspire to the role of leadership in higher education (Johnson 2014: 835). Research shows that female leaders are working to overcome sociocultural and structural barriers within their institutions. While most research on female's experience in leadership focuses on the barriers that limit females' upward mobility in the workplace, a small but growing body of work seeks to ascertain and isolate the conditions under which these barriers might be overcome.

There are amazing females who are able to navigate all domains of life (Gallant 2014: 203). They display a sharp awareness of their situation, which intensifies their ability for judgement. These females display dynamic brainpower. Many female leaders attribute their success in masculine environments to the inspiration of noteworthy family members and social backgrounds. Belief in self has often been embedded early in infancy with one or both parental figures, either a father or a mother whose support has been a major inspiration on career choices and the vivacity to follow ambitions outside traditional

borderlines. Moodly (2015: 230) state work within the social stereotype. They comprehend the dominant place of symbolic traces and can influence this understanding to their benefit. Females in senior positions continue to play chosen roles, such as the reproached or sympathetic wife, combined with their male colleagues. Others are able to rejoice their femaleness and influence as advantages that come with it. These females accept that being female is part of who they are and how they participate with others in the running of organisations and institutions. They enjoy the attention that they are labelled as 'only female' in huge organisations like universities.

3.4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING FEMALE LEADERSHIP

These days, just about every university has a diversity and inclusion policy. Like similar policies at large corporations, this policy typically lays out the institution's commitment to hiring and serving a diverse population. It might indicate that the institution is an equal opportunity employer, or that it encourages women and minorities to apply. It all sounds pretty promising, yet recent figures show just how much further we have to go to truly achieve diversity in higher education.

Even in top positions, women face challenges within institutional structures, systems and mind-sets that require transformative change. This research was inspired by two critical factors relating to women leaders in senior positions in education district offices. Firstly, women leaders are continually plagued with stereotyping, and secondly, women are repeatedly undermined by male colleagues. Although the South African Constitution and other related legislation prohibits any form of gender discrimination, inequalities and injustices against women still prevail. Women are subjected to a false notion that they lack the resilience and experience desired when faced with hard-hitting or threatening situations. The primary focus of this study was to explore the experiences of women leaders in senior positions in all the UoTs in South Africa. To underpin this study, the feminist theory was selected.

Progressing women in leadership positions, especially in institutes of higher education in South Africa remains a central issue for most of the countries around the world. With the changing times, the role and definition of leadership are transforming each day. Therefore, it is important to seek policies and initiatives that will empower women and

enable them to accept and maneuver through leadership challenges. Important lessons can be learned from the successful government and institutional systems that have delivered positive results towards this issue and existing programmes should be evaluated against establishing a benchmark for further improvement. The leadership training programmes for the women should include contextual elements from their own unique environment and aspiring women leaders need to build a strong network with women in power from other places for inspiration and personal development (Morley 2014: 114).

Since the end of apartheid, numerous pieces of legislation have been endorsed to tackle racial bias and other forms of inequity. The government has placed noteworthy importance on advancing gender equality throughout the South African society including higher education (Mouton, Louw and Strydom 2012: 21). While certain numbers give a positive impression of the movements in the numbers of females entering leadership positions, there still are challenges that females in leadership have to navigate.

Following South Africa's 1994 elections, there was an official acknowledgement of equality between the sexes, and the recognition of females' rights in South Africa (Mahope 2014: 290). The new Constitution, passed in 1996, mirrors this change. It contains a Bill of Rights with an equality paragraph and precisely forbids unfair discrimination on such grounds as gender, sex and sexual orientation. It says: "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth".

The prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of gender, sex, pregnancy and marital status is clearly intended to protect females. The grounds "sex", which is a biological feature, and "gender", a social artefact, are both included - perhaps unnecessarily. However, the result is that this section leaves no doubt that no unfair discrimination based on any feature of being a female will be tolerated.

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 added “family responsibility” to the list of grounds on which no “unfair discrimination” may occur. It also presented affirmative action for “designated groups”, computed to be “black people, females (of all ‘races’) and people with disabilities.” The most exciting bill that came in recently is the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill that made provision for at least 50% of decision-making posts in the country to be filled by females. This bill’s role is to advance female access to education, training and skills. It also seeks to protect females’ reproductive health and to remove discrimination and any practices of gender-based violence.

The improvements to the status of females in South Africa go way back during Nelson Mandela’s era as president of the country were very important to the country’s first president in the democratic era. Nelson Mandela is credited with opening the door to females’ empowerment after the 1994 elections (Mandela 1994). At the first session of South Africa’s new parliament in 1994, the newly elected president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela pronounced that freedom could not be realised unless females have been liberated from all forms of oppression. He further added that females should be empowered to intervene in all facets of life as equals with any other fellow members of society.

After Nelson Mandela took over as president, the female representation of cabinet ministers in South Africa’s parliament increased (Babalola, Stouten, Camps and Euwema 2017: 5). Today, this representation puts South Africa among the top ten most representative in the world (Brown and Mitchell 2010: 583). However, if one looks at inclusive employment statistics in South Africa, a different picture appears. Although females constitute half of the total population, they are still poorly represented in senior positions in higher education (Ibid: 584). According to Schwanke (2013: 568), females generally comprise 43% of the skilled labour force, 42% of those with proficient qualifications, 30% being senior managers, and 20% in top management. The trend is clear: the higher females go on the workplace ladder, the fewer they become (Tessens, White and Web 2011: 653).

What is interesting is that since 1994 greater emphasis has been placed on equal prospects for females in higher education. There are now more female students, more

female staff and more female managers at universities than before. According to the Council on Higher Education, South Africa's number of female students rose from 409 000 in 2006 to 543 000 in 2011 (CHE 2016: 279). However, then again, the number of male students also went up. What about the numbers of females in senior positions in universities of technology staff and senior management? The Council on Higher Education states that more females are taking up leadership positions in higher education, however, so are males (ibid). Therefore, the male-female representation at senior positions has remained problematic since men are still much better represented than females. This kind of representation is not only happening in South Africa but in the rest of the continent too. According to Kele (2015: 11), the statistics show the under-representation of females in senior positions are the same in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. HERS-SA states that "the highest proportion of females are in the lowest academic positions and the lowest occupational levels in support departments". This representation is also a global issue. In the US, females make up 57% of all college students but only 26% of full professors, 23% of university presidents and 14% of presidencies at doctoral degree-granting institutions (Naicker 2013: 328).

3.4.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT (EEA) OF 1998

Many of the laws enacted during colonial rule destructively affected the employment opportunities for African, Coloured and Indian people. A few examples are as follows: jobs were reserved for Whites under the Mines and Works Acts (1911: 2), which specified that Africans, Coloured and Indians were not lawfully allowed to work (or, more correctly, to receive wages) as skilled workers. Moreover, in 1941 the Factories Act led to the separation of workspaces, as separate facilities were set aside for different racial groups. These are some of the examples of discriminatory labour legislation that paralleled prejudiced legislation in other sectors. Together these laws form the inheritance of discrimination that employment equity legislation is designed to neutralise.

The South African Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998 is one of the most important and disputed pieces of legislation passed in South Africa. The EEA, which has drawn on the experiences of other nations, affects employers, employees and potential employees

in major ways. Chapter two of the Employment Equity Act deals with the riddance of unfair discrimination and affects every employer in South Africa, regardless of the number of employees. Chapter three of the Act, entitled “Affirmative Action”, relates to all types of designated employers of 50 or more employees, whether they are firms, non-profit organisations, public institutions or universities (Obers 2014: 1107).

Advocates generally regard Employment Equity and Affirmative Action as a progressive tool that empowers people who have been discriminated against in the past (particularly in the workplace), while adversaries consider Affirmative Action and efforts toward Employment Equity to be reversed discrimination. The Employment Equity Act was intended for the traditional business employer, such as an enterprise or factory. As the university is a specific type of employer, the challenges and limitations it faces are not, in many cases, equal to those of standard business and industry employers. Higher-education institutions in any country are characterised by many organisational elements, such as the purpose, management style and product, which are not similar to business organisations. In addition, the key business of higher-education institutions involves high levels of talents, specialisation and qualifications for the bulk of academic and administrative positions. In the South African situation, in which universities were created as racially segregated public institutions, this variance from usual industry employers becomes even more noticeable. The functions of universities were created and shaped within the delimitations of the apartheid state tool. Universities in the South African context must not only deal with higher education employment needs in terms of employment equity but must also confront their race-based pasts and try to reconfigure themselves in the fresh social, political and higher education environments.

Higher-education institutions exist to produce knowledge, to distribute knowledge through research and for public engagement. To achieve these purposes, females in higher-education institutions should interact without restrictions and have access to knowledge. However, in South Africa as in the rest of the world, researchers see the social construct of gender, one of many social inequalities, as either restrictive or increasing opportunities in academia. In realising that gender limits females in higher education, international and national bodies are deliberately dedicated to addressing this inequality. However, even

with these commitments in place, the present literature suggests that females are still facing challenges in higher-education institutions.

3.4.2 THE EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT OF 1998 AS AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The goal of affirmative action is to increase opportunities for individuals and groups that historically have been underrepresented or, in some cases, barred, from certain areas of academia, the government, and the private sector workforce. Affirmative action policies provide funding in the form of grants and scholarships to these communities. Policies were adopted to help those from different racial backgrounds and national origins. They have expanded to address gender, sexual orientation, and various disabilities.

The key Affirmative Action legislation in South Africa is the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. The purpose of the Act is to realise equity in the workplace. This, by stimulating and encouraging equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the removal of unfair discrimination; and applying affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by selected groups (black people, females and people with disabilities), to ensure their equitable representation in all categories and levels in the workplace. As stated in this Act, these guidelines empower employers to ensure that their human resource policies and practices are founded on non-discrimination and mirror employment equity principles at the beginning of employment, during employment and when terminating employment (Hersch (2021: 10). Policies and platforms as developed and implemented by employers in South Africa are efforts to provide a more balanced view of employment equity in South Africa.

Affirmative action is a way of making the workplace more representative and fairer. It makes sure that qualified people from selected groups have equal prospects in the workplace. In South Africa, these groups are black people (black, coloured and Indian), females and people with disabilities (Mahope 2014: 290).

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 is defined as the employment of individuals in a fair and non-biased manner (Gamble and Turner 2015: 87). Part of the transformation plan for South Africa after the 1994 polls, was the transformation of all organisations to make them representative of all South African citizens (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018: 382). The

justification for introducing the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 was to apply transformation on the basis that organisations would not empower adequate numbers of black employees of their own free will (ibid). Although there are indications of transformation of the workforce, the implementation of the Employment Equity Act is often reduced to a question of legal compliance (ibid). A consequence of the cynicism of business leaders is that the attitudes and experiences of employees affected by the implementation of these transformational laws are often not taken into consideration.

There is no transparency in the literature on females' attitudes towards employment equity. There are beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of this policy who have certain sentiments about this policy. Females in senior leadership positions often fear tokenism and being sidelined or called 'sell outs' when appointed in designated positions by those who have not benefited from the policy. ASeveral stigmas are attached to this policy as most whites see it as what they have labelled 'reverse discrimination' (Lee 2018: 257). White staff members also fear revenge from blacks, loss of standards, disciplinary taxation and limitation of their career opportunities (Ibid). This policy has also sometimes been perceived as racism and unfair treatment (Ibid).

The shared understanding appears to be that only white people are capable/competent in the workplace and that black people are not. The researcher summarises that the lowering of standards argument is highlighted by the negative postulation that black people are mostly not as capable as white people (de Beer, Rothmann and Pienaar 2015: 528). It may be correct to state that the previously disadvantaged group lacks the experiences and capability to deliver instantly on the job and could be due to the fact that they were formerly denied opportunities in these senior leadership jobs.

The researcher however differs with the argument that employment equity is reverse racism because the word racism advocates that one group of people is superior to the other. Employment equity policies do not imply that white people are inferior or incompetent in performing certain responsibilities if they are disregarded for certain jobs, but they cannot benefit alone from life's opportunities.

On another note, the researcher also understands that the quota system depersonalises females who are leaders and views them as numbers only. This assumption on its own is not fair to those females who actually work hard to get to these positions, as it insinuates that they are tokens. In order to ensure the assessment of employment equity positively, the criteria for assessing its success should start with the organisational climate whereby, both black and white employees are adequately prepared for transformation processes in institutions. If the climate of the institution is favourable, the so-called 'revolving door syndrome' together with white fears should be eliminated (Mouton, Louw and Louw 2013: 285).

Females and previously neglected groups, in general, have more positive attitudes towards employment equity than white men do (The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants 2015: 52). An insinuation that the different attitudes and experiences may lead to renewed division and distrust among staff, leading to higher staff turnover, especially amongst those from selected groups. A South African study by Tsheola and Nembambula (2014: 1655) found that the so-called 'jobhopping' of many white leaders cannot only be attributed to higher salaries or better incentives but also to issues not fitting into historically established corporate cultures brought in by this policy.

Employment equity aims to restore human dignity in the world of work. Many human embarrassments were experienced in the workplace because employees were seen as desperate people who could dance to any tune set by the employer (Cleary 2017: 5). This policy refers to programmes designed to ensure relative representation of employees and undo the results of past discrimination. However, this may be viewed as somewhat problematic, because it does not admit the supposition that those being considered for relative representation are all equally qualified for certain positions. Thus, many females in senior positions are assumed tokens, or placed in those positions politically (Ibid). Such realities accentuate the need for institutions to communicate the fundamental purpose of the policy and the need to involve the entire workforce in this transformational advantage. The facts of stereotyping racial groups and misunderstandings about the real intentions of employment equity highlight the need to address the socio-historical context of the act.

Cleary (2017: 7) argues that gender equality legislation assists females in achieving equal prospects in the workplace and offers job security. Cloete, Fehnel, Masassen, Moja, Perold and Gibbon (2002: 551) further states that the availability of these privileges provides females with positive insights regarding work/life balance and gives them motivation to stick to their career goals and desires. Nevertheless, the existence and availability of these privileges do not mean that the workplace is gender-neutral or equal opportunities have been certified. It is easily understandable that these policies do not provide enough to influence the gender order of society and institutions to promote equality. The reason is men are not similarly prejudiced by such policies (ibid: 337).

As the society is not totally gender equal and equal prospects are yet to be universal, it is clear that gender neutral policies are not appropriate in South African UoTs. Gender difference is still persistent and cultivated by social norms and values in South Africa.

1.13.1.17 ACCEPTING A NEW SET OF VALUES THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The most common arguments against affirmative action are stated and evaluated. These are that affirmative action tends to be permanent; affirmative action helps the wrong people; affirmative action will lead to inefficiency and a lowering of standards; affirmative action stigmatises its beneficiaries; affirmative action causes racism; affirmative action undermines democratic values; affirmative action amounts to reverse discrimination; and affirmative action is ineffective. The conclusion is that, while most of these objections may have some validity, these are premature because affirmative action has not been implemented for a sufficient period to justify conclusions about its effects.

The normative, principal vision for higher-education institutions that implement the Employment Equity Act is the rational reflection of the South African population demographics based on acceptance, mutual respect and trust between persons. Even though the Employment Equity Act is currently imposed as a top-down process, higher-education institutions realise that the successful implementation thereof requires a change in the “hearts and minds” (spiritual essence) of staff, mainly by means of accepting a new set of values (Coleman and Ndebele 2010: 55).

This transformational exertion should include the two core themes of Affirmative Action, as described by Jaarsveld (2000: 5). The first is impartiality and the second, fairness. Although van Jaarsveld emphasises the fact that these legal and moral concepts are open to debate, they need to be accepted in the broader society for interconnected legislation to function properly.

From a political standpoint, affirmative action is a series of public policies and initiatives planned to alleviate past and present discernment. Such policies are intended to promote social change in a positive way. There is controversy in the interpretation and implementation of these laws. Some people argue that these policies lead to the best employment policies that help everyone in an organisation regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity. Others call it reverse discrimination (Coleman and Ndebele 2010: 56). It is, therefore, up to employers to endorse the policy in order to ensure discrimination does not take place in the workplace while keeping careful employment records and data so this effort can be tracked. According to Women and Minorities, Inc. (2009: 34), “the proper approach is to use affirmative action as a management tool to advance a strategic plan to govern if you have fairness in terms of diversity and fair labour practices. However, institutions should not just place females in leadership positions as tokens; they should be there on merit irrespective of race. This will prevent failure to deliver on-the-job expectations by those appointed as tokens.

Discrimination is understood as the differential treatment of individuals belonging to particular groups or categories in society. According to Schwanke (2013: 2), “In reality, most females have no economic choice except to work, and/or seek professional advancement and leadership positions. Therefore, it is in everyone’s best interest for females to receive equitable treatment, pay and opportunity for advancement.” The three primary sources of discrimination include psychological, social, and historical reasons.

The study done by Gangone (2013: 23), benchmarked female leadership in individual sectors and it demonstrated that despite legislative changes, females in higher education are underpaid, and in some cases, over-performing when examined with their male counterparts. Factors often mentioned as causes to females’ lack of leadership advancement and pay equity included the choice to invest in family responsibilities (Ibid).

Moreover, there is stereotypically an insinuation that females are choosing not to pursue senior leadership roles. This, in reality, is not true. Many females are discriminated against in the workplace. The findings of a study done by the Colorado Women's College at the University of Denver demonstrated the following:

- Females in leadership are often outperforming men, but not earning salaries or obtaining titles that reflect their high performance.
- Females are better represented as top performers (as measured by industry-specific achievements) when comparing the nation's top businesses and organisations to their respective sectors as a whole.
- The theory that females are under-represented in leadership roles because they prefer less challenging or time-consuming positions to accommodate their families or lifestyle is defied by the research.
- When female leaders are present, revenue is better, sales are increased, impact and reach are more extensive, and industry distinctions are more abundant.
- Taking all evidence into consideration, the lack of females in leadership roles is mainly due to an intrinsic bias against females as leaders.
- Without approaches to address the promotion and development of females, South African institutions of higher education will continue to fall behind their competition as they neglect connecting the energy and talent of more than 50% of the South African workforce (Benchmarking Women's Leadership 2013:4)

Gangone (2013: 44) continues to say, "When females lead, their leadership improves an institution's impact, employee retention and profit. With amended retention comes better and more proficient hiring, promotion practices, and talent management. From greater impact comes innovative and various viewpoints on the solutions to societal problems, more satisfied clients and/or consumers and an improvement in quality of life. With larger profits comes a more sustainable organisation or business, more opportunities for hires and promotions, and greater wealth. Investing in females is a win-win for all institutions and ultimately, the South African nation".

The affirmative action policy gives help to people of different colour, gender; national origin, race, and religion to enter institutions of higher education. It addresses discrimination and inequality in these institutions. Females and affirmative action tend to be ignored because race rules the issues of affirmative action. However, support for affirmative action for females is more advantageous than race-based affirmative action. It is unfortunate that even today when the word affirmative action is mentioned, the issue of race is the first word that comes to mind amongst many unaffected individuals. Gender discrimination is just as common as inequality. Even though affirmative action seeks to create a balance and equal opportunity in theory, it faults in action. Affirmative action has allowed females to overcome some of the prejudice in the workplace, yet it still does not address the inequality that females have in education and employment (Trujillo 2010: 3). The lack of facilities that would help females work in an equal playing field as men confirms that inequality still exists.

1.13.1.18 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND CURRENT FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The questions up for discussion in this section of the study are first, does affirmative action in the way in which it is practised in South Africa encourage the achievement of equality (especially for females)? Secondly, can the notion “black” be used as a catchall for the intended recipients of affirmative action? Lastly what are the constitutional boundaries of the requirement of representativity in the context of redressing the discrepancies of the past? The most noticeable way in which to test the question of whether affirmative action as implemented to date is advancing or promoting the achievement of equality is to match the state of equality as of 1994, when apartheid perished, with the state of parity now.

A suitable measure devised by economists for this purpose is called the GINI index (Ultsch and Lötsch 2017), which measures how significantly, and economically unequal individuals are in a given country on the basis that the higher the index, the less equal and the lower the index, the more equal they are (ibid). The index in the general public in which material benefits are dispersed equally would be zero, in one in which all such benefits are conferred on one person, the GINI index would be 100. In South Africa, the GINI index has progressed in the wrong direction for a country committed constitutionally

to the promotion of equality (ibid). The United Development Programme has placed South Africa as the 12th most unequal country in the world with a GINI index of 57.8 (ibid). The South African Institute of Race Relations gives the nation an even worse score of 65 in 2005, poorer than the 60 in 1996 (Tsheola and Nembambula 2014: 1655). The question is, why has this happened when affirmative action measures, what ought to promote the achievement of equality in place Siphos Seepe, the director of Educor's Graduate Institute of Management and Technology, pointed out, "We don't have the courage to admit that things are not well in our education system" (Ultsch and Lötsch). The conclusions to be drawn from the above question, insofar as it impacts on the question of whether or not affirmative action is stimulating and promoting equality as it is required to do in the Constitution, is that the measures in place have completely failed to promote the achievement of equality. Females have been becoming more disadvantaged while there are laws, policies and practices of government in place to support them.

There is a distinct danger in perpetuating the levels of inequality, which have grown during the early years of our new democratic order. Already, females who voted so enthusiastically in 1994, are demonstrating their dissatisfaction with the current order by staying away from leadership roles in their droves. This is a sign that an overhaul of the higher education system is the best way in which to achieve more equal opportunities for females in higher education and creating a society in which all have equal worth as human beings. The unacceptably high unemployment rate also exacerbates inequality. Job creation is a constructive way of promoting the achievement of equality. There would appear to be a lack of suitable strategies for implementation in this field. The introduction of a two-tier labour system with greater flexibility for the young could help many unemployed school leavers enter the workplace.

Turning now to the term 'Black' defined, as "persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination" in the context of a non-racial democratic dispensation. The Constitution is cautious to keep away from the race grouping of the past. It is, however, quite evident how a more subtle and sensible formulation is used for the appointment of females in senior leadership positions in higher education. As it turns out, not too many females have put their hands up, and some of those who have availed

themselves for appointments have regretted doing so. Steps to fast-track suitable female candidates to speed up the lagging appointment rate of female leaders are slow.

If there is governmental defiance, a suitable court challenge aimed at re-introducing the true spirit of the Constitution to the affirmative action arena should become necessary. The real constitutional purpose of measures designed to protect or advance the disadvantaged is the promotion of the attainment of equality. This purpose is, based on the education sector, not being achieved with the measures now in place (Sánchez 2015: 67).

1.13.1.19 EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 3 OF 1997: A PROGRAMME FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Due to the challenges faced by higher education during the apartheid period in South Africa, the programme for the transformation of higher education was released on July 24, 1997, to aid, lead and push the higher education system in the envisioned path. According to the South African, Department of Education, 1997, Education White Paper 3 (1997:10), higher-education institutions were advised to re-evaluate their human resource strategies and practices to improve and motivate the workforce who are incapable of meeting the prospects of their respective institutions. Therefore, it became the responsibility of every institution to come up with management strategies that would realise these objectives and improve employees' performance, creativity and the work atmosphere at large. This Act has aided in providing the correct synchronisation of higher, progression of knowledge and skills, quality academic standard education, as well as making the work populations free from all forms of discrimination to advance the economy of South Africa.

In relation to this study, the Act is projected to investigate whether fairness and justice in UoTs have been achieved so that all those concerned females can lead without any form of discrimination. The time has come for females and men to share leadership for the sake of our families, our institutions, and our country. This study will contribute to encouraging discussions, backed by noteworthy data, to create a greater capacity for female leadership across higher-education institutions.

To the males in general and specifically in higher education that will read this study, it is important to ask yourselves what you will do to partner with females in senior leadership positions and those aspiring to be leaders in higher education to change the landscape of positional leadership in this country. In addition, to the females already in leadership and those aspiring to become leaders, as this is their journey through their own leadership path, they should remember that they are necessary players in changing the landscape of leadership in higher education in South Africa.

South African institutes of higher education have begun to make racial, cultural, and gender diversity an acceptable goal of good management. More than a decade has passed since the 1998 Employment Equity Act ushered in a host of affirmative action policies, and the debates over their relevance have, it seems, become less fraught with time. Ten more years hence, we hope, most South African universities will reflect such great diversity that sensitivity to the issue, especially in relation to female leadership.

1.13.1.20 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY BILL: NO 37005 OF 2013

The accomplishment of equality and non-sexism are two of the main founding values of the Constitution. Section 9 of the Constitution gives effect to these values by making the right to equality before the law and equal protection and benefit of the law. Therefore, in late 2013, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill was introduced in Parliament which duplicates the Commission on Gender Equality Act (1996: 25), the Skills Development Act (1998: 36), the Employment Equity Act (1998: 16) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000: 3). The aim of the bill is to give effect to section 9 of the Constitution by providing for a legal framework to advance and develop the empowerment of females, as well as gender equality. The Bill accordingly attempts to create a legislative framework that succeeds all other laws pertaining to female empowerment. However, the Bill lacks operative implementation mechanisms to warrant compliance with its empowerment and equality provisions. This has resulted in minimal or no change in the outputs expected from the implementation.

It is clear that institutions of higher learning in South Africa have been forced to implement policies aimed at uplifting females to senior leadership positions. Although the challenges

to get to the anticipated government objectives are still there, some universities have not been making enough progress (Kele and Pietersen 2015: 11). Focusing on females already occupying senior leadership positions, this study attempts to find out if any of the government legislation has been instrumental in the lived experiences, views and attitudes about female roles in higher education leadership.

As Alqahtani (2019: 34) explains, females who have reached senior leadership positions, which are mainly occupied by men, have recognised that there are social roles and beliefs governing how females should carry themselves. Regrettably, these expectations do not correspond with how they should act in their work environments. To be successful in their workplace, these females are referred to as abnormal and must escalate above the social expectations of femininity to aspire to the socially prescribed role of leader. The extreme labels given to such successful females in senior positions are 'bitchy', 'queen bees' or 'dragon ladies' (Kelan 2012: 57 and Thompson and Laurent 2015: 8).

Having high standards does not make a female leader a bitch. Having high standards means that the leader is driven to do things on a different level than most people. It also means that the leader can implement strategies to make things happen at a high level of excellence. Thus, such leaders demand that same level of excellence from their staff. In addition, many institutions have diversity goals that they need to reach and therefore do not just settle for whomever they can get but expect the best out of everyone involved in the attainment of the goal.

Information is an odd characteristic of human beings with an amazing capacity to acquire and transfer knowledge from one generation to another, gaining advanced standing with cutting-edge science and technology. Higher education is the entry into economic security and opportunity particularly for females in South Africa. Females are part of the socio-economic system and up-hold rich cultural and traditional ideals. Their progress is associated with the progress of the nation. The South African government introduced policies and procedures with the goal of informing the higher education system, recognising gender equity and amassing the number of females enrolling in higher education. Higher education for females in South Africa has witnessed remarkable

growth over the years and the government is combining resources needed to promote female education at all levels.

During the State of The Nation Address (SONA) in 2020, the President Cyril Ramaphosa highlighted the disparity between females and males by mentioning that among the nine top South African universities. Only one female is a Vice-Chancellor, and that female earns less than their male counterparts do. Something has to change if South Africa wants to see females as tough leaders with unswerving influence on shaping policy and perception as Vice-Chancellors, professors and academics. Females cannot shift the narrative if they are not included in the first place. During an interview with Cosmopolitan magazine, Phumzile Mlambo Nkuka (Chief of UN Women) stated that not a single country has reached the goal of equality for the sexes. This is in spite of it being 20 years since 189 countries adopted the Beijing platform to achieving a commitment from governments to end discrimination against females and close the gender gap in dire areas, including employment and political engagement.

Transformation of higher education in South Africa involved, among others, compelling institutions of higher learning to implement policies intended at uplifting females to managerial positions. Even though there are challenges preventing universities from getting to the preferred government objectives, universities of technology have not been making fast progress. Concentrating on females already occupying leadership positions, this section explored the role of empowerment in the lived experiences of the females. Also, equally important, the views and attitudes about the empowerment or lack of empowerment of these females in higher education leadership.

There was no better time to introduce the Empowerment Bill to assist females to gain support and resources to make decisions and build confidence. Female empowerment is defined as the “female’s ability to make strategic life choices where that ability had been previously denied them” (Cornwall 2016: 342). Empowerment is midway in the change processes that benefit females at the individual, household, community and broader levels. At the most basic level, innovations can benefit females simply by improving their well-being in terms of health, nutrition, income and life span (Hopkins and O’Neil and Denke 2015: 25). Beyond vital improvements in well-being, changes can

result in female's empowerment, where females gain support and resources to make decisions and build confidence. Deeper and truly transformative changes reshape societal norms, attitudes and institutional practices. Greater gender equality in higher-education institutions and social roles provide an ongoing foundation for sustaining female's well-being and empowerment.

In South Africa, with the adoption of the 'Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill', the National Assembly made provision for at least 50% of decision-making posts in the country to be occupied by females. This was indeed a paradigm shift in the field of gender equality and empowerment in South Africa. However, these were just figures. In reality, the actual occupation of leadership positions by females was still very slow. Although females constitute half of the total population, they are poorly represented in senior leadership positions (Fotaki 2013: 1). According to the Commission for Employment Equity, females comprise 43% of the skilled workforce, 42% of those with professional qualifications, 30% of senior managers, and 20% of top management (ibid). The trend is clear: the higher up you go on the workplace ladder, the fewer females you find (Dunn, Gerlach, and Hyle 2014: 11-12). It is at the upper ranks where it becomes obvious that men are fairly represented with females.

3.4.3 AN EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT - EMPOWERING MIMICRY

There are numerous moral and practical reasons to increase the number and visibility of competent, successful females in leadership positions. These females serve as powerful role models for females and can have beneficial effects on their behaviours and leadership aspirations (Lama Alghofaily 2019: 30). This study supports this claim and further uncovers the behavioural mechanism that accounts for these optimistic effects. Empowering mimicry shows that known, visible female leader role models are vital to inspiring females because they offer the opportunity to mimic their nonverbal behaviours such as influential body postures (Batel Hazan-Liran and Paul Miller 2022: 43). When females adopt these powerful postures themselves, these nonverbal behavioural changes further lead to empowering effects on female' performance, a process we call empowering mimicry. As a result, this study suggests that increasing the visibility of female leaders can have beneficial effects on females in stressful leadership tasks.

These female leader role models can show females how to behave in challenging situations, ultimately serving the goal of empowering females.

3.5 A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR FEMALE LEADERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The world is experiencing technological change, social change and economic opportunity at a pace never experienced in human history; therefore, females in UoTs need to be part of that paradigm shift. HERS-SA has an academy aimed at females who currently hold senior leadership positions or who wish to prepare for such a role. The academy seeks to empower such females so they may achieve their career aspirations. The academy gives females a rare space to reflect on their lives and careers (Shen 2013: 22). This shows that empowerment strides are being made by higher education in South Africa. However, as stated before, progress is slow. According to the Department of education (White Paper 3 DoE 1997: 119)

“The principle of democratisation requires that governance of the system of higher education and of individual institutions should be democratic, representative and participatory and characterised by mutual respect, tolerance and the maintenance of a well-ordered and peaceful community life. Structures and procedures should ensure that those affected by decisions have a say in making them, either directly or through elected representatives. It requires that decision-making processes at the systemic, institutional and departmental levels are transparent, and that those taking and implementing decisions are accountable for the manner in which they perform their duties and use resources.”

This has led to the gazetting of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill in 2013 as legislation that deals directly with females' issues in the place of work. The Bill strives to establish a legislative framework for the empowerment of females and to ensure the selection, promotion, appointment and representation of females into decision-making positions. Additionally, the Bill specifies that at least 50% representation of females should be achieved, and plans should be put in place to attain this by both private and public entities (Department of Labour 2010). However, due to the existence of the so-called glass ceiling, 50% of female representation is still not achieved in South Africa (Anand 2014: 14).

Now, more than any time in history, the world is working together to improve the lives of females in higher education and empower them to realise their potential. Seizing this pivotal moment can help realise meaningful change for a vast majority of females in UoTs. Despite changes made in the past 20 years, the recent UN 59th Commission on Status of Women indicated countries were still far behind in tackling structural issues such as female empowerment.

South Africa has seen significant progress in extending the participation of females in higher education. The role of the university is not only academic; it also has an important role in generating new knowledge which leads to influence on government policy at various levels. And lastly, universities are situated in society and should engage with communities in meaningful ways. This is where higher-education institutions should also exercise an influence in terms of the position and empowerment of females in society. Gender equality and female's empowerment are fundamental in the promotion of a resilient and democratic society. When females play an active role in civil society and politics, governments tend to be more open, responsive and transparent. When females are at the negotiating table, peace agreements are more durable; even in higher education (Mehrangiz, Dirani and Fatemeh 2020: 171). It is, therefore, important that females are empowered through equal rights and equal opportunities as they are key drivers of progress and growth. Since higher education as a social institution is an instrument that facilitates the reproduction of social structures, females in higher education need to be fully empowered for a 21st-century economy. Once they are empowered, females will be valued as leaders, peace builders, and breadwinners in their communities and societies.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "If you educate the male, you educate the person but if you educate the female, you educate the nation". One of the most noteworthy transformations in education in South Africa over the past decades is the drastic increase in female access to colleges and universities. Framing and implementing rigorous and influential laws and policies have addressed the wickedness of gender discrimination in Higher Education. Most South African females, with the possibility of economic independence, through reputable employment, have become main earning members of the family. An educated female has the skills, self-confidence and power to be a better

citizen. Females have all the power and ability as that of men and they are revealing themselves amongst different opportunities provided through higher education.

After the pronouncement of mergers, South African universities have experienced serious transformational changes in line with governmental requirements and policies (i.e. The National Gender policy framework that is South Africa's framework for women's empowerment and gender equality). One of the changes imposed on universities was the insistence of the need to appoint more females in leadership positions. The government did not just impose this on universities, but also passed laws to assist the females during this evolution. The Women Empowerment Bill, together with other bills were passed in 2003. Thus, the ascending of females into senior positions was put to the test. Good leaders known to be role models in their institutions were suddenly taking up senior positions in an environment that was known to be hostile to them.

According to Mies (2019: 56), South African females have always been in the second level of society, regardless of their race. To counter this unfair practice, the government passed the affirmative action legislation as part of the national strategy to redress the discrepancies of the past. Female disquiets came to the fore, both within government departments and within the commercial sector. Issues like equality, human rights and empowerment got massive attention. With the help of the Gender Policy Framework (GPF), policies aimed at addressing disparities of the past were drafted and signed into laws. Included in this route was the drafting of procedures and practices intended to guarantee females are afforded equal opportunities in all sectors of the South African economy (Sidani, Alison and Charlotte 2015: 276). The Bill on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment came into effect to empower females and deal with the issue of gender equality (ibid). The figures below portray the percentages of female leaders in universities of technology in South Africa in 2012. Evidently, there is still a huge difference in percentages of females in leadership occupying senior positions in UoTs compared to their male counterparts.

3.6 EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE LEADERS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

It is a known fact that gender inequality exists as a political problem in much of the world (Atchison 2017: 185), but how promising is the situation for females within the South

African academy? Aggregate statistics confirm the discouraging view of gender equality gleaned from interview data on the situation for females in UoTs in South Africa

It is abundantly clear that fewer females than men make it to the most senior leadership positions in universities (June 2015; 22; Kellerman and Rhode 2014: 36; Cook and Kim 2012: 58). This scarcity of females is not due to a pipeline issue, as there are plenty of experienced and qualified females to do the jobs. For example, the number of female university Vice-Chancellors in Australia lingers at 26%. In 2006, the number of females who were Junior Academic Officers was 38% and the number of females who were senior leaders was 45% (Cook and Kim 2012: 60).

Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011: 479) point out that explicit gender bias may not be the culprit, but instead it could be second-generation bias or less noticeable forms of bias. Organisational hierarchies in which men control, along with practices that link leadership with behaviours believed to be more common or suitable in men, strongly, if unintentionally communicate that females are ill-suited for leadership roles (Ely, Ibarra and Kolb 2011: 475). How, then, can females become leaders despite this accidental bias? Leadership development programmes can assist them in feeling more content taking on larger roles by growing their abilities, self-confidence and networks.

By modelling the behaviour of females in academic leadership roles, Universities will help to lessen future unintentional bias in all areas of employment for students, who will have experience with females in positions of power during their foundational years. Having more females in leadership roles in higher education institutions and on their boards will aid shift the way many people think about females as leaders. It will inspire the most skilled persons to reach their potential (Ely Ibarra and Kolb 2011: 476). It will also enable more females to consider themselves as possible leaders. Females need to see themselves in other females who take on positions of leadership. If not, the area of senior-level leaders will remain an essentially male-dominated club, a result that restricts the views of the leaders and the followers themselves.

The representation of females in leadership positions has a positive connection with economic performance, measured in tangible terms such as organisational growth, improved market share, and return on investment (Longman and Anderson 2016: 24).

Though correlation is not a substitute for action, there are particular reasons to promote a culture of equality. These include improved staff morale, better employment and retention of top talent. Organisations that offer opportunities for employees, such as a leadership advancement programme, may be better equipped to keep their most valued resources—their people. Several leadership-training methodologies exist for developing individual female leaders. DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Reed and Wheatly (2014: 22) propose that a common methodology is a leadership institute for females such as the HERS Institutes or the Women's Leadership Forum at Harvard. While effective for the participant, overall change within the member's institution is regrettably not normally achieved due to the focus of training on only the participant.

High on the agenda of the new democratic government of South Africa was the transformation of higher education. Government, to bring about the development of females and to intensify the number of females in higher education, announced several interventions. Research grants were made accessible; more positions for females opened up, mentoring plans were established and a host of other interventions were introduced (Karkouti 2016: 405). However, a study by Tunheim and Goldschmidt (2013: 30) emphasised the place of females in higher education in South Africa. The study revealed that the lasting obstacle for female leaders, particularly black female leaders employed at tertiary institutions, is that they are “considered to be outsiders within their academic environments” (Zamani 2003: 7). The study noted that owing to their small numbers, female leaders in higher education are frequently unnoticeable and overlooked. Furthermore, the experiences of black females are often outshined by the experiences of black males or incorporated under the realities of white females. The universalising of their experiences as black or female does little to support their individuality and their particular struggles. As a result, female leaders must navigate their way through an environment that does not fully hear or recognise them. Tariq and Syed (2017: 510) affirm similar sentiments as they highlighted the overlap of race, class and gender, and asserted that female leaders continue to face discrepancies across race and gender lines.

3.6.1 FEMALE RESILIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite barriers that hinder female's career growth, leadership opportunities and their experiences at work, females are progressing in South Africa (Terjesen and Sealy 2016:

510). South African female leaders experience organisational barriers, social labelling, and biases driven by their intersectionality that impedes their career opportunities. Social norms place females in inferior roles in comparison to men in society. Females face such social barriers at a higher level given additional societal hardships driven by racism. This study explores the leadership characteristics, barriers, success strategies and resilience of females in senior leadership positions through the lenses of these females. It assesses leadership and resilience in females who hold senior-level positions of leadership in traditionally male-dominated universities.

The purpose of the research is to detect those factors that increase success, and advancement in senior positions despite the difficulties associated with females in leadership positions. The goal is to provide a guide for females who wish to hold similar leadership positions and to make available to them an outline of the success of other females to offer a blueprint for organisational approaches.

Toughness is the same as thriving but embraces an individual's ability to make the best of difficult situations. There are three dimensions to hardiness/toughness as defined by Griffin, Bennett and Harris 2011: 45): (a) being committed to finding meaningful purpose in life, (b) the belief that one can influence one's surroundings and the outcome of events, and (c) the belief that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences. A definition that originated from existential personality theory states that the construct of hardiness refers to a collection of personality characteristics that function as a resistance resource in the encounter with stressful life events (ibid).

According to Enke (2014: 105), anyone in a position of leadership has to deal with rapidly changing circumstances and must learn to recognise challenges as opportunities. Leaders must learn to be resilient in the face of difficulty. Chuang defines the ability to take on difficult problems, to learn from the problem, and to turn the problem into an advantage (ibid: 106). There are numerous social, professional, and political forces impacting the role of the female to positively influence herself and other females as well. Today's females face numerous situations that generate adversity and increasing one's resilience is critical for success. Females have the skills and characteristics needed to lead effectively in senior positions. Looking at the history of South African females, the

resilience strengths have been demonstrated in a time of conflict and stress. Overcoming adversity and recognising the importance of resilience is important to a female's dream for success and perseverance in the top-ranking position in higher education. The same resilience that females demonstrated during the time of apartheid needs to be enforced in higher education today.

According to Nguyen, Kuntz, Näswall and Malinen (2016: 14), resilience is at the heart of successful leadership. All leaders experience a level of weakening after experiencing adversity. Leaders lacking resiliency skills can rapidly become dysfunctional leaders. Those who are discreetly resilient will limit the deterioration by adapting in a way that allows for survival (ibid). Leaders with relatively more resilience will move beyond adaptation to recovery, ending up at the same level of functioning as they were before experiencing the adversity. Developing resiliency requires that females pay attention to the complexities of their experiences, listen to their emotions, and be willing to learn from disappointment as well as success (Ravera, IniestaArandia, Martín-López, Pascual and Bose (2016: 241).

There is plenty of evidence of how tough it is to make it to the top as a female and stay there without being pushed or having to give up. According to Toledano and Karanda (2014: 975), 93% of females and 68% of men think that, even with equal skills, experiences and qualifications, females have much more difficulty reaching senior positions in higher education than men due to a lack of resilience. This, therefore, explains that through resilience these females can overcome the additional barriers.

3.6.2 ROLE CONGRUENCE OF FEMALE LEADERS

The opinion that female's success has been weakened by the inappropriateness between beliefs about characteristics of good leadership in a particular setting and gender stereotypes has been called the role congruity principle (Enke 2014: 105). The principle of prejudice explored in this study explains why so few females in higher education reach top leadership positions and why those in leadership positions face a lot of challenges. Challenges, not because females cannot lead, but because they are female (Adla 2015: 28). This is due to the prejudice surrounding female roles. Traditional perceptions of gender roles and leadership roles are known to believe that females have fewer

leadership abilities than men, or females are judged more harshly when compared to men. Research shows these prejudices exist, especially in more male-dominated fields like higher education (Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir and Stroebe 2019: 109).

There are notable differences in UoTs regarding the percentage of females in leading positions. Cultural diversity in gender stereotypic beliefs and attitudes may be one essential reason for this difference. Therefore, this study will explore whether as an experience for female leaders in UoTs, these differences between female and male leadership are still perceived differently and investigate this issue in terms of diverse cultural backgrounds. After the statement of mergers, South African universities have undergone serious transformational changes in line with legislative requirements and policies. Among others, the changes insisted on the need to appoint more females in positions of authority (Kele and Pietersen 2015: 11). The kind of leadership that is depicted in organisations from different sectors and industries has been the focal point for many researchers. However, this has not been the case in many UoTs, as males still dominate the senior leadership positions in those UoTs. Even today, people rely on prior gender attitudes when judging female leaders (Bierema 2017: 145).

Role congruity (Eagly and Karau 2002: 579) serves as a framework to address the research objective of whether men and females lead differently. According to this theory, probable differences between females and men in leadership positions are explained based on a perceived congruence, respectively incongruence, between the leadership role and the gender role. Stereotypic beliefs and social norms are considered to play an important role in shaping the perceptions of these roles (Johnson and Mathur-Helm 2011: 48). This theory has been proposed and tested in some detail by Alice Eagly and her colleagues. Eagly argues that incongruity between leadership roles and female gender roles (*i.e.*, prescriptive expectations for female's behaviour) leads to harmful judgements and actions (Eagly and Karau 2002: 573). Ibarra, Carter and Silva (2010: 80) agree that people more easily perceive men as being highly competent, more likely to be considered leaders, given opportunities, and ultimately to emerge as leaders than females.

The gender stereotypes that contribute to biased evaluations in leadership are the pervasive and resilient gender stereotypes maintaining that females take care and men

take charge (Hoyt 2012: 86; Merchant 2012 and Ngunjiri and Gardiner 2017: 423). Executive leaders and councils in universities make significant and far-reaching decisions influencing many facets of the university society. Unfortunately, females hold relatively few of these powerful positions. Females' experiences in attaining and being seen as effective in top leadership positions is one of their greatest challenges. This is seen by the lack of equality between the sexes in leadership. This study serves to illuminate the leadership labyrinth. The focus then shifts to examining how stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination contribute to female under-representation in elite leadership roles by both influencing insights of females and responses to females as well as affecting the experiences of females themselves.

As Schwanke (2013: 20) explains females who have achieved getting into senior positions, which are predominantly held by men in higher education, have realised that, consciously or unconsciously, there are social roles and expectations governing the manner in which they should carry themselves. Unfortunately, these expectations do not match the manner in which they should act in their work environments. To make a success in their workplace, they are referred to as 'abnormal' females and must rise above the social expectations of femaleness in order to aspire to the socially prescribed role of leader. In addition, even in lower administrative positions, females still possess the 'abnormal' status should they be good at what they do (Macfarlane and Burg 2019: 262). The extreme could be the labels of being bitchy or dragon ladies (Kele 2015: 12).

3.6.4 FEMALE'S SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONCEPT

As the name implies, situational leadership requires adapting to situations that arise because situational emergencies command your style for that moment. Situational leadership stresses that leaders need to find out about their subordinates' needs and then adapt their leadership style accordingly (Northouse 2004: 93 and Moodly 2015: 229).

The foundation of this concept is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership. A leader needs to adapt his or her style to the situation. The approach centres on the idea that employees move forward and backward along a development scale. For leaders to be effective, they need to identify where subordinates are on the scale and

adapt their style to it. For example, if the people being led are not focused on quality, then the situational approach suggests that the leader should lead with a quality style for best results. "Although many theories of leadership are descriptive in nature, the situational approach is prescriptive. It tells you what you should and should not do in various contexts" (Hoyt and Simon 2017: 13; Northhouse 2012: 105; Schyns and Schilling 2011: 141). The three core competencies of a situational leader are: diagnosing, flexibility, and partnering (Narayanan 2017: 12).

In further explaining this concept, O'Connor and Pat 2017: 255) give the example of a situational leader who is a football coach able to adapt to each game of the season by diagnosing the situation, being flexible, and partnering with his or her team. Since a leader's position is usually associated with task performance at the workplace by employees, Kaifi, Noor, Nguyen, Aslami and Khanfar (2014: 34) suggest that leaders can motivate employees to be more proactive and adaptive with a clear, compelling and discrepant view of the future. According to Salehzadeh (2017: 869), societal and organisational culture shapes a leader's leadership style within that society/culture. This means that female leaders need to adapt to the societal and organisational culture first before expecting subordinates to relate to their leadership.

The situational concept behind this study proceeds from the assumption that different circumstances call for different leadership personas; accordingly, there is no single profile of a leader (Tortorella and Fogliatto 2017: 947). Contingency concepts examine settings and situations, and the interface of leadership behaviour and characteristics with follower characteristics. While these lend themselves to including the complexities of diversity, the context of leadership in these studies is typically the organisational culture in which leadership is exercised. A broader definition of contexts to include the cultural and social contexts would be more vigorous especially as we begin to look at the exercise of leadership within a global context and diverse society.

According to situational leadership models in general, leaders should take on different leadership styles depending on the situations that they come across. Leadership experiences, which work in one given situation, may not be effective under different circumstances (Luo and Liu 2014: 1726). In other words, other elements must be

considered when deciding which leadership style to use in a given situation. Therefore, successful leaders can be considered and characterised as those who are able to adjust their leadership styles according to circumstances that warrant their intervention.

According to modern theories of situational leadership, there is no one best way to influence people. In simple terms, this theory holds that the leadership style you select, and use will depend on the environment and the readiness or ability of your unit or your individual subordinates (Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube 2015: 12). Majeed, Ramaya, Mustamil, Nazri and Jamshed (2017: 572) also believes that “it is not the leader who needs changing but the role and role relationship they are playing within institutional structures”. In this background, female leadership imply a process that is “proactive and not reactive” (Rosiński 2017: 165), thereby making work with academic staff a process of ‘naming and claiming instead of blaming and shaming’ colleagues (Makondo and Makondo 2014: 305).

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Fundamental change is underway in the South African higher education sector. The population of faculties is increasing and gradually becoming more diverse (Rosiński, 2017: 170). New forms of leadership and new leaders are called upon to navigate through the current turbulent times. In this background of change and turbulence, this study focused on females who have successfully reached senior leadership positions to understand the pathways to seniority and how to better support female leaders on that journey.

Leadership development programmes are necessary and valuable for females in higher education. It is abundantly clear that fewer females than men make it to senior leadership positions in universities (Madsen 2007: 99; Cook and Kim 2012; Kellerman and Rhode 2014 and Salehzadeh 2017: 867). This dearth of women is not due to a pipeline issue, as there are plenty of qualified women to do the jobs.

The current study’s aim was to produce information that would assist to increase the understanding of female leaders in senior positions and enhance the stories that the

particular females told about their experiences of climbing up the leadership ladder and being successful in senior leadership positions. This was achieved within the backgrounds of their individual experiences and not a historical analysis of racial achievements. Their experiences were measured by examining each individual narrative for opinions, self-concepts, and elements of comparison within the group of female leaders, similar characteristics if any, principles, and criteria for success (Rosa and Clavero 2020: 20) to help perceive and appreciate how it is to be a female leader in a senior position.

The limited topics raised in this chapter are merely a guide and foundation on what might be the serious concerns and issues that might be raised by the study. The main objective was not to test the literature on barriers to females' accomplishment of leadership positions, but relatively to support and enlarge that area of literature as well as increase the theoretical dialogue about females' increasing prominence in leadership positions in universities. In the process, females will read about other females' experiences in this study, the effects on their personal lives, absorb what other females have gone through and what they have done to rise to senior leadership positions and how they manage their experiences. Younger females will value this study and benefit from it since they will have a record of other successful females whom they could imitate.

This section presented the main issues around female leadership in higher education in south africa as well as some critical success factors and supporting theories for female leadership. The literature review identified some main barriers faced by female leaders, namely, Personal barriers, social barriers, interpersonal barriers, gender stereotypes, Institutional barriers, educational barriers, and cultural barriers amongst others. The next chapter will present the methodology adopted by this study for investigating the experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As the title of this dissertation indicates, this study is about women's experiences in leadership roles in higher education. In chapter 2, I reviewed literature on women in higher education leadership and discussed previous research on women's experiences of the institutional climate and leadership development. Many studies addressed the barriers that women face in career and advancement (Barkhuizen, Masakane and Van der Sluis 2022: 48) and recent research has even focused on mid-level women in higher education who opt out of work as higher education administrators to care for young children (Alqahtani 2020: 37). However, few studies have focused on women in higher education who have been blocked from or have opted out of progressive career advancement more broadly, and there are no theories or meta-analyses to help explain this phenomenon. Heeding the call to action to develop more empowering approaches to the generation of knowledge (Belwal and Belwal 2014: 98) and following the lead of scholars who have engaged in deep, sustained, and groundbreaking studies of women's development (Brue 2018: 220; Brue 2019: 35; Bodalina and Mestry 2020: 452; and), I have adopted a theoretical frame and methodology that honors the voices of the participants and contributes to a deeper understanding of women's leadership experiences in higher education. My goal of developing a deeper understanding of the experiences of women working in mid-level leadership positions in higher education also influenced my choice of a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology represents a naturalistic view of inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and is valued for its interpretative approach "sensitive to the people and places under study" (Creswell 2014: 37). Building on the extant research, this study seeks to understand women's experiences in mid-level leadership positions and the decisions they have made and anticipate making regarding their careers. Studying the experiences of women in leadership in higher education requires a theoretical framework that considers the interrelationships among identity development, leadership, gender, and career. The grand research question that guided this study was "What experiences influence women's decisions to pursue senior-level leadership positions in higher education?" In the following sections, I outline the

theoretical framework guiding this study. Subsequently, I provide a brief overview of qualitative methodology followed by a detailed description of the grounded theory methods including criteria for evaluating grounded theory. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of methodological considerations and my researcher worldview.

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEW (RESEARCH PARADIGM)

The term paradigm is derived from Greek meaning pattern (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017: 26) and has been broadly defined by many academics. For example, paradigm is perceived as “a way of seeing the world that frames a research topic” and influences the way that researchers think about the topic (Bunnis Kelly 2010: 358). Bunis (Ibid) further argued that a paradigm is “a set of beliefs about the way in which particular problems exist and a set of agreements on how such problems can be investigated”. Paradigm is also described as “sets of beliefs that guide action” (Brooke 2013: 430) which is embedded in all educational research (Ibid). It is also argued that “all social scientists approach their subject via explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated” (Antwi & Hamza 2015: 219). Hughes (2010 :35) further asserts that a research is undergirded by paradigm, or a specific way of “seeing the world and making sense of it” (Mukherji and Albon 2015: 24). Every researcher has particular understandings on what is knowledge and what is truth (Chilisa and Kawulich 2012: 54). Such understandings shape researchers’ thoughts and views about themselves and other people as much as the researchers’ thoughts and views about the world (Ibid: 57).

The previous chapter presented the literature review conducted by this study on exploring the experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa. Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be on the research methodology used in the study including the research design which is the general plan that incorporates the different components of the study such as population and sampling, data collecting tools, and justification for each of them. The development methodologies were designed to acquire trustworthy information and validate it in a comprehensible and coherent approach making sure that the study will efficiently discourse the research problem. This chapter outlines the method and design used to conduct the research and analyse the

participant's stories. The population is defined including references that support the proposed number of participants. Interview protocol is conferred, along with the procedure for data collection, processing, and subsequent analysis. Any researcher assumptions or limitations are discussed.

Creswell (2014: 56) defines a research paradigm as a set of essential assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived which then serves as a thinking background that guides the behaviour of the researcher. Overall, a paradigm best describes an entire system of thinking (Martin 2017: 99).

Yanchar and Williams (2013: 5) defines a paradigm as a wide-ranging belief system, worldview, or framework that guides research and practice in a field. When someone chooses to conduct qualitative research, the researcher brings her/his own set of beliefs to the process. In various approaches to qualitative research, researchers use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to supplement and shape the study. Worthy research requires making these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks clear in the writing of the study, and, at a minimum, being aware that they impact and influence the conduct of inquiry (O'Neil and Koekemoer 2016: 3).

Research paradigms are the assumptions, norms, and standards that underpin different approaches to research. Essentially, research paradigms are the 'worldview' that inform research. It is valuable for researchers, both qualitative and quantitative, to understand what paradigm they are working within because understanding the theoretical basis of research paradigms allows researchers to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the approach being used and adjust accordingly. Different paradigms have different ontology and epistemologies. Ontology is defined as the "assumptions about the nature of reality" whereas epistemology is defined as the "assumptions about the nature of knowledge" that inform the work researchers do. It is important to understand the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research paradigm researchers are working within to allow for a full understanding of the approach being used and the assumptions that underpin the approach as a whole. Further, it is crucial that researchers understand their own ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world in general because their assumptions about the world will necessarily impact how they

interact with research. A discussion of the research paradigm is not complete without describing positivist, postpositivist, and constructivist philosophies.

4.2.1 POSITIVIST VS POSTPOSITIVIST

To further understand qualitative research, we need to discuss positivist and postpositivist frameworks. Positivism is a philosophy that the scientific method can and should be applied to social as well as natural sciences. Essentially, positivist thinking insists that the social sciences should use natural science methods in its research which stems from positivist ontology that there is an objective reality that exists that is fully independent of our perception of the world as individuals. Quantitative research is rooted in positivist philosophy, which can be seen in the value it places on concepts such as causality, generalizability, and replicability.

Conversely, postpositivists argue that social reality can never be one hundred percent explained but it could be approximated. Indeed, qualitative researchers have been insisting that there are “fundamental limits to the extent to which the methods and procedures of the natural sciences could be applied to the social world” and therefore postpositivist philosophy is often associated with qualitative research. An example of positivist versus postpositivist values in research might be that positivist philosophies value hypothesis-testing, whereas postpositivist philosophies value the ability to formulate a substantive theory.

4.2.2 CONSTRUCTIVIST

Constructivism is a subcategory of postpositivism. Most researchers invested in postpositivist research are constructivist as well, meaning they think there is no objective external reality that exists but rather that reality is constructed. Constructivism is a theoretical lens that emphasizes the dynamic nature of our world. “Constructivism contends that individuals’ views are directly influenced by their experiences, and it is these individual experiences and views that shape their perspective of reality”. Essentially, Constructivist thought focuses on how ‘reality’ is not a fixed certainty and experiences, interactions, and backgrounds give people a unique view of the world.

Constructivism contends, unlike in positivist views, that there is not necessarily an 'objective' reality we all experience. This is the 'relativist' ontological view that reality and the world we live in are dynamic and socially constructed. Therefore, qualitative scientific knowledge can be inductive as well as deductive."

So why is it important to understand the differences in assumptions that different philosophies and approaches to research have? Fundamentally, the assumptions underpinning the research tools a researcher selects provide an overall base for the assumptions the rest of the research will have and can even change the role of the researcher themselves. For example, is the researcher an 'objective' observer such as in positivist quantitative work? Or is the researcher an active participant in the research itself, as in postpositivist qualitative work? Understanding the philosophical base of the research undertaken allows researchers to fully understand the implications of their work and their role within the research, as well as reflect on their own positionality and bias as it pertains to the research they are conducting.

4.2.3 PHENOMENOLOGY AS THE BEST PARADIGM FOR THIS STUDY

Phenomenology is one of the main qualitative research approaches. It is purely meant for qualitative research. Merriam (2009: 23) defines phenomenology as a "study that seeks understanding about the essence and the underlying structure of the phenomenon". According to Van Manen (1990: 9), phenomenologists do not spend time to classify, simplify, and reduce phenomena to theoretical laws. Rather they are interested in "lived experiences". Parker (2014: 22) concurs, "Phenomenological research has overlaps with other essential qualitative approaches including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactions". Thus, the main aim of phenomenological research is to describe and start from a perspective that is free from hypotheses or preconceptions. As outlined earlier, this study seeks to discover the experiences of female leaders currently in senior positions. Thus, phenomenology will be the most fitting research paradigm for this study.

Another motive that led to the choice of this research paradigm is that will restrict the study from being biased or subjective and provide a better understanding of the

phenomenon under study (Enabling elements of female leadership and the challenges). The viewpoints of the participants were vital. Phenomenologists and several researchers that have used phenomenology in their studies accepted this judgement. Researchers such as Nieuwenhuis (2016: 56) and this study seek an awareness of the real nature of things. According to Cunliffe and Locke (2015: 310), “the phenomenologists are interested in understanding the social and emotional phenomena from the participants’ perspective”. As stated by Coetzee and Zyl (2014: 5), phenomenological methods are linked with and are strongly fixed in the paradigm of individual knowledge and subjectivity and give importance to individual outlook and interpretation. This makes the approach trustworthy for understanding subjective experiences, gaining discernments into people’s motivations and actions and wiping away previous assumptions and conformist wisdom to reveal the specific and recognise phenomena in the sequence of how they are perceived by the actors in a given situation (Ibid: 6).

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a plan of how the study is to be conducted (Guercini, S. 2014: 662; Sekaran and Bougie 2016: 94; Creswell and Clark 2018: 51) with the intention of answering the research questions. According to (Sekaran and Bourie 2016: 95), the research design is an outline of how a researcher intends to conduct the research focusing mainly on data collection and analysis. Moreover, Sheperd and Challenger (2013: 225). suggests that a research design is a framework that specifies the processes for obtaining the essential information to answer the research problem by detailing the type of information to be gathered. As a result, the qualitative approach was used in this investigation.

4.3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

This study followed a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was intended to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the female leaders. The qualitative research method, according to Conger (1998: 107), is research conducted with a view that the social world should be studied in its natural state, using suitable words and descriptions to record and investigate facets of social reality.

The qualitative approach is drawn from the constructivist paradigm (Bryman 2004: 729). This approach requires the researcher to avoid imposing their own opinion of the meaning of social phenomena upon the respondent (Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008: 214). The aim is to investigate how the respondents interpret their own reality (Ibid: 220). This presents the test of creating a methodology that is framed by the respondent rather than by the researcher. The research strategy of this study was a case study, and data collection was via interviews. An effective means by which to do this in this study was through interviews, where the response to an inquiry was open (Parker 2014: 15). Furthermore, the researcher of this study developed the questions throughout the process in order to ensure that the respondent further expands upon the evidence provided. Qualitative research is usually used for examining the meaning of social phenomena, rather than seeking a causative relationship between established variables (Ibid: 20).

Madill and Gough (2008: 254) maintain that one of the purposes served by the qualitative method of research is to assist the researcher to discover the problem that exists within a phenomenon and gain understanding into the nature of a specific phenomenon and develop new concepts of or theoretical perceptions on the phenomenon and discover problems about the phenomenon. This is what they mention as “interpretation”. The qualitative approach requires that the researcher interacts with the participants in their natural settings. This enables the researcher to gain the participants’ co-operation by establishing connections with them, which enables the production of high response rates. Pritchard (2015: 307) explain that in the qualitative approach, the researcher approaches reality or the truth from a position that is constructivist, which allows for various meanings of individuals. Qualitative data assists the researcher to know more about the problem, acquire a more thorough, and complete picture of the participants. In this study, the qualitative data was collected by conducting interviews, which produced an understanding of the experiences of female leaders regarding their senior position.

A method of research that produces descriptive (non-numerical) data, such as observations of behavior or personal accounts of experiences. The goal of gathering this qualitative data is to examine how individuals can perceive the world from different vantage points. A variety of techniques are subsumed under qualitative research,

including content analyses of narratives, in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and case studies, often conducted in naturalistic settings.

The term “methods” refers to techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering. According to Johnson, Buehring, Cassell and Symon (2007: 23), methodology refers to how the researcher will go about reviewing the topic or phenomena. Punch (2009: 16) refers to methodology as methods used for studying reality and defines “methods” as “suitable ways of constructing knowledge of that reality”. Another important aspect of methodology relates to inductive and deductive zoning. Inherent in the quantitative; qualitative dichotomy is the view of quantitative research adopts a deductive process, whereas qualitative research adopts an inductive process (Schurink 2003: 4). According to Stead, Perry, Munka, Bonnett, Shiban and Care (2011: 105) research methodology is how the research is planned and done, the methodology consists of the researcher’s point of view, theoretical and conceptual framework and method. The research consists of three key methods which are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of conducting research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016:44). A research methodology is used to look for a solution to the question at hand.

The research method used in this study is qualitative. Understanding and giving more insight into the matter is emphasised in this method. The qualitative method also facilitates the respondent’s personal points of view on the topic (Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy 2013: 12). This method was selected for this particular study to enable female leaders to personally give their opinions about their experiences in in-depth interviews. The leaders freely answer the questions without restrictions and according to their own thinking.

Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervene or introduce treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses as well as further investigate and understand quantitative data (Korstjens and Moser (2018: 120). Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. It answers the hows and whys instead of how many or how much. It could be structured as a stand-alone study, purely relying on qualitative data or

it could be part of mixed-methods research that combines qualitative and quantitative data. This review introduces the readers to some basic concepts, definitions, terminology, and application of qualitative research (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan 2022: 15).

Qualitative research at its core, ask open-ended questions whose answers are not easily put into numbers such as 'how' and 'why'. Due to the open-ended nature of the research questions at hand, qualitative research design is often not linear in the same way quantitative design is. One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to explain processes and patterns of human behavior that can be difficult to quantify (Cleland 2017: 61) Phenomena such as experiences, attitudes, and behaviors can be difficult to accurately capture quantitatively, whereas a qualitative approach allows participants themselves to explain how, why, or what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing at a certain time or during an event of interest. Quantifying qualitative data certainly is possible, but at its core, qualitative data is looking for themes and patterns that can be difficult to quantify and it is important to ensure that the context and narrative of qualitative work are not lost by trying to quantify something that is not meant to be quantified (Ibid: 63).

However, while qualitative research is sometimes placed in opposition to quantitative research, where they are necessarily opposites and therefore 'compete' against each other and the philosophical paradigms associated with each, qualitative and quantitative work are not necessarily opposites nor are they incompatible (Cleland 2017: 64) While qualitative and quantitative approaches are different, they are not necessarily opposites, and they are certainly not mutually exclusive. For instance, qualitative research can help expand and deepen understanding of data or results obtained from quantitative analysis. For example, say a quantitative analysis has determined that there is a correlation between length of stay and level of patient satisfaction, but why does this correlation exist? This dual-focus scenario shows one way in which qualitative and quantitative research could be integrated together.

1.13.1.21 JUSTIFICATION FOR USING THE QUALITATIVE METHOD

When someone resolves to conduct qualitative research, that researcher brings his or her own set of opinions to the process. These opinions and beliefs inform how the

qualitative study will be conducted and written. In addition, in many approaches to qualitative research, the researchers use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to advance the study. Good research entails assembling these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks clearly in the writing of the study, and at the least being aware that they guide the conduct of inquiry (Palinkas et al. 2015: 355).

This study embraces a qualitative methodology approach. Qualitative research is grounded in a philosophical position that applies a largely interpretivist epistemology in the sense that it is concerned with people's experiences and how their social world is construed, unstated, and fabricated (Ibid: 356). Therefore, qualitative methodology is more suitable for the interpretative and emancipatory epistemological stance taken in this research. Qualitative is the most prevailing methodology for studying individuals' experiences (Ibid: 357). The strength of qualitative research in this study is its ability to provide multifaceted textual descriptions of how females experience senior leadership. It provides information about the human side of gender and race issues, behaviours, beliefs, opinions, feelings, and relationships of the females being studied. The qualitative method is also effective in categorising intangible factors, such as social standards and norms, socioeconomic status, gender characters and roles and ethnicity whose role in the research issue may not be readily obvious. A qualitative approach is also more appropriate for studies of cultures of inequality, and it complements arguments in feminist theory on qualitative approaches being most appropriate in accessing and giving voice to silenced and marginalised groups (Corbin and Strauss 2015: 54).

Studies in qualitative research highlights individual meanings, setting, and reflexivity. From the data collected from the participants through semi-structured interview questions, the researcher analyses the data, looking for patterns to emerge from the main study (Creswell 2013: 12). It has been discovered that common features in the paths of females who have attained leadership positions during this work.

Using a qualitative approach designed to understand participants' experiences within the context of an issue was the most useful way to accomplish this purpose. Within the qualitative approach, the researcher combined narrative inquiry techniques. According to Bruce, Beuthin, Sheilds, Molzahn and Schick-Makaroff (2016: 12), narrative inquiry

records the experiences of individuals or small group with the aim of revealing their experiences or perspectives. The three dimensions of narrative inquiry include temporality, personal and social, and place. Moving within these dimensions enables the researcher to travel in four directions: inward (internal conditions), outward (the environment), forward, and situated within place (past, present, and future). Another important theme is that of relationships between the researcher and the participants as well as those between the researcher and the study.

Such stories can best be discovered through the interview process. According to Castillo-Montoya (2016: 811), “at the root of semi-structured interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience”. This is the essence of the planned research study: to tell the stories of female leaders, as they perceive their experiences, and recognise common qualities and characteristics in their individual journeys. The study describes the lived experiences of females in senior leadership positions in universities of technology in South Africa. This research utilised two main methods of data collection: a critical view of literature and policies and semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interview questions allowed the meaning attributed to leadership to be obtained through explanations of the experiences of the participants. The interviews revealed a range of original findings from the ten female voices in the study. However, the literature and policy review also highlighted multiple silences and absences of female data in higher education in South Africa. For instance, there was no statistical proof of implementation of gender policies in higher education.

4.3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACHES

There are five common approaches to qualitative research: They are discussed as follows:

4.3.2.1 ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography as a research design has its origins in social and cultural anthropology, and involves the researcher being directly immersed in the participant’s environment. Through this immersion, the ethnographer can use a variety of data collection techniques with the aim of being able to produce a comprehensive account of the social phenomena

that occurred during the research period. That is to say, the researcher's aim with ethnography is to immerse themselves into the research population and come out of it with accounts of actions, behaviors, events, etc. through the eyes of someone involved in the population. Direct involvement of the researcher with the target population is one benefit of ethnographic research because it can then be possible to find data that is otherwise very difficult to extract and record (Scott, Peller, Goldman and Simon Kitto 2013: 15).

4.3.2.2 GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded Theory is the "generation of a theoretical model through the experience of observing a study population and developing a comparative analysis of their speech and behavior." As opposed to quantitative research which is deductive and tests or verifies an existing theory, grounded theory research is inductive and therefore lends itself to research that is aiming to study social interactions or experiences. In essence, Grounded Theory's goal is to explain for example how and why an event occurs or how and why people might behave a certain way. Through observing the population, a researcher using the Grounded Theory approach can then develop a theory to explain the phenomena of interest (Chun, Birks and Francis 2019: 62)

4.3.2.3 PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. The approach investigates the everyday experiences of human beings while suspending the researchers' preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. In other words, phenomenological research studies lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how people understand those experiences. Researchers using phenomenological research design assume that people use a universal structure or essence to make sense of their experience. They interpret the participants' feelings, perceptions, and beliefs to clarify the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. Phenomenological research design requires the researcher to bracket whatever a priori assumption they have about the experience or phenomenon. In simpler terms, researchers use phenomenological research designs to understand a

phenomenon's universal nature by exploring the views of those who have experienced it. This approach is popularly used to study lived experience, gain a deeper understanding of how human beings think, and expand a researcher's knowledge about a phenomenon (Delve, Ho and Limpaecher 2022c, March 17).

4.3.3.3 NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Researchers use narrative analysis to understand how research participants construct story and narrative from their own personal experience. That means there is a dual layer of interpretation in narrative analysis. First the research participants interpret their own lives through narrative. Then the researcher interprets the construction of that narrative. Narratives can be derived from journals, letters, conversations, autobiographies, transcripts of in-depth interviews, focus groups, or other types of narrative qualitative research and then used in narrative research (Sandelowski 1991: 15)

One of qualitative research's strengths lies in its ability to tell a story, often from the perspective of those directly involved in it. Reporting on qualitative research involves including details and descriptions of the setting involved and quotes from participants. This detail is called 'thick' or 'rich' description and is a strength of qualitative research. Narrative research is rife with the possibilities of 'thick' description as this approach weaves together a sequence of events, usually from just one or two individuals, in the hopes of creating a cohesive story, or narrative (Bleakley 2005: 534). While it might seem like a waste of time to focus on such a specific, individual level, understanding one- or two-people's narratives for an event or phenomenon can help to inform researchers about the influences that helped shape that narrative. The tension or conflict of differing narratives can be "opportunities for innovation" (Ibid).

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are two main types of research approach, namely, inductive and deductive research approaches This study will adopt the deductive research approach.

4.4.1 DEDUCTIVE APPROACH

The deductive approach develops the hypothesis or hypotheses upon a pre-existing theory and then formulates the research approach to test it (Silverman 2013: 336). This approach is best appropriate to contexts where the study is concerned with examining whether the observed phenomena fit in with expectations based upon previous research (Wiles et al. 2011: 587). The deductive approach, therefore, might be considered particularly suited to the positivist approach, which permits the formulation of hypotheses and the statistical testing of predictable results to a conventional level of probability (Snieder and Lerner 2009: 16). However, a deductive approach may also be used with qualitative research methods, though in such cases the expectations formed by pre-existing studies would be articulated differently than through hypotheses testing (Saunders et al. 2007: 23). The deductive approach is characterised as the development from general to specific: the general theory and database are first established, and the particular knowledge gained from the study process is then tested against it (Kothari 2004: 56).

Narrative inquiry is one of the traditional approaches of qualitative research. I selected narrative inquiry for my doctoral research study because through narratives I gained insight into the experiences of female leaders in senior higher education leadership which corresponded to my purpose and research questions. In qualitative research studies, data can be collected through interviews and observations and/or from documents. I chose to collect data from interviews with ten participants. There are four primary approaches to performing narrative data analysis and I used thematic analysis as my focus was to identify themes within the narratives. From narrative thematic analysis four themes the experiences of leadership by the ten participants providing a better understanding of the challenges that the female leaders faced.

4.4.2 INDUCTIVE APPROACH

The inductive approach is characterised as a move from the specific to the general (Azungah, Theophilus 2018: 56). In this approach, the observations are the starting point for the researcher, and patterns are looked for in the data. In this approach, there is no framework that primarily informs the data collection, and the research focus can thus be formed after the data has been collected. Although this may be seen as the point at which

new theories are generated, it is also correct that as the data is analysed it may be found to fit into an existing theory (Bryman and Bell 2011: 22).

This method is commonly used in qualitative research, where the absence of a theory informing the research process may be of value by reducing the possibility of researcher bias in the data collection stage (Bryman and Bell 2011: 28). Interviews are carried out regarding specific phenomena and then the data may be examined for patterns between respondents (Flick 2011: 195). However, this approach may also be used successfully within positivist methodologies, where the data is analysed first, and important patterns are used to inform the generation of results.

4.4.3 CASE STUDY RESEARCH

A case study is an appropriate research design when you want to gain concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject. It allows you to explore the key characteristics, meanings, and implications of the case (Yin 2014: 12). Case study research is a type of qualitative research design. It's often used in the social sciences because it involves observing subjects, or cases, in their natural setting, with minimal interference from the researcher. In the case study method, researchers pose a specific question about an individual or group to test a theory or theories. This can be done by gathering data from interviews with key informants.

Although case study methods remain a controversial approach to data collection, they are widely recognised in many social science studies especially when in-depth explanations of a social behaviour are sought after. This article, therefore, discusses several aspects of cases studies as a research method. These include the design and categories of case studies and how their robustness can be achieved. It also explores on the advantages and disadvantages of case study as a research method.

There are a number of advantages in using case studies. First, the examination of the data is most often conducted within the context of its use (Yin 2014: 14), that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. A case study might be interested, for example, in the process by which a subject comprehends an authentic text. To explore the strategies the reader uses, the researcher must observe the subject within her environment, such as reading in classroom or reading for leisure. This would contrast with

experiment, for instance, which deliberately isolates a phenomenon from its context, focusing on a limited number of variables (Zaidah 2003: 52)

In this study, the researcher has provided some discussion of case studies in terms of the different types of case studies found in the literature. Case studies are considered useful in research as they enable researchers to examine data at the micro level (Järvensivu and Törnroos 2010: 102). As an alternative to quantitative or qualitative research, case studies can be a practical solution when a big sample population is difficult to obtain. Although case studies have various advantages, in that they present data of real-life situations and they provide better insights into the detailed behaviours of the subjects of interest, they are also criticised for their inability to generalise their results (Patnaik and Pandey 2019: 164). Case study method has always been criticised for its lack of rigour and the tendency for a researcher to have a biased interpretation of the data. Grounds for establishing reliability and generality are also subjected to scepticism when a small sampling is deployed. Often time, case study research is dismissed as useful only as an exploratory tool. Despite these criticisms, researchers continue to deploy the case study method particularly in studies of real-life situations governing social issues and problems (Ibid). Case studies from various disciplines and domains are widely reported in the literature. The case of Universities of Technology was used in this study because the case study method acted a form of qualitative analysis wherein careful and complete observation of the female leaders in UoTs is done; efforts are made to study each and every aspect of the concerning unit in minute details and then from case data generalizations and inferences are drawn. In fact, the case study method used in this study deliberately focused on unusual, neglected, or outlying cases of challenges faced by female leadership in higher education which shed new light on the research problem.

4.5 RESEARCH METHOD

A good qualitative study design starts with a goal or objective. This should be clearly defined or stated. The target population needs to be specified. A method for obtaining information from the study population must be carefully detailed to ensure there are no omissions of part of the target population. A proper collection method should be selected which will help obtain the desired information without overly limiting the collected data because many times, the information sought is not well compartmentalized or obtained.

Finally, the design should ensure adequate methods for analyzing the data. An example may help better clarify some of the various aspects of qualitative research. All this is explained in what Saunders et al (2007: 56) calls a research onion:

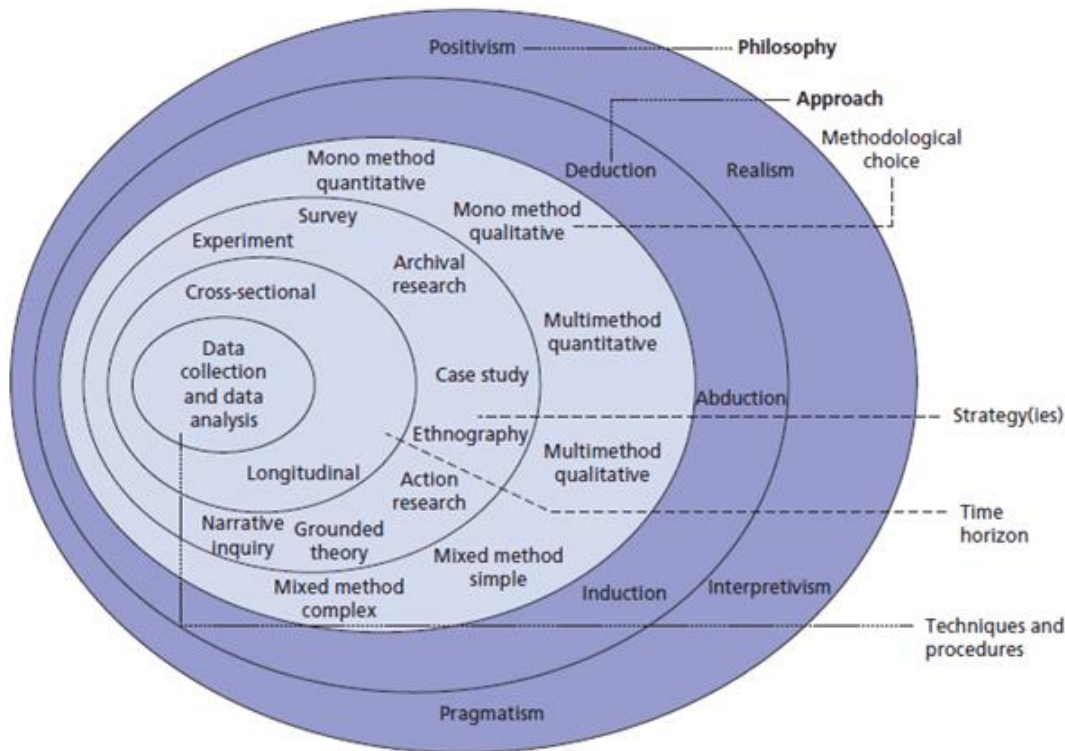


Figure 0.1 Research onion

Source: (Saunders et al. 2019: 108).

Research onion is a framework for developing different types of research methodology, depending upon the objective of the study. Research onion was developed by Saunders et al (2019: 108) in their book "Research Method for Business Students". The model consists of multiple layers that are arranged in a way similar to the layers of an onion. Saunders et al. (2019: 109) proposed the research onion framework (Figure 4.1), which explains pictorially the various aspects of the research to be examined and planned in order to come up with a sound research design. In other words, the research onion guides the researcher through all the steps that need to be taken when developing a research methodology.

4.5.1 RESEARCH SETTING

This study analyzes data collected through a series of qualitative interviews. This study takes an applied research approach by contributing to the current field of knowledge around women in leadership. It provides an improved understanding of the existing challenges for women and aims at beginning to identify areas for solutions to be developed. Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyze the interviews and elucidate common themes from the women's experiences. This study, from its inception through analysis, took place between January 2018 and March 2019 in different areas within South Africa where the six UoTs are situated. All the interviews were conducted in various locations of the participants' choosing.

4.5.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Generally, inferential statistics is used in quantitative type of educational, psychological and sociological researches. For that, research is carried out on selected sample and the results are generalised on a large or entire group of targeted subjects. Such a group is called population in research (Shukla 2020: 1). The researcher has to decide and define the population accurately before starting research activities. Well defined population helps the researcher in selecting sample of proper size, which represents the entire population. Success of research and reliability of results mostly depend upon the sample. How to select such sample that represents the entire population in real sense is discussed in this chapter. The researcher will begin by defining start the meaning of population.

Population refers to the set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied. (Guetterman 2015: 10). Any type of research has been based on objectives. Objectives, clarify the subjects of study directly or indirectly. On which group the results of research can be applied or for which group the findings can be generalised is clarified by the objectives of study. Such group is known as population in research (Shaw and Holland 2014: 87). A part of population that represents it completely is known as sample. It means, the units, selected from the population as a sample, must represent all kind of characteristics of different types of units of population (Yin 2011: 89). Due to various reasons, data are collected from units of sample instead of all units of population in majority of researches and their findings are generalised in the context of entire

population. This can be done precisely only if the efforts are made to select the sample by keeping in mind the characteristics of an ideal sample (Van Dierendonck and Sousa 2016: 403) explains that a population constitutes the entire collection of elements or groups in respect of which inferences must be drawn, while sampling involves the process of drawing a suitable representative subset from the overall population. The target population for this study will consist of all female leaders in leadership positions in all South African universities of technologies.

2.1.1.1 SAMPLING METHOD

The process of selecting sample from population is called sampling. A method used to select a sample is called sampling method. A researcher can apply certain sampling method out of different methods according to the objective of research. The none probability sampling was used in this study. A none probability sampling method does not have any scientific base, so it increases the chances of selecting biased sample (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 12). In most of the cases, such sample does not represent all characteristics of entire population. All units do not have certain or fixed probability to be selected in sample in this method. That is why, this is known as non-probability sampling method (Khan and Naushad 2020: 14)

2.1.1.1.1 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling has a long developmental history and there are as many views that it is simple and straightforward as there are about its complexity. The reason for purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigour of the study and trustworthiness of the data and results. Four aspects to this concept have previously been described: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior et al. 2020: 652).

Purposive sampling is a blanket term for several sampling techniques that choose participants deliberately due to qualities they possess. As Patton (2002: 272) notes, “purposeful sampling is one of the core distinguishing elements of qualitative inquiry.” It

is also called judgmental sampling, because it relies on the judgment of the researcher to select the units. In the case of this study was chosen due to the quality they have; since all of them were female leaders currently in senior leadership positions in their institutions. There are two types of sampling procedures. Probability sampling seeks to generalise. Sampling design is one of the most significant steps in a research study. Since it is impossible to cover every unit of the population, a sample of units is selected from the population (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016: 16) maintains that the sample is a subgroup of individual representative of the population of a study. Researchers make use of samples to select the research participants who will represent the entire research population.

Qualitative research uses non-probability sampling as its intention is not to produce a statistically representative sample or draw a statistical inference. Purposive sampling is a technique often employed in a qualitative study. With a purposive non-random sample, the total number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them. In this study, the characteristics of the females were used as the basis of selection.

The critical case purposive sampling strategy was employed in this study, that is why the sample selected was ten females to elicit the most data and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge as stated by (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior et al. 2020: 652). Critical case purposive sampling focuses on identifying 'outliers', in the case of this study: females with exceptional outcomes and understanding of their experience as compared to other females, Paton (2002: 272) has written that in qualitative research studies sample size depends on five things: the scope of the study, nature of the topic, quality of the data, study design, and the use of shadowed data (when participants speak of others' experience as well as their own). Each approach involves the use of purposive sampling methods to recruit participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study.

The purpose of the current study is to measure the success of female leaders in particularly critical case (in higher education). Therefore, sampling is not a matter of representative thoughts or opinions, but a matter of the richness of facts. Correctness and appropriateness are paramount in qualitative sampling (Patton 2015: 4). The concept

or the experience under study is the unit of analysis; given that an individual can generate hundreds or thousands of concepts, large samples are not necessarily needed to generate rich data sets (Staller 2013: 395). The exact number of individuals needed, and the number of interviews per individual depends on the goals and purpose of the study. Phenomenologists are interested in common features of the lived experience. Although diverse samples might provide a broader range from which to filter the essence of the phenomenon, data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and who can provide a detailed account of their experience might suffice to uncover its core elements. Typical samples for phenomenological studies range from one to ten persons. In the case of this study, the ten females were interviewed once.

Purposive sampling is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose. A researcher may have a specific group in mind, in the case of this study, females in senior leadership positions. Purposive sampling begins with a purpose in mind, meaning there is far less emphasis on generalising from sample to population and greater attention to a sample purposely selected for its potential to yield insight from its illuminative and rich information sources (Staller 2021: 40). Purposive sampling was applied to select females who are already in senior leadership positions from the institutions concerned. In this study, some advanced knowledge of the population under investigation was necessary when carrying out purposive sampling. Although the researcher did not know the participants personally, she had either read about them in newspapers or journal articles, read their work or heard them speak at conferences.

The sample is thus selected to include the targeted females and exclude those who do not fit the purpose. A purposive sample is designed to enhance an understanding of selected individuals or a group's experience/s or for developing theories and concepts. The researcher's aim was to accomplish goals by selecting a specific group of individuals who are information-rich and can provide the greatest insight into the research objectives (O'Reilly and Parker 2013: 19). It was for the researcher to decide what needs to be known and set out ways to find females who could and were willing to provide information by virtue of their knowledge and experiences.

Grossoehme (2014: 109) agree with Babbie and Mouton (2012: 74) that research methodology refers to the researcher's overall approach in carrying out the research plan. Mouton (2012: 56) views research methodology as concentrating on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. The point of departure would be the specific task (data collection) at hand, the different steps in the research process, and the most objective procedures to be employed. In essence, as Griffiths, Roberts and Price (2019: 32) express, methodologies rationalise and justify methods, which produce data and analyses, and methods produce understanding, so methodologies have epistemic content. Put simply, the research methodology in this research thus refers to the approach embraced to follow in gathering and analysing data.

In order to consider the effect of the situation on their behaviour, divergent population settings, including rural, suburban and urban areas were used. Since the study is about females busy in their daily leadership activities, separate interviews were conducted in places chosen by the respondent following an appointment. The environment chosen was suitable for all who participated.

2.1.1.1.2 SELECTING THE PARTICIPANTS

In assessing the leadership of the females relevant for this study, the researcher employed a distinctive set of characteristics relevant to higher-education institutions when raw data was unavailable. After the characteristics were acknowledged, the researcher skimmed through the data points to narrow down the top ten females. By only scrutinising the top ten from a pool of other candidates, the researcher was able to narrow the findings and focus solely on power wielders and major influencers, which was the main goal of the study. This study had a small sample. However, the problem does not rest in the size of the sample, it is with the inadequacy of the evidence. Emmel (2013: 141) wrote, "reporting that 1 or 200 cases were collected is not as important as the ways in which insights into events and experiences are used for interpretation, explanation, and claims for research. The key consideration is validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry (which) have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observation/analytical capabilities of the researcher than

with sample size.” In short, I encourage beginners not to fret too much about the numbers of participants, but rather focus on the richness and quality of your evidence.

Also, by so doing, the researcher unintentionally found that the top ten list also served as a sufficient representation of the gender breakdown for most institutions. Once ten willing participants were identified, the researcher stopped recruiting for the study; however, it is important to note that this study did not turn anyone away. Recruiting for this study was extremely challenging because of the limited time females in the role of senior leadership have available.

2.1.1.1.3 REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE SAMPLE

In an effort to collect information from all UoTs whilst decreasing the chance of any potential systematic bias, several classifications were used to inform the targeting of participants. Some of these include the participants’ ethnicity, gender, and level of education. Understanding the overview of the respondents’ characteristics was vital for added analysis of their responses. Therefore, efforts were made to describe the background of the respondents which was directly related to the objectives of the study.

Their professional contact details were found in the university’s organogram, some were requested from the Human Resource Department, and some were personally requested. Other participants were referrals by some of the participants. The selected ones were asked to refer the researcher to other female leaders within their networks who are in other universities of technology across South Africa. After identifying the participants, they were contacted in person, by phone or email and requested to participate in the study. The participants were requested to describe their opinions, experiences, feelings, views and beliefs, at their workplaces in relation to past, current, and future concerns and hopes on the issues of female visibility in senior leadership positions. A purposive sample of females with experiences of the phenomena of being leaders in higher education was necessary to the value and trustworthiness of data and as such reliability and closeness to the participants was warranted. Therefore, the general demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, marital status, position, racial group, higher education experience and highest qualification will be described.

The sample of this study had to be representative of all South African races. South African law splits the population into four main racial categories: Black Africans, Whites, Indians and Coloureds. This study attempted to be representative of all races but could not find a coloured female who was willing to be a part of the study. Overall, all the other racial groups were represented.

I contacted the carefully chosen respondents and requested them to be a part of my research study. I contacted them by e-mail and gave them a description of the nature and purpose of the study. All of the females who agreed to be part of the study were given an informed consent letter, a description of the study and ethical clearance to conduct the study. All these documents were given to participants at the time of the interview outlining information related to the study. These items are included in the Appendices section of this dissertation. Participants were assured and guaranteed anonymity throughout the research study. During the interview process and throughout reporting the study's findings, the participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. All study data, including interview tapes and transcripts, were kept in a locked location at work and destroyed upon completion of the study. A transcriptionist transcribed the interviews and signed a confidentiality form.

4.6 SETTING AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The study was on all six universities of technology in South Africa and all of them were represented. The participants were selected based on their unique experiences of being a female leader in higher education. All the female leaders interviewed had their own remote and private offices at their workplaces. Interviews were conducted there with doors closed to safeguard from eavesdropping or unintended colleagues. Although all the interviewees were important; it was amazing to interview four Vice Chancellors. This was an achievement because when the researcher started the study in 2017, there was only one female Vice-Chancellor in all six UoTs. Another exciting factor was that all the participants had PhD degrees, irrespective of age, experience or race.

What was outstanding in the setting and demographics of this study was that the participants were totally different. Even in a small sample of ten females who all work in the same higher education sector, there was substantial dissimilarity in their life

beginnings, experiences, career journeys and assertiveness. Some came from very poor families, some came from political families, and others came from supportive families where both parents were successful teachers whilst others were the first in their family to attend university. Some are happily married, others divorced and others single. Some have children whilst others do not. Some have proceeded along the traditional academic route whilst others have entered academia from business or other professions, such as medicine and health care or the arts. What is clear to me is that there are dangers in treating any gender identified group as the same.

4.7 PILOT TESTING

Additionally, while methodological texts recommend the use of pilot studies in qualitative research, there is a lack of reported research focusing on how to conduct such pilot studies. My argument for using a pilot study was to familiarize myself with interviews in a case study research where semi-structured qualitative interviews are used. I also believed that if I conducted a pilot study, I will be better informed and prepared to face the challenges that are likely to arise in the practical study and more confident in the instruments to be used for data collection. A proper analysis of the procedures and results from the pilot study facilitates the identification of weaknesses that may be addressed. A carefully organized and managed pilot study has the potential to increase the quality of the research as results from such studies can inform subsequent parts of the research process (Marshall, Cardon and Poddaret et al 2013: 22). A pilot test, according to Turner (2010: 757), is an important element in preparing for an interview. Researchers are advised to use people who are interested in what the researcher seeks to study for the pilot test just as the potential interviewees. Pilot testing is important because it offers the researcher the opportunity to tell if there are mistakes in his/her research questions and research instrument in order to fix them in advance. (Gelling 2014: 44).

Therefore, before the actual interviews, I piloted five female leaders who were not sampled for this study. The pilot was conducted from one of the UoTs used in this study. Five females in senior leadership positions were randomly chosen but were not part of the study. The pilot test assisted in restructuring the interview questions and shortening them. Most of those piloted overstepped the 20 minutes stipulated for the test. Most of the piloted candidates suggested that the interviews be semi-structured and not open-

ended because most open-ended interviews end up losing focus. After collecting the feedback from the pilot tests, all the five interview answers and recordings were then revised before the actual data collection process started. The sample for the pilot study was not used as part of the research sample. One of my participants for the pilot testing advised me to delete some questions which were similar to avoid repetition and waste of time. Another one also alerted me of my accent, to try to make it understandable, since I was going to interview senior academics. Last, but not least, one participant told me to allow enough time for my participant to answer the questions because females think about the questions posed carefully before answering. I took all the advice into consideration during the actual interview. Overall, it allowed me to fine-tune my questions and to consider the length of time that was apt for each interview.

Pilot tests are not necessary in qualitative studies. However, with that said, I think that conducting one or two test interviews helped to refine my interview guide and get a general feel for how the interviews will go. The purpose of the pilot test was to determine if the study can be conducted on a larger scale; to test the reliability and validity of the instrument and trustworthiness of respondents for data collection in the main study; to establish how suitable, understandable and practical the instrument is; to address any problems prior to the main study, and to check the time necessary for the completion of the interview (Gelling 2015: 44). The pilot test demonstrated that the interview schedule did not contain any confusing items and the respondents found it easy to understand.

4.8 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In this study, the readers will explore how the researcher conducting qualitative research becomes responsible for maintaining the consistency and credibility of various aspects of the research. In a way, this is similar to the role statistics, validated and reliable instruments, and standardized measures and methods play in quantitative research. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to try to access entry into the thoughts and feelings of study participants. This task is not easy at all, as it involves asking individuals to talk about things that may be very private and personal to them.

Sometimes the experiences being revealed are renewed in the participant's mind, whereas in other cases recalling past experiences may be hard and problematic. Nonetheless, data are being collected; a major responsibility of the researcher is to protect participants and their data. Devices for such protection must be clearly pronounced to participants and must be approved by an appropriate research ethics review board before the research begins. As a new practitioner to qualitative research, I consulted with a female leader from my institution who is known for and experienced in qualitative research before embarking on this project. I also took several classes in qualitative research and attended five qualitative method workshops and two seminars where I acquired: the skill to associate the crucial phenomenon of the study; the capacity to pose research questions that are important and reflective of the phenomenon; the skill to conduct interviews in which the participants are permitted to guide the content to an extent; and the ability to collect and analyse data, as well as coding text and developing themes. I also recognised that qualitative research is timeconsuming and costly as well. However, I was prepared to assume these challenges.

Journaling and constant self-reflection during the course of the research process allowed the researcher to make sure she was faithfully demonstrating the words of the females in the study and showing understandings generated from her own experiences. Ethical issues were addressed during each stage of the study. I was familiar with the ethical principles associated with research. Permissions for this study were solicited from the appropriate bodies. The procedure also commands that research information be submitted to the Institutional Review Council for approval. The Request for Review Form was filed, providing investigator information, title and project information, description of participants, research methodology, data sources, and a project description.

4.8.1 AN INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Informed consent forms can be found in the appendices section of this dissertation. The form states the processes of the study, stresses that the participant can expect confidentiality, provides the opportunity to ask questions, and ensures the freedom to withdraw at any time. Contact information for the researcher, her supervisor, and the Institutional Review Council are included in the letter.

2.1.1.2 INTEGRITY OF THE RESEARCH IS THE ISSUE

Of course, this is true of qualitative research that researchers make errors, and these threaten the validity, reliability, and utility of their study. Qualitative researchers, however, lack many of the protections against errors that the statistical methods, standardized measures, and classical designs afford. They must rely on their own competence, openness, and honesty. That is, on their person. Thus, their role, the role of the researcher is more open to scrutiny. As a qualitative researcher, whose human brain is trained to find meaning in everything, the researcher encountered confirmation bias in every interaction with both participants and data. Therefore, the researcher monitored the study and reduced the disposition to interpret too quickly. As a qualitative researcher, I have evolved a variety of methods for this, such as the famous phenomenological reduction and epoché, but every design within qualitative methodology requires an explicit description of how the researcher will remain conscious of his or her previous knowledge and dispositions and how he or she will control the intrusion of bias. As a qualitative researcher, I practiced mindfulness meditation as a means to become aware when their thoughts were about previous knowledge rather than open and receptive to the information from the participant.

2.1.1.3 DOCUMENT REVIEW

In conjunction with the interviews of the female leaders, I conducted an extensive document review of different types of information related to the female transitional state of UoTs and their differences from traditional universities. This, I did in order to garner more insight into, as well as different perspectives on the background of the participants' work. I also wanted to get information on the transitional process so that I could understand national policy documents better. Data included public media sources and higher education historical archives. Specifically, the documentation consisted of oral and written higher education sketches, transcripts and audio recordings of previous interviews, newspaper and magazine articles, and artefacts including articles no longer available through online searches that the primary research participant provided.

Material from all these sources served to inform the interview questions and develop broad and detailed cases, and correct career timelines. However, despite a thorough review of printed data, archived higher education audio and transcribed oral histories,

there was insufficient information available to develop a case study for the universities of technology. The documents reviewed revealed little of this higher education sector and revealed nothing about the female leaders, their personal journeys and experiences of becoming senior leaders, or of the interventions that females exerted in the course of navigating their career in higher education.

4.9 DATA COLLECTION

Central to qualitative research is the collection of non-numerical data or qualitative properties. These qualitative properties are not measurable, unlike numerical or quantitative data. These non-numerical or qualitative data can be gathered through several specific data collection methods that are unique in qualitative research. Choosing the suitable method for collecting qualitative data requires an understanding of the types of research question and the types of qualitative research an individual or research team intends to pursue.

4.9 THE METHODS FOR COLLECTING QUALITATIVE DATA

Deciding on the appropriate data collection instrument to use in capturing the needed data to address a research problem for this study very challenging. Nevertheless, the experience of my supervisor having worked on some research projects over the years appear to suggest that a documentary analysis guide is challenging to use, in that: documentary analysis guide may not be able to provide an exhaustive list of all most relevant documents needed, and the potential bias in a document may be difficult if not impossible to capture (McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl: 2019: 1002). However, an interview guide (e.g. semi-structured and unstructured) is easy to use because it provides flexibility to the interviewer. It also facilitates the conduct of the interview since the interview guide contains the topics to focused on during the interview conversation. It is therefore argued that the success or failure of using documentary analysis guide and interview guide will depend mainly on the qualities of the researcher (Gorsky and Mold 2020: 83).

The primary purpose of conducting research is to inform action and or contribute to knowledge development (Hamilton and Finey 2019: 112). To achieve this purpose, I firmly believe that the selection of an appropriate research instrument to capture data

that allows analysis to lead to the formulation of convincing and credible answers to research questions and objectives of the study. Thus, as a researcher engaging in my first PhD study, my supervisor needed to guide me using his abilities and capabilities in selecting the research instruments to use. This proposition is particularly pertinent in the case of qualitative research, where the researcher is regarded as the part of the data collection instrument (McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl 2019: 1002; Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin 2020: 84). Below are some data collection instruments available to qualitative researchers.

4.9.1 OBSERVATION

One of the most popular data collection methods in qualitative research is observation. This approach generally requires a researcher to use all of his or her senses to examine the people in their natural settings or to explore naturally occurring situations. There are two sub-types of observation. The first is participatory observation in which the researcher mingles with the subject of his or her research while maintaining a professional distance to avoid interference. The second is non-participatory observation involves very limited to zero interactions (Fritz and Smith 2008: 115). Specific techniques for collecting qualitative data through observation include the writing of fieldnotes or the use of recording devices such as an audio recorder or an audio-video recorder. Regarding this study, the researcher used this data collection method and also used a recording device. This was either use such to record the female's narration of her observation .

4.9.2 INTERVIEW

Interviews are a common method of data collection in nursing research. They are frequently used alone in a qualitative study or combined with other data collection methods in mixed or multi-method research. Semi-structured interviews, where the researcher has some predefined questions or topics but then probes further as the participant responds, can produce powerful data that provide insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions or opinions (Peters and Halcomb E. 2015: 6).

An interview is a one-on-one conversation and bi-directional communication process in which a researcher or interviewer asks a series of questions to an interviewee. Essentially, the interviewer asks a question and the interviewee responds. Both take turns talking to create a substantial conversation about a particular topic. The goal of an interview is to explore the views and opinions, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of individual informants (Hamilton and Finely 2019: 112).

There are three types of interviews in qualitative research. A structured interview is a verbally administered questionnaire that involves directing the entire conversation based on a predetermined list of questions. On the other hand, an unstructured interview has little to zero framework, and the entire conversation is very exploratory (Gorsky and Mold 2020: 84). A semi-structured interview combines some of the benefits of structured and unstructured interviews in which the researcher uses a predefined list of questions that allows room for divergence and redirection.

Interviews usually take place in person or face to face. In some instances, an interview can take place using modern communication technologies such as in the case of telephone interviews or Internet-enabled videoconferences. Furthermore, although interviews often involve spoken conversation or oral communication, some interviews involve non-spoken conversation in which the participants type questions and answers back and forth (Ibid: 5). When discussing care at the end of life, researchers must accept that some participants may become distressed or emotional, depending on their previous experiences. Interviews that involve sensitive topics require careful planning.

4.9.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Another common data collection method in qualitative research is focus group discussion. Note that a focus group is a small but demographically diverse group of research participants that represent a larger population. Their verbalized reactions serve as the main source of qualitative data (Gorsky and Mold 2020: 83). Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population (Bennet et al 2017: 97). Even though the application of this method in conservation

research has been extensive, there are no critical assessment of the application of the technique. In addition, there are no readily available guidelines for conservation researchers (Ibid).

There are some similarities between a focus group discussion and an unstructured or semi-structured interview. Such include the need to probe the views and opinions, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of the focus group members without rigid guidelines. However, a focus group discussion remains considerably different because its primary purpose is to generate qualitative data based on the collective views of the research participants (Ibid).

Central to focus group discussion is the use of group dynamics to generate qualitative data. Interactivity or active participation among focus group members is very important. To promote interactivity while employing a certain degree of rigidity, the researcher or a commissioned moderator directs the entire discussion. The use of a recording device is helpful in keeping track of the whole discussion for later analysis.

4.9.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique. Rather than being a single method, current applications of content analysis show three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative. all three approaches are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data and, hence, adhere to the naturalistic paradigm (Hsieh and Shannon 2015: 1277). The major differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context.

Some types of qualitative research require collecting data from published sources or existing materials. The method used in these situations is content analysis which involves the analysis of communication artifacts such as texts and other communication formats such as pictures or images, and audio or video materials. The purpose of content analysis

is to systematically examine patterns in communications to uncover themes for further interpretations (Smith 2013: 89).

A systematic analysis of contents or materials centers in a thorough and organized dissection to identify patterns and themes. The involved researcher defines and assigns labels or codes to indicate the presence of interesting or relevant parts of a particular material.

There are three approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative. A conventional approach involves deriving coding categories from the materials while a directed approach involves using a priori theory or relevant research findings as the basis for determining coding categories. On the other hand, a summative content analysis requires counting and comparison of keywords or contents (Ibid).

4.9.5 SELF-REPORTING

A self-report is another method for collecting qualitative data. It is similar to an interview and also has some overlaps with observations. However, the primary differentiation of self-reporting is that there is zero interference from the researcher Adosi 2020: 5). The research participant is centrally responsible for documenting his or her responses based on the scenarios developed by the researcher.

Most self-reporting techniques uses self-administered questionnaires. But there is more to this data collection method than just providing responses to predetermined questions. Some qualitative research will require participants to document their responses, observations, and/or experiences on a notebook, diaries, or a recording device (Ibid). The purpose of self-reporting is to generate qualitative data from the subjects of the study while in their natural environment or fixed within a given situation without t any form of interference. However, this method has validity issues because some participants can exaggerate their responses, observations, and/or experiences (Ibid).

4.10 INTERVIEWS

The data for the study was collected in 2017-2018 and the process was cumbersome because of the busy schedule of the female leaders and the distance between each

UoT's where the females were sampled. My supervisor assisted me to get two participants. The data was collected through individual interviews. Interview participants were ten in total and all females currently in senior leadership positions. Although interviewing is a powerful instrument, researchers are warned to use it with caution since it has shortcomings (Hamilton 2019: 58). Firstly, bias is likely to occur because of the researcher's perceptions and interpretations of the data (Ibid: 59). Secondly, the data might fall short where there is power inequality between the interviewer and the interviewee where the researcher is in a more authoritative position that "defines and controls the situation" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 3). In this situation, bias can easily happen especially when interviewees are children. Luckily, in this study, the researcher and interviewee had no power issues. However, race issues occurred but were controlled by the researcher.

Glesne (2006: 13) writes, "In qualitative case studies, data tend to be gathered through the ethnographic tools of participant observation and in-depth interviewing". Patton (2002: 447) simply states that the purpose of a case study is to collect "all-inclusive, orderly, and in-depth information about each case of interest". In order to begin to understand the experiences of the female leaders in senior leadership in this study, the primary source of data on the participating female leaders were drawn from personal interviews with them. Data collection and analysis is reliant on the methodological approach used (Bryman 2012: 220). The method used at this stage of the study contributes meaningfully to the study's overall reliability and validity (Saunders et al. 2007). Irrespective of the approach used in the project, the type of data collected can be divided into two types: primary and secondary.

Most interviews follow a structured, unstructured or semi-structured format to help recruiters, human resources specialists or hiring managers evaluate a candidate's qualifications for an open position. Knowing the differences between these formats can assist the researcher of the study determine what one to use to ensure a successful interview (Magaldi and Berler 2020: 33).

4.10.1 SEMI STRUCTURED

The semi-structured interview is an exploratory interview used most often in the social sciences for qualitative research purposes or to gather clinical data. (De Jonckheere 2019: 75). While it generally follows a guide or protocol that is devised prior to the interview and is focused on a core topic to provide a general structure, the semi-structured interview also allows for discovery, with space to follow topical trajectories as the conversation unfolds (Baumbusch 2010: 255).

Before going into more detail about semi-structured interviews, the researcher considered their disadvantages. Semi-structured interviews are time-consuming, labor intensive, and require interviewer sophistication. Interviewers need to be smart, sensitive, poised, and nimble as well as knowledgeable about the relevant substantive issues. The process of preparing for the interviews, setting up the interviews, conducting the interviews, and analyzing the interviews is not quick nor easy (Adams 2015: 7). The time and effort required to do all of it right is considerable. Semi-structured interviews usually entail the arduous task of analyzing a huge volume of notes and sometimes many hours of transcripts. Yet, despite the disadvantages and costs of semi-structured interviews, they offer some extraordinary benefits. Semi-structured interviews are superbly suited for a number of valuable tasks, particularly when more than a few of the open-ended questions require follow-up queries. This study used the semi structured type of interview to interview the ten female leaders of this study.

4.11 STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Ten females in senior leadership were included as participants in the study. The inclusion criteria were based on the classification of senior leadership position and it was restricted to females who were currently holding senior leadership position from all six UoTs. The female leaders were contacted by email requesting their participation in the study. Some curriculum vitae, copies of current speeches, mission statements, organisational charts, were requested before the interview to create a context for each restricted case.

After the recruitment of the participants, participants chose the phone number they required to be called on, in an effort to make them feel at ease. On the day of the reserved

interview, the researcher showed the participants both ethical clearances; one from DUT and the other was the Gatekeeper's letter from the institution. The researcher then explained the purpose of the study to the participant. The participant read and signed an informed consent form (Appendix D). A copy of the interview questions was provided to each participant to guide them throughout the interview. The researcher established a pseudonym for each participant in to maintain confidentiality. In order to escalate the security of confidentiality, informed consent forms were not stored in the same protected filing cabinet as the raw data with listed pseudonyms.

Due to unplanned circumstances, one participant was very emotional during the interview and requested a break of about 15 minutes and later resumed normally. The researcher prudently went through the data collected for each participant to determine if more in-depth data collection was present. Several steps warranted the study was carried out with accuracy and professional integrity. Patton (2002: 261) suggested that a major part of creating reliable and credible results is the professional ethics of the researcher. Ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge within qualitative studies because of the researcher-participant relationship (Jamished 2014: 87). To reduce the impact of ethical problems, Patton (2002: 283) identified best practices to consider when conducting qualitative research. Good practices include explaining the purpose and methods of the study to participants, evaluating the risk for the participant, keeping all records confidential, attaining informed consent and the institution human subject's approval, clearness about exchange within the researcher-participant relationship, and the establishment of a confidante to deliberate ethical concerns. Reliability and validity in qualitative research can be defined differently than in quantitative research, but the end result of trustworthy conclusions is the same. The crucial notion in qualitative research is "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Abrams 2010: 536). This can be achieved through honesty, trustworthiness, transferability, and steadiness.

Although the semi-structured interviews were scheduled for one to two hours, one of the participants requested an off the record chat that lasted three hours. Although it was off the record, some information was so compelling and relevant to the study that the researcher requested permission to use it. Permission was granted. The wealth of data collected was of assistance in creating a triangulation of data and adequate engagement

in the data collection process (Guetterman 2015: 10). All the females in this study were contacted for short follow up telephonic interviews. This was when the researcher realised that there were gaps that were not sufficiently covered during the initial interview.

The interviews provided rich data. Each participant provided an upright interview, full of detail and comprehension. The participants had clearly done a great deal of thinking and soul-searching on this issue. The interview provided the females with an opportunity to confirm their experiences and journeys. Female leaders in South African higher education have generally had a positive experience in progression through the organisation, despite an out-dated culture that might have advocated otherwise. These females have been successful owing to the relationship of organisational and domestic support, together with a strong personal drive to succeed.

Family support, encouragement and praise were critical to the success of the female respondents. The most common theme in the interviews was the important role played by the family in encouraging and cheering these females to follow careers. In most cases, this reassurance and encouragement were direct, in others it was indirect. The source of support changed as the females advanced in their careers and their lives. It became scarce and many females spoke of the gender conflict being battled not at work, but at home.

As will be seen from the synopsis of participant's profiles, there is a good range of different key sets represented across the sample. On reflection, some variables could have a probable impact on participants' experiences and views, which I did not measure. For example, I did not ask participants to tell me where they came from or what social class, they fall in. However, I did ask them to divulge their ages because I wanted to measure the time it took a female to become a senior leader. I also asked them to identify their ethnic groups because I knew that through the history of apartheid in South Africa, the journeys of these females would probably differ due to matters like Bantu education and white privileges. All the females' respondents were able to identify guidance in their early and current lives in the form of family members or close friends that served as sources of motivation or supporters of their success. Moreover, when asked specifically about mentors who had played noteworthy roles in their career advancement, almost all the females responded positively that, indeed, certain individuals had been mentors.

However, when queried further about these identified mentors, some females struggled to describe them in more concrete, action-oriented ways indicating that females have less developed mentoring systems; in some cases, the females actually laboured to identify names of individuals (i.e. "I know I had mentors ... now, let me see, who were they?"). In other words, females jumped right into discussions about mentoring but had trouble supporting the conversation, indicating, perhaps, some confusion or misunderstanding of the true meaning of mentoring. According to Chun, Sosik and Nam (2012: 107), it is not uncommon for females to lack mentors. Table below presents the demographics of the study's participants.

Table 0.1 Profile of study participants

Pseudonyms	Marital status	Higher education experience	Highest Qualification	Number of children
1-Nellie	Married	22	PhD	4
Sibongile	Divorced	20	PhD	2
Thabsile	Married	20	PhD	2
Rose	Married	25	PhD	2
Thandi	Married	18	PhD	2
Lucinda	Married	15	PhD	3
Pamela	Divorced	5	PhD	2
Trimeira	Divorced	7	PhD	4
Angeline	Widowed	10	PhD	3
Hlobi	Single	10	PhD	4

Among the ethical consideration exercised throughout this study, one of them was an agreement not to mention the names of the interviewees, their institution and their

positions. I had ten individual interviews with females serving as leaders in their various UoTs. Therefore, the participant's names were fictitious in order to ensure the confidentiality of their personal details. It is worth mentioning that my main motive was to interview only the ten female leaders, to see what they had to say about their experiences in senior leadership. Thus, the entire findings from the data analysis came from them. Another important factor is that direct narratives that came from the data are referenced by using the label of the corresponding interviewee that provided the information. Following the research questions, the results or findings of the study are reported under the following main themes: career paths, support and motivation; barriers; challenges and opportunities; tokenism as a gender policy gone wrong; patriarchy; leadership styles; mentoring; building resilience and finally intersectionality.

What was intriguing from the participant's profiles was that only two out of ten female's journeys were towards higher education. Most of the participants had their own paths and they were motivated either by family or by mentors to follow a leadership route in higher education. This to me as the researcher insinuates that they are bound to face challenges in the field of higher education; especially because they had no prior background or interest.

The demographics also seemed biased to other races. However, the researcher requested all races to participate in the study and there were more black participants in the study. The researcher also picked up that the age of the participants was over 40 years. This shows that there is probably a barrier that bars young females who have PhDs under the age of 40. Lastly, most of the black participants had more experience in higher education than other races which is either due to the females navigating the labyrinth earlier or due to tokenism as most of them began their leadership roles close to the independence of South Africa from the Boers. What was fascinating was that all the females had PhDs. This may seem applaudable, but the researcher saw the attainment of a PhD as a barrier itself; since many learned and experienced females were probably not selected because they did not have PhDs

4.11.1 INDIVIDUAL PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

Next, I identified one piece of information that I felt was relevant to the study; that of giving the reader, a short summary of the study participant. This I did because the female leaders had different characteristics and backgrounds which were included in the study. Similarly, mention if the study sample excluded people with certain characteristics. All the female leaders were South African but from different backgrounds and provinces. That was the reason behind examining any participant characteristics as they factored in the analysis.

4.11.1.1 NELLY

Nelly is 58 years old. She has been in her current senior leadership position for about two years. She is a goal-driven person and loves attention. She enjoys a challenge because she knows she will overcome it. She always wanted to maximise her potential as a female and is a revolutionary at heart. She is not popular at work as she speaks freely about how she feels about inequality and the rippling effects of apartheid. She is very smart and has been smart since school and was in the first position throughout her schooling phase. Nelly has a very strong sense of competition and thrives better in a competitive world. She loves card games and insists that she always wins. She also likes daring people and even puts money down to show how much she always believes in herself. She loves cycling and mountain climbing and that shows from her very athletic posture. Her dream was to be in politics and that journey began when she was elected the first black female SRC member in university. Her parents wanted her to be a doctor, so she grew up being known to be defiant. Although she was an activist, she continued to excel at university and was then offered a job as a tutor where she was paid a stipend. A year later, the same university offered her a scholarship to study at a renowned university in the United Kingdom (UK). Nelly acquired the scholarship and was done with the Master's degree in two years and she moved back to South Africa where she was applied for a position of a junior lecturer and got it at one of the UoTs. That is when her academic career drive showed signs of maturity and she continued to do her PhD.

Although Nelly was now in higher education, she was also politically involved in the African National Congress. The political affiliation created dual roles and turbulence for Nelly. During the interview, Nelly's analysis of higher education in South Africa always

centred on issues facing South Africa as the reason why higher education is in the state it is today. Nelly is an unapologetic feminist leader who is against those who think that females are sexual objects and not agents of social change. Nelly admits that she is a feminist and is willing to ensure that barriers inhibiting the progression of females in South Africa and in higher education are removed. Nelly is not afraid of anyone and has been labelled a controversial troublemaker because she has exposed both males and females who discriminate against other races.

4.11.1.2 SIBONGILE

Sibongile is 47 years old. She has been in her current position for about a year and three months. She believes in bringing 'ubuntu' into leadership. Relationships are very important for Sibongile. When she was a young girl, she enjoyed role-playing as a teacher. She struggled with hearing loss and a speech impediment which she said was caused by abuse. As a result, she was always isolated when her siblings went out to play games and she started to create her own classroom with sticks and her students were stones with names. However, as she got to high school, her hearing improved, and she was then moved to a mission special school for her speech impediment. That is where her life changed. Being with other kids that had worse disabilities than hers made her realise that she was gifted and special. She was chosen as a prefect throughout her high school journey. She taught herself to read other people's lips and had to overcome her speech impediment problem to prove she was not born developmentally disabled. In school, she enjoyed dancing and storytelling. She had no idea what she wanted to study in university, but she was clear that it had to do with her being directly in contact with people. She did not have a particular interest in any extracurricular activities, except working as a Red Cross ambassador at school, which assisted in developing her people skills.

Her career goals changed daily and weekly to something else. She remembers telling her teacher that she wanted to be Jesus Christ and the whole class laughed at her. With the help of a career guidance teacher, she realised that she wanted to be a teacher. When she graduated from the mission school, a little party was thrown for her as she had been instrumental in a lot of things at the school. She went straight to university and on weekends and university holidays she worked in a spaza shop owned by her father's

friend. During her second year, she started working at the university cafeteria so she could have free meals as her parents were struggling to even pay for her fees. During her last year at university, she became a substitute teacher for a school that had just been opened in her community. And when she graduated, the school asked her if she wanted to work as a teacher full-time. She was so excited and agreed. She, however, told the principal of the school that she wanted to further her studies, one day get a PhD and become a researcher. She later got a job offer as a librarian at a local university. And then she started climbing the leadership ladder to where she is currently. She does point out that it was very hard to compete with people who looked at you through the colour of your skin instead of your academic excellence.

4.11.1.3 THABSILE

Thabsile is a 45-year-old, self-proclaimed hard worker and bookworm. She has been in her current position for about three months. Her dream job was to be a pilot because she had never been on an aeroplane, and she also spoke of how she enjoyed thinking about the fact that all the people on the plane would rely on her for survival in the skies. That thought was thrilling for her. Through great guidance from her mother, she excelled in Maths and Science at school and enjoyed building stuff. Her parents thought she was going to be an architect or do some sort of engineering like civil engineering. Her part-time job during high school was at a hardware store that her mother's boss owned. Her mother was a maid/nanny. At the hardware store, she met a lot of builders and 'do it yourself' (DIY) males who were always asking for the smart girl when they came to the hardware store. She was paid mostly for stocktaking but ended up doing all sorts of jobs at the warehouse, like manning the till to mixing paints and checking outgoing stock. The most interesting part of her job was giving advice to customers, who would laugh it off and later on come back and tell the boss that she was right. Thabsile then shocked her family when she chose what to study at university; she studied Arts and majored in Mathematics. She did not struggle to get a job after university; she continued to study further and was roped in by a university. That is when her leadership journey began.

Listening to Thabsile's stories and experiences, I could not help but have high regard for her commitment and perseverance through it all. Not only is she diligent and committed, but she is also very inspirational. Thabsile did not let her struggles define her, but rather,

used it to drive her ambition, goals and motivations. Her humility and sincerity stood out for me. As our interview ended, she is the only female who asked me to share my story with her. I was humbled to share my story and goals with her and how I got to this point in my life. She provided me with some contacts who would help me in my new career journey.

4.11.1.4 ROSE

Rose is a 54-year single mother of two boys. She has never been married. She grew up in the township, got her schooling from there and went to a UoT to further her studies. Her dream was to be a police officer. Her career choice was motivated by the crime in her community. However, she ended up working as an administration officer at the university. Rose is one of the participants who was very cagey with her personal life but spoke freely when the questions regarding challenges and barriers were asked. She also repeatedly reminded me how she started from nothing to be where she is today and spoke a lot about nepotism, racism and tokenism. She is very career driven and although she is an introvert; there are things she is passionate about, like soccer. She is a die-hard supporter of Kaizer Chiefs and spent some time speaking about her team of choice. She comes by as shy yet has the tendency to “sting like a bee” when provoked. She is a hard worker and although her job at the university leaves her with less time to spend with her kids, she still spends two Saturdays a month at the local hospice. She also sources out funds for them; donates things like old computers to the hospice and involves the university students as a social responsibility gesture. She, however, is unstoppable as she still has a dream to open her own school. She has a very good academic record with international qualifications and certificates. She never dreamt that she would be a leader one day and she is proud of her achievements.

4.11.1.5 THANDI

Thandi is 46 years of age. She is well detail-oriented leader, who is very sociable, believes in hard-working people, supportive and does not lose sight of the strategic objective of her position. She has been in her current position for two years. She sees herself as a female who is honourable, reliable, and trustworthy. She conducts her affairs with integrity. She took a leadership role in the early years of her career. She has a rural background and believes that how she grew up made her resilient. She was the oldest

of ix offsprings, and being the oldest child gave her opportunities to lead her siblings and take decisions on their behalf. Her career goal was to work in an outside environment that was recreational in nature. She later realised that she loved working with children; she changed her career goal to be a schoolteacher. After she acquired her degree in education, she started her first job as a teacher. She continued to study further and has numerous journal articles under her belt. She branched into academia because she believed that she could make a positive impact on a great number of students (especially students from rural backgrounds). She started as a lecturer, then as a Head of Department to her current position.

4.11.1.6 LUCINDA

Lucinda is a 45-year-old female. She is married and has three kids. Family means everything to her. All the participants went to university after matriculating. But Lucinda is the only participant who got married early in her mid-twenties. She then had two children with her husband before she went to university. She is also the only female who did not stay at the university residence but commuted to university from home. She stayed with her in-laws and had to do 'wifely duties' while studying. Therefore, she took a three-year break from studying to help out the family. Growing up she liked to play in the streets with other kids and was always fetched from the streets by her mother when the sun was about to set. Her dream job was to be an actress in one of the famous Bollywood movies. Since she did drama at school, she still wanted to pursue a drama-related career. Unfortunately, her father squashed that dream and advised her to be a lawyer or a doctor so that she could have a bright future. Due to her petite size, she was chosen to join the softball team at university, and she enjoyed it a lot. This experience made her want to become a lecturer and work with students. After she graduated from university, she got a teaching position. She worked herself up until she became the head of the school. She acquired her PhD and started looking for better opportunities until she landed her current job at the university.

4.11.1.7 PAMELA

Pamela is a 44-year-old divorced mother of two kids. She got a job in an insurance company after graduating from university, and she also found the job demanding as well. Not only was it a new job, but she also had a lot of responsibility being a project leader

and she had to micro-manage the sales staff. Later she applied to work in the Human Resource (HR) department of a UoT and progressed from being an HR consultant for staff at the university, got promoted to be an HR administrator and later got the job she was currently occupying. She has no concerns about gender discrimination, “I don’t see higher education as a man’s world that I had to break into”, and the university was instrumental in empowering her with skills and she then developed other females as well. However, she is still concerned about female representation in engineering and speaks a lot about her resilience when confronted with challenges. Pamela has taken on some prominent senior and executive male leaders who thought they could intimidate her with name-calling and body shaming. Every time such leaders wagged their fingers of masculine authority at her, she named and shamed them.

During the interview, Pamela explained that her experiences have certainly shaped her as a person and a leader, particularly working in higher education. She recalls her father telling her not to rely on anyone and ensure that she made her own living. Her father’s words have always stimulated her to be self-reliant. On the other hand, her mother’s words of wisdom involved the importance of doing what you love and being kind-hearted and empathetic to others. Pamela expressed her wish to have a perfect amalgamation of the two, as it will make her a better and successful leader. Another great characteristic Pamela possesses is the ability to listen. She concluded our interview by saying that she believes her experiences have taught her how to solve problems, which has the potential to bring people together. “I want to be the catalyst of change and be the bridge that brings societies together”.

4.11.1.8 TRIMEIRA

Trimeira is a 52-year-old divorced female. The history and tradition of Indian females are uniquely contradictory. Somehow, Indian females have had greater freedom than their black South African sisters have, and for longer. They have had admission to professions such as medicine, teaching and the right to own property. Among some social classes, females are extremely powerful. Yet, there is a long history of females being oppressed by men and relegated to playing subordinate roles. This is exactly how Trimeira felt growing up in an Indian family. There are instances of Indian females not being promoted

despite successful performance because 'she had the capability of flexible timing' to balance work and family commitments. Growing up, although Trimeira was told to study hard, she was also asked how marriage would impact her career. Marital status was used to deduce an inclination to re-locate and commitment to the organisation. As Trimeira's career showed elements of success, she still was tied down to three jobs (housework, childcare and her job at the university). Unfortunately, instead of receiving credit for the additional responsibilities, it was often used to discredit her as being less committed to her husband. These are some of the reasons that led to the end of her marriage.

During the growth stage, Trimeira still did not know her dream job. She indicated, "I didn't have an understanding about what a career was, and I was not thinking of a dream job because I just didn't have a clear view of what I wanted to do." Therefore, landing a job in a university was not planned. Findings from this narrative also revealed an indication that those participants who might not have recognised a dream job or had no clear idea of what they wanted to do, developed a conception of what they actually did not want to be. Trimeira stated that "I didn't want to be a teacher, no matter what. I hated the marking because I saw my mom mark until the wee hours of the morning. She was always exhausted and yet she was always broke".

4.11.1.9 ANGELINE

Angeline is 55 years old and is what I call a typical daddy's girl. In today's terms, she is a spoilt brat, but she believes all her dad did for her was earned: if she wanted something, her dad always asked her what he would get in return and that motivated her to do extremely well at school. She was the first, at university, to have a computer, then a fridge, then a television and the list went on. However, all these things, she insists she earned them. Angeline is a lover of nature and conservation and is the one person who picks up dirt along the coastline and introduced recycling at university when no one knew what that word was. She wanted to work outside, preferably in a game park or at any recreational facility. However, her career stars had other plans in store for her. She pursued a degree in education and started her first job as a sales consultant at a bank where she gained leadership experiences; coupled with her leadership experience gained from being the oldest of four children who always made decisions for her siblings,

and leading siblings made her realise that she could actually take on a leadership position. Since Angeline loved to work outside, she then enrolled in a programme to become a certified civil engineer. As a female, she did struggle to get a job in civil engineering, and she was headhunted by the university to lecture to civil engineering to students. That is when her career goal shifted from being a forest person to being in higher education. She enjoyed civil engineering, but the leadership trait never went to waste. She then pursued a doctoral degree majoring in educational leadership. She wanted to pursue leadership positions because of the belief she could make an impact on a greater number of students. Angeline acknowledged gender discrimination in engineering since that is a male-dominated field. “It is a challenge for a female in engineering because it is male-dominated field. There is a mistaken belief that a female is not as tough as a male in that industry”. She then moved up the leadership ranks (at a very slow pace) until she got a leadership position. Her aim in climbing the ladder was to deal with gender stereotypes in engineering. She has been successful in ensuring that more females are enrolled in engineering and that they get paid the same salary as males. She has been called names like “tough cookie” but that has not stopped her from getting bursaries for females to study engineering.

4.11.1.10 HLOBI

The soft-spoken Hlobi is in her late fifties. She is tall and her dress sense is to a certain extent reserved. She thinks before answering the interview questions, stressing her belief in the importance of carefully representing oneself. Thoroughly dedicated to her position and her profession, Hlobi chose not to marry. She strongly believes that the demands of her career are not supportive of a spouse. Up until the last year, Hlobi spent her entire career in a province far away from where she was born and raised. Although she does not have a husband, she's dedicated to her mother, her four kids and siblings. When Hlobi's father passed away, Hlobi was left with the great responsibility of assisting her mother and younger sister through the difficult period of grief and transition. At the time of the interview, Hlobi was serving as head of the department and in charge of 16 staff members.

Hlobi had always been an ardent reader and loved to read to her parents who were both pastors of the local church. She grew up in a Christian family and was a member of the church choir at the age of twelve. She learned to play three musical instruments at an early age as these were always at her disposal. She was also a lover of fashion and was always trying on her mother's clothes and shoes. For her eleventh birthday, her parents bought her a sewing machine and she started designing clothes. Her parents encouraged her to pursue fashion design, as she was passionate about it. However, Hlobi's real love was reading. She knew the verses of the Bible like the palm of her hand and was instrumental in introducing a youth camp at church, where young girls were taught to read the Bible and stay away from boys. She attended a Catholic, girls-only school as her parents wanted to protect her from boys. At school, she was chosen as a morning assembly leader and read the daily verse to students. She passed matric and went to university where she registered for a Bachelor of Arts degree and majored in English and Theology. That is when all the wheels started falling off as she fell pregnant during her first year with twins. She, however, did not stop being religious and spiritual. The next year, she fell pregnant again with another set of twins and by then her parents had written her off as she had embarrassed the family. Her parents continued to pay for her tuition but hardly communicated with her. After university, she started working at a clothing store as a buyer as she loved working with clothes. She later changed to teaching, as the money was better and taught the English language. That was the turning point of her career as she felt she was doing something more worthwhile, and she also wanted to emulate her father who was a principal at a local school. That is when she applied for a teaching course and passed with distinction. She then got a job offer as a principal after the former principal had a heart attack. She was 38 at the time. At 40, she became a lecturer and then it was just a natural progression from one position to another. Hlobi had no concerns about gender discrimination and never felt that being a female made it different or worse. She believed that her values and religious background assisted her in her progression as she was respected wherever she went. She always kept to deadlines. Yet, as a single parent and she still took stock of what she had and where she was going. The work-life balance challenge was not an issue as her mom took over the twins whenever she needed a break or was pressed for a deadline.

The study participants were requested to describe their career journeys and some of their narratives were emotional. Each female had a different experience that ultimately got her to her current leadership position. Some of the stories were narrated with sadness and others with joy and one female shed a tear and got a bit emotional as she spoke about her family's political journey that impacted her current state of mind.

When examining the leadership experiences of the female leaders I interviewed, my aim was to find out how they manoeuvred through the numerous challenges as stated in the literature and triumphantly moved up their leadership ladders. At times, the excitement to know developed to frustration over what seemed like a long and endless road to get through all the raw data. Yet, once immersed in the data, it felt as if I was a part of each of my participants' journeys and in danger of finding only discrete and unrelated experiences. This uneasiness was due to the diverse nature of the respondents. The breakthrough came when I was able to recognise the appearance of common themes. It was as if the females were all communicating as a unit rather than participating individually. This was the thrilling part; this is what I was probing for and this is the part that will be shared in this chapter.

4.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Broadly, qualitative research is commonly employed to support a researcher in generating a deep and nuanced understanding of a given phenomenon (Lester, Cho and Lochmiller 2020: 94). The outcomes of such research range from generating findings that can inform study (Lochmiller 2016: 75) to providing detailed descriptions of a given problem of practice (Clark and Braun 2013: 120) or to offering insights about professional practices within a given context (O'Reilly et al. 2015: 195) and tackling issues related to the subjective nature of qualitative research (Cho et al. 2016: 461), among others. The potentiality of conducting qualitative research is famous and yet dependent upon researchers being able to conduct grounded, laborious analyses, and more generally, understanding what it means to do qualitative analysis.

Generally speaking, qualitative data analyses bring meaning to a data set (Braun et al. 2019: 844), with qualitative data including a wide range of materials (e.g., conversational

data, images, observations, and unstructured, semi-structured, or structured interviews, among others). Indeed, qualitative data analysis means various things, as it is often aligned with a particular methodology, theoretical perspective, research tradition, and/or field (Lochmiller and Lester 2017: 41). Frith and Gleeson (2004: 42) remind us that “there is no single right way to analyze qualitative data; equally, it is essential to find ways of using the data to think with”.

In analyzing the data, part of the process implied my understanding how I was essentially going to make sense of the data. This required some form of engagement with the data, which meant risking my everyday attitude, boldness or knowledge in order to acknowledge the liminal experience of the female leaders. As such my feelings ranged between a feeling of awareness with the participants’ attributions of meaning in their lives and a feeling that I could not identify personally with what they could be feeling or relating. Knowing that I would come across this liminal experience invigorated me to explore the data with a sense of flexibility and open mindedness, improvisation and creativity as well as planning and devotion to steps and rules of data analysis.

Analysis transforms data into findings by bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Patton 2002: 261). The analytical process does not proceed orderedly or in a linear fashion but is more of a coiled process; it entails reducing the volume of the information, sorting out important from irrelevant facts, identifying patterns and trends, and creating a framework for communicating the core of what is revealed by the data (Rocco 2010: 375).

There is an “inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis, and this is one of the major features that distinguish qualitative research from traditional research” (Israel et al. 2017: 200). Accordingly, as the data was being transcribed and translated, I found myself identifying patterns of expressions that alerted me to be aware of similar or divergent themes as more data unfolded. Furthermore, “data analysis does not in itself provide answers to research questions as these are found by way of interpretation of the analyzed data” (Costa et al 2016: 34). Interpretation involves explaining and making sense of the data (Aguinis and Solarino 2019: 210). This again involves an ongoing engagement with the process, in that interpretation and analysis are closely intertwined

as the researcher automatically interprets as he or she analyzes (Perkins 2018: 307). Hence, it was from this collective process of data collection and analysis that a credible and articulate interpretation developed (Tsai 2016: 236).

In this study, I analyzed the data into generative themes, which will be described individually. I describe how the themes overlap. I link the findings to the literature on female leaders in higher education in order to evaluate whether and how the data illuminated and answered the research questions of the study.

4.12.1 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

For this study thematic analysis was viewed as a useful starting point for learning and doing laborious qualitative analyses. I viewed thematic analysis as offering tremendous theoretical flexibility and theoretically being used as “just an analytic method, rather than a methodology, which most other qualitative approaches are” (Clarke and Braun 2013: 120). This theoretical flexibility allows me as a researcher to engage disciplinary theories and perspectives when conducting a thematic analysis, possibly generating a more meaningful and relevant analysis for a given field. Consequently, thematic analysis can result in a theory-driven or data-driven set of findings and engage a range of research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79). Thematic analysis also engages with analytic practices that are equally common with other approaches to qualitative analysis.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 80) and Terry, Hayfield, Clark and Braun (2010: 120), thematic analysis involves the recognition, analysis and presentation of data. Still, in the same inclination, Braun et al. (2019: 843) said that thematic analysis has a descriptive approach which is based on “...identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 79), this approach assists in the description of the phenomenon under study. This approach is similar to content analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2016: 743). Choo et al. (2016: 461) claims that content analysis begins with predetermined categories while in thematic analysis, “categories are ‘induced’ from the data”.

Thematic analysis is an impeccable choice for this study for not only does it have several advantages, but it also particularly allows for a great degree of flexibility and permits the

beginner researcher that I am to learn and apply qualitative analysis within a short period. As Braun and Clarke (2016: 739) submit it is flexible and can be used in inductive and deductive methodologies. Both authors further expound that the inductive approach involves moving from the specific to the general as the whole process of coding the data emerges from the data itself. This style is called the data-driven form of thematic analysis. In contrast, the deductive approach is theoretical driven and moves from the general to the explicit. Finally, thematic analysis was employed in this study since it presents a clear and simple picture of my entire results and findings and for readers to effortlessly see what has been done and how it has been done.

As soon as the second version of each transcript was completed, I read it thoroughly. Going through the transcripts, I took notes on what message the participant was trying to convey. With this information, I assigned codes to particular sections of text. Some pieces of the accounts related to the eight themes which were apparent during the interview and/or during the transcription process. Inductive analysis was used which combined immersion in the details and specifics of the data to realise the important sub-themes, categories, dimensions and interrelationships (Lockmiller 2016: 79). The first stage of analysis resulted in chunks of text from each case that related to the six themes. The second stage of analysis involved deeper involvement in the passages or blocks of text relating to each theme (early childhood motivation, resilience, power, challenges and barriers, identity and leadership styles. The next step involves the coding of data.

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. This process was originally developed for psychology research by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in 2006. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Braun and Clarke 2006: 77). There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis, but the most common form follows a six-step process: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Following this process can also help you avoid confirmation bias when formulating your analysis (Ibid: 80).

2.1.1.4 GUIDE OF FORMULATING THEMES

STEP 1: FAMILIARIZATION

The first step is to get to know our data. It's important to get a thorough overview of all the data we collected before we start analyzing individual items. This might involve transcribing audio, reading through the text and taking initial notes, and generally looking through the data to get familiar with it (Halverson et al. 2014: 20)

STEP 2: CODING

Next up, we need to code the data. Coding means highlighting sections of our text – usually phrases or sentences – and coming up with shorthand labels or “codes” to describe their content (Rocco 2010: 375). At this stage, the researcher wanted to be thorough and went through the transcripts of all the ten female leaders, of every interview and highlighted everything that jumps out as relevant or potentially interesting. As well as highlighting all the phrases and sentences that match these codes, and kept adding new codes as the coding continued. After the researcher had been through the text, she collated together all the data into groups identified by code. These codes allowed the researcher to gain a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that recur throughout the data.

STEP 3: GENERATING THEMES

The researcher then looked over the codes created and identified patterns among them, and start coming up with themes (Terry et al 2010: 837). Themes are generally broader than codes. Most of the time, the researcher combined several codes into a single theme. At this stage, the researcher decided that some of the codes are too vague or not relevant enough (for example, because they don't appear very often in the data), so such codes were discarded. Other codes become themes in their own right. The researcher wanted to create potential themes that tell the reader something helpful about the data collected.

STEP 4: REVIEWING THEMES

Now the researcher had to make sure that the themes are useful and an accurate representation of the data. (Saldana 2016: 125) Here the researcher returned to the data set and compare the themes against it. Researcher checked if there was something, and confirmed that the themes really represented the data. The researcher understood that if

there are problem encountered with the themes, then there would be a need to split them up, combine them, discard them or create new ones: whatever makes them more useful and accurate.

STEP 5: DEFINING AND NAMING THEMES

Now that the researcher had a final list of themes, it was time to name and define each of one them (Perkins 2018: 310). Defining the themes involveed formulating exactly what the researcher meant by each theme and figuring out how it helps us understand the data. Naming themes involved coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme.

STEP 6: WRITING UP

Finally, the researcher started the rght write up of the analysis of the data. Like all academic texts, writing up a thematic analysis requires an introduction to establish our research question, aims and approach (Auguinis and Solarino 2019: 210).The researcher also include a methodology section, describing how we collected the data (e.g. through semi-structured interviews) and explaining how the thematic analysis was conducted. The results or findings section that followed addressed each theme in turn. The researcher described how often the themes came up and what they meant, including examples from the data as evidence. Finally, the chapter conclusion explains the main takeaways and shows how the analysis has answered the study research questions.

2.1.1.5 CODING OF THE DATA

Rocco (2010: 375) defines coding “as the translation of question responses and respondent data to specific categories”. Another point to consider is that categories, themes and concepts can be prearranged by reading the literature under study or, during the analysis process, by reading the preliminary transcripts. As suggested by O’ Reily et al (2015: 195), after transcribing and reading the interview transcripts, the text that explained and fit any of the outlined themes was underlined and coded. Related codes were grouped to form another theme. Lockmiller (2016: 100) suggested that themes and concepts should be thoroughly examined, grouping and comparing them, and seeking

patterns and their connections. As stated by Havelson et al. (2014: 30). The initial step in coding involves viewing important moments of the phenomenon, coding them and identifying themes that arrived from the data themselves. According to Braun and Clarke (2016: 739), the analyst can use tables, mind-maps or theme-piles to unite the coded data into themes.

Since I used semi-structured-interviews to conduct this research, transcripts from the interviews were used to code the data into themes. Examining what participants said line-by-line, I looked for descriptive codes that produced key concepts within the text. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) gave details of several types of coding. Literal codes are “words that appear in the text and are generally descriptive codes”. Interpretative analytical codes are not tied to the text itself but somewhat rely on researcher notes and any documents that illicit interpretation. In focused coding, the researcher examines all data, and “matches each piece of data with every other piece and finally builds a strong and clear working definition of each concept, which is then named”. Using all the codes, I analysed the data and developed analytical dimensions or subcodes that explored more profound meaning.

Once coding is complete, the next step in qualitative data analysis is interpretation (Anderson 2017: 130). Interpretation took place during the course of the coding process. Perkins 2018: 320) recommend that researchers use strong arguments for any knowledge claimed from the data while interpreting. I emphasised noteworthy statements or clusters of meaning that explained how the female participants experienced being senior leaders, then used the data to develop themes, and wrote descriptions that caught the essence of the experience (Clarke and Braun 2013: 121). Appropriate to validation, thick descriptions are rich in detail and provide the context of the situation; they also generate an emotional and social state when reading the narrative so that readers feel as though they experience the phenomenon personally or could imagine themselves experiencing the phenomenon (Cho, Park, Ju, Hans, Moon, Park, Ju, Park 2016: 461). Thick descriptions express the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of participants’ interactions” (Creswell 2013: 94).

Given that this was a qualitative study, the researcher employed a thematic method to analyse the descriptive data. It is worth mentioning that, before the beginning of data

analysis, the researcher had to familiarise him or herself with the information at hand through monotonous readings to view some particular words, phrases, patterns of behaviour, subject's thinking modes, and exceptional recurrent events that relate to the subject matter under study (Cassol et al. 2018: 40). This method allows the data analyst to come out with a coding system to make interpretation a lot easier.

Patton (2002: 261) say that the case study is considered both a process and product of inquiry and may contain a selection of sources of data relative to the case of interest. The case studies that resulted for the ten female leaders were the outcome of combining, refining and comparing all the information collected from them and about them. This included historical information that offered pertinent context about the institution and society in which each female works. Furthermore, analysis across the cases produced findings of how these particular females succeeded that may also inform strategies and performances for females navigating their future organisations and professions.

The analysis consisted of two consecutive stages of case study analysis, which Perkins (2018: 320) refers to as thematic analysis and analysis of themes. The first stage utilised theme analysis to construct individual case studies for each of the female leaders. The second stage explored and compared the cases through analysis of themes, which explored and identified similarities and differences along categories across the cases. Finally, suppositions emerged from the case study data that may guide subsequent studies. Throughout this qualitative analysis process, I participated in personal reflection of my research by means of analytic memos (discussed in more detail later), which further added to the accuracy and credibility of findings in this study.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2016: 740) thematic analysis is a technique for finding, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It plainly organises and describes your data in detail. It is essential to note that thematic analysis is not a linear but a recursive process, meaning that one of the steps of the analysis procedure comprises re-running the process. Thus, during the course of the analysis, the researcher was able to move back and forth between the data and the research question in order to make sure that all themes included were relevant. This process allowed the researcher to sort and categorise the information remaining sensitive to the 'meaning' of similar

terms being used by different participants. Braun and Clarke (2016: 742) provided the breakdown that the researcher followed in order to analyse the data thematically:

Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the data, which involved reading the transcripts several times, while listening to the audio recording, and noting down original thoughts and ideas of likely themes. The second and third steps involved discovery themes in the data and studying them by checking that the quotes nominated, speak to the theme that the researcher was trying to describe. The last two steps assigned names to the themes and reported what was discovered.

It is commonly accepted that thematic analysis is a method applied to other qualitative research approaches such as narrative, phenomenological and grounded theory. Braun and Clarke (2006: 100) validate this opinion by arguing that thematic analysis is used extensively but is not a well-branded method. Thematic analysis is not a titled analysis in the same way as other methods are (e.g. narrative analysis and grounded theory). Although not clearly claimed, a lot of analysis is basically thematic analysis, even if named to be something else.

The qualitative data collected was descriptive and rich in nature. The rich aspect contained within this data will be described and subsequently, the researcher's analysis goes beyond the descriptive level and appoints an interpretative process and tries to make sense of the descriptive data (Saldana 2016: 125). Halverson et al. 2014: 30) explains that interpretation is an effort to make clear, to make sense of an article of study; but how does one recognise that an interpretation is accurate? Seemingly, it is because what was odd or abnormal or puzzling or contradictory, is no longer so; so, the researcher hopes to add depth and significance to the data by interpreting meanings from both the verbal and non-verbal communiqué that happened during the interviewing process.

Lockmiller and Lester (2017: 810) presented the fundamental outcome of phenomenology, as the description of the meaning of a lived experience. The researcher developed a deep understanding through the uttered re-living of the experience as expressed by the participant. To do so, the researcher made every effort to be fully present, attentive and focussed and allowed participants to give or describe their lived

experience as a given. For the parts that the researcher felt the need for more clarity, through rephrasing and follow up questions, the researcher pursued a deeper description of the phenomenon. The give-and-take interactions between the researcher and respondent and their reflections brought out the experience (Ibid: 815) that became the data set. This is what was analysed. To explain and clarify implied meanings and to clarify answers, detect examples, produce information and themes, the interviewer had used the method of rephrasing questions, engaging in serious discussions and enquiring follow-up questions to get an in-depth account of the situation. Meaning-making was completed through the process of looking for clarification and examples, self-reflection, transcribing and spontaneous thematic analysis of the field notes and participants feedback using a descriptive phenomenological analysis independently from my own meaning-making and speculative interpretation. Before clarification of the data or story analyses for common patterns, the researcher checked phrasing in the responses for clarity and shift in meaning and control for interviewer bias and subversion by listening and re-reading the scripts and transcribing carefully to avoid distortions and bias, inappropriate insinuations and misinterpretations (Creswell 2013: 56). Data analysis was done with the aid of Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software after which the data was grouped according to themes and codes.

Voice base transcription software was used to organise the transcripts, manually listening again to check the quality, gathering them all into one document, and then uploading to Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. This process allowed for the identification and structuring of frameworks guided by the study questions and the conceptual frameworks. The data was then arranged into the framework and categorised ready for descriptive analysis and later for discussing the connections.

To ensure that none of the responses was lost or distorted, I read and re-read each text, listening to the recording over and over while taking notes, reflecting on the data and writing down explanations and understanding. Using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software, I used open coding to begin by creating as many codes as possible followed by axial and scheme coding. I then observed the rate of recurrence and strength of occurrences as displayed by the software and made memorandums and code notes. The

procedure assisted the researcher to identify patterns in the data and to search data to help answer the questions of the study.

4.13 STRATEGY EMPLOYED TO ENSURE QUALITY OF RESEARCH

In this chapter we outline some of the ways in which quality can be achieved when conducting qualitative research and how quality can be demonstrated in qualitative research outputs. Guba and Lincoln's concepts for defining and investigating quality in qualitative research as follows:

4.13.1 CREDIBILITY

Do participants or members of the community being researched feel that the findings represent their experience? Activities that make it more likely that research will produce credible findings include prolonged engagement with participants; negative (divergent) case analysis; and triangulation (of sources and researchers). Member checking and peer debriefing with other researchers can be used to investigate credibility. The research chose the best female leaders who have experienced senior leadership in their respective institutions.

4.13.2 TRANSFERABILITY

Are the findings applicable in other contexts? Providing a rich description of participants' responses (and the researcher's interpretations) makes transferability easier to evaluate. Naturalistic generalization occurs when the findings are in harmony with the experiences of the individual evaluating the research, and thus appear transferable in the eyes of the reader. The research output. This study provides readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable to other universities and organisations at large.

4.13.3 DEPENDABILITY

Would similar findings be produced if someone else also undertook the research? Triangulation across researchers can be used to investigate dependability. Auditing can also be carried out to allow another researcher to follow the audit trail (ideally) generated

by the original researcher. This study produced similar results as explained in the literature.

4.13.4 CONFIRMABILITY

Are the findings a product of participants' responses and not the researcher's 'biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives' (Lincoln and Guba 1985:290)? Auditing can be used to evaluate the confirmability of findings. A more transparent report of the findings makes confirmability easier to evaluate.

4.13.5 AUTHENTICITY

Does the research represent a fair range of differing viewpoints on the topic? Do the findings have transformative potential? Is there community consensus that the findings are 'useful and (have) meaning (especially meaning for action and further steps)' (Lincoln et al. 2011:116). Member checking can be used to inquire about apparent authenticity with participants or other members of the community in question, sometimes known as 'end-users'. These individuals might include practitioners who would potentially change their practice based on the findings. This study will be useful to higher education institutions and government policy makers to access the result and implement strategies to change the way female leaders are treated in higher education in South Africa.

Due to constraints of communication, it is never possible to be fully transparent when describing research. The word limits that journals have for articles and universities have for dissertations/theses place an extra pressure when doing qualitative research. Nonetheless, transparency is a worthy goal of any research output. Elliott et al. (1999) argue that ensuring transparency across all sections of a research output is a subtle process of forming a rationale, selecting a method and explaining the findings. Tsai (2016: 207) also emphasizes the importance of transparency in demonstrating and matching of the research questions.

4.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in all research study. In a qualitative study, ethical considerations

have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process. The existing ethical guidance for undertaking qualitative research often provide general guidelines rather than focusing on how to apply it in practice, particularly when interviewing vulnerable group of women. The protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynade 2001:93). In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process. The concern of ethical issues becomes more salient when conducting face to face interview with vulnerable group of participants. They may potentially become stressed while expressing their feelings during the interview session.

To ensure that the research conformed to standard research ethics, participant anonymity was essential. This was achieved by using pseudo names instead of official identities of the participant. This ensures that responses are not linked to the participants. Furthermore, confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary participation were taken into consideration. This was achieved by providing participants with enough information to make an informed decision.

The moral integrity of the researcher is a critically central aspect of making sure that the research process and a researcher's findings are trustworthy and valid (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011: 59). Originating from the Greek word "ethos," ethics refers to a person's character (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011:59). Ethical considerations must be carefully inspected and scrutinised from the start of the research process to the completion of the research process. Completing and being granted the Durban University of Technology's ethics clearance demonstrated how my research was to be conducted in an ethical manner, protecting participants' identities. After the participants had agreed to be interviewed, they were emailed a letter of informed consent that explained the nature of my study and noted that their involvement in the study was voluntary.

I advised all the participants not to answer questions they were not comfortable with and explained that they could leave the study at any time. The letter also had details of the interview procedure and the fact that the study was confidential. All participants signed the letter of informed consent and sent it back to me prior to the interview. Pseudonyms

were allocated and assigned to each participant so that her anonymity was protected, and these pseudonyms were used in all written and recorded material. In addition, names of other individuals and institutions (that were not part of the study) were withheld from the study. There was little to no risk for the participants in the study.

The participants entering the research setting is the initial step before conducting research. Ethical consideration is also important. Ethics, according to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 63), is an effort to develop norms and principles for researchers' moral behaviour. Therefore, a request for approval to participate in the study was sought from the participants and approval was received from all the 6 UoTs through issuing of a Gatekeeper's letters from the university's Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IREC) ethics committee (See Appenix B, C, D and E). The researcher then applied for an Ethics letter from the university where she works from and it was granted in 2016 (see Appendix F). Final ethics for this study was approved and granted by the IREC in November 2020 (Ref. 039/20). After obtaining the ethics approval the researcher began the process of collecting the data from the relevant participants. The researcher distributed the information to all the participants prior to the interviews (Appendix A). According to (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner 2012: 68), the information and content letter clearly indicates that individual respondents' output/perspectives will remain anonymous, they can withdraw from the research at any given time and their participation in this study voluntary. I declared my position to the respondents during the data recruitment process, thereby eliminating any feelings of intimidation and coercion. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants was guaranteed to ensure that there was no harm to participants in the study.

All terms and conditions relating to the completion of the surveys were explained to respondents. Except when otherwise specified, the researcher declared that these research results/findings are for her own independent work. Other sources are explicitly acknowledged and appropriately referenced.

4.14.1 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was preserved by not revealing their names and identity in the data collection, analysis and reporting of the study findings. Privacy and confidentiality of the interview environment were managed carefully during telephone communication, interview session, data analysis and dissemination of the findings.

4.14.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Qualitative inquiry has recently experienced a burgeoning in the field of educational research. Qualitative research is uniquely positioned to provide researchers with process-based, narrated, storied, data that is more closely related to the human experience. One can learn so much from another's experience, and from a good story. Yet, the degree of trust one has in the person telling the tale has much to do with the degree of trust attributed to the telling. It is the same with studies conducted from a qualitative research approach. Indeed, building trust is imperative. It guides research practice and the utilization of the findings. Researchers need not be required to employ each of the methods for promoting trustworthiness as specified throughout the column, but each investigator bears the onus of demonstrating how the qualitative or action-oriented study meets standard conventions for trustworthiness so that the work might serve the needs of those who are consumers of that research (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007: 311). After all, if one cannot learn from study extensions that might fit with a subsequent set of situations, the impact from the original study is limited. Just as it is valid and important to create new knowledge from emergent discovery qualitative research, it is also productive to seek understanding from others' efficient qualitative inquiry. It is with such intentions that a similarity to both external validity and generalizability in quantitative research might be productive. I believe this study is trustworthy.

4.14.3 HANDLING AND MANAGING DISTRESS DURING INTERVIEW

The face to face semi structured interview technique requires me to listen and respond to the participants' answers or speech. The act of my listening may create unintended harm to the participants. I was aware that I was working with females who did not want to be known. I was also aware that the participants may potentially become stressed while expressing their feelings during the interview session. Therefore, a woman leader who believed herself to be facing challenges and barriers at work; I had to be very professional and considerate to the participants during the interview. As applied to all participants, they were advised to withdraw from the interview at any point if they thought answering the interview questions and disclosing their feelings may impact upon their emotional status. One out of the 10 participants were crying when sharing some parts of their experience during interview sessions. In this case, I offered them to discontinue the interview if they felt it would cause any physical or psychological harm. She was also given a choice to stop the interview and continue once they were ready to do so. In all cases, the participants of this study chose to stop talking about the study topic for a few minutes and continued after they felt better. During this 'time break', I tried to distract participant's attention by having conversation outside the study scope (e.g., her child's name or anything she likes to do in her spare time). Stopping the interview and searching for possible solutions for the participants' distress indicates that researchers are aware of the vulnerability of participants and their rights

4.14.4 PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Confidentiality is another important ethical concern, and it must be upheld throughout the research process. In addition to keeping a participant's identity confidential, Creswell (2014: 55) noted that at times researchers are put in a compromising position when asked to keep something "off the record".

All ten of the female leaders who agreed to participate in the study consented to releasing their identities for purposes of this research and the development of their case studies.

However, I decided to use pseudonyms instead because of the small number of females and their distinctive career milestones and these females would likely be uniquely identifiable, due to the scarcity of female leaders in senior positions in UoTs. Also, when a participant said she was speaking “off the record,” as the researcher, I scratched that information from the record and continued as though it had not been stated. However, one participant’s permission was sourced out to use an “off the record” section of the interview which was neither recorded nor scripted. The participant was given specifics of what was going to be used and she gladly gave permission.

4.14.5 STORAGE OF DATA

While conducting research ethically there is always concern about the storage of the data. Only I have access to the written notes and audio recordings. The audio recording is stored on my laptop computer, which is password-protected, and on an external hard drive that is stored in a password locked cabinet. The hard copies of the interview transcripts and all electronic and audio files pertaining to the study are also stored in a locked cabinet. They will be kept there for seven years and, if no longer needed after that time, will be destroyed.

4.14.5 FREEDOM FROM HARM AND EXPLOITATION

Being aware of what constitutes ethical research is an essential part of planning for a research project. At all times the researcher of this study ensured that all the study participants were safe from harm and protected from unnecessary stress. The respondents could at anytime withdraw from the research if there is any danger or harm anticipated.

Research can generate benefits for individuals now and in the future. However, all research carries some risks of harm to the participants of the study. Different studies carry different levels of risk of harm. Risks of harm to research participants are ethically acceptable only if they are outweighed by potential benefits (Whiting 2008: 35). Framing and conceptualising research therefore involves not only identifying a gap in knowledge, but also thinking about who will benefit from the research, what risks of harm the research may create and who will be exposed to the risks. Including participants in the design of research is an important part of recognising the benefits. Striking the right balance

between potential benefits and risks of harm requires paying attention to the context of the particular study. Some studies are exploratory, in which case the benefits and harms can be more difficult to anticipate.

Benefits are events or experiences that advance the interests of one or more individuals. Categories of prospective benefits include:

- direct benefit for the individual, such as improvement in health condition
- indirect benefit for the individual, such as feeling helpful, gaining access to medical care that may not be available outside of the study
- benefits to others, through generating knowledge that may improve the lives of people in the future rather than the lives of the individuals in the study.

To justify any risks of harm to study participants, research must have social and scientific value: that is, the potential to generate knowledge and methods that can protect and promote the health, wellbeing and independence of individuals, the population and groups within that population. Researchers must minimise risks and ensure that any that remain are outweighed by the potential benefits. The level of risk that is acceptable is up to the potential participants to determine.

4.16 SUBJECTIVITY STATEMENT

As a female interested in higher education leadership, and enthusiastic about my future leadership opportunities, I cannot help but think of the glass ceiling as I get closer to graduation and start applying for senior positions. I am educated and a hard worker, but as figures show, I am set up for failure among my male peers as I have observed during my ten years in higher education. I am a full-time staff member in one of the UoTs under study and doing my research on the experiences of female leaders in higher education on a part-time basis. I have a particular interest in female leadership and elements that constitute effective leadership. It is not a complex fact that all leaders have diverse leadership styles and effective leaders know how to adjust their styles to be effective in various tough and challenging situations. Due to studying interpersonal relationships, the researcher has developed an interest in the dialogue between the differences in leadership styles between men and females.

4.16.1 POSITIONALITY

“Research is a process, not just a product” (England 1994: 82). If England’s statement is true, then an accompanying argument might be made that research is an ongoing process, and does not stop once we complete disseminate the findings. For research to be valuable from the perspective of process over product, the value must lie beyond a sense of completion. Research continues as we reflect: on the development of an idea; on data collection; on findings, and; on implications. Our reflections may take shape in other ways. My reflections on this study has led me to consider the interaction between myself and the participants who were kind enough to share their time and thoughts with me.

4.17 REFLECTING BACK ON MY RESEARCH EXPERIENCE ON THIS STUDY

Throughout my dissertation, my mind was flooded with valuable information. While I hope that the scholarship that emerges from this dissertation contributes to my field, the greater lessons that have emerged thus far apply to the research experience itself. The black female leaders spoke about race in rather generic terms, and looked to other participants and to myself in an effort to ensure that they were saying the “right” things. I was also asked by other study participants, how I felt about racism. I chose not to answer, even though I had a lot to say about racism in higher education, instead I simply posed follow-up questions. I am both insider and outsider. As someone concerned with the challenges faced by females in leadership positions and black females in particular, I became an insider with the black females as most of their experience was off the record, as my research interest is their lived experience. But on the flip side, the White and Indian female leaders with whom I interacted had little to no personal experience with the topics of racism and sexism and were unable to relate to it, and by extension, were unable to relate to me. As with any research project, as I moved through the research process, I continually thought about issues pertaining to limitations of the study. At one point during the course of the study, I began writing about limitations in the context of my positionality as a black woman studying issues of race and in collecting data from black women. But now reflecting on the research process in the context of positionality, I realize that my positionality is not a limitation. During this research I remained reflective throughout the process, I will be shaped by it, and by those with whom I interact. Now that I have taken

the time to reflect upon my experiences with my own positionality in qualitative research, I am more mindful of some important things to reflect.

4.18 CONCLUSION

This section of the study argued that while ethical considerations are important in all research area, the concern becomes more striking in qualitative research, particularly when involving vulnerable group of participants. It is the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to ensure participants to have a power of freedom of choice to involve in the study, protect the participants' identity throughout recruitment and dissemination process, and promote clear and honest research reporting without deception to readers. Reflecting those strategies that I have used during my research made me aware that ethical issues in qualitative research is not as general as being portrayed in the literature, instead it might require some modifications along the research process.

The purpose of this study was to explore views of females in senior leadership positions and who had successfully navigated leadership challenges, to gain an understanding of how career advancement took place, in particular, probing female leaders working in the area of higher education administration and academia. As proposed in the theoretical framework the female leaders may have had an intersection of identities that played a role in their life experiences, institutions, and leadership positions. The researcher was fascinated by the numerous complexities that arose in each case, allowing each case to stand alone. This study used several sources of information including interviews, institutional policies, journals, letters, organisational charts, individual curriculum vitae, and speeches to create an in-depth emersion into each case. The next chapter will present the empirical finding of this study on exploring the experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The results chapter in this dissertation or thesis is where I will objectively and neutrally present the findings of my qualitative analysis. This chapter can sometimes be combined with the discussion chapter (where you interpret the data and discuss its meaning). This chapter will add a quantitative element so as to can add some rigour, which strengthens the results by providing more evidence for my claims. This study will be using and aims to achieve depth, richness and identify nuances, so I will not get a tunnel vision by focusing on the numbers. I will use them as a cream on top in a qualitative analysis. The results chapter is where I objectively present the findings of the study analysis, without interpreting them (I will save that for the discussion chapter). Since I used thematic analysis in this study, I will therefore detail the themes identified in the analysis, using extracts from the transcripts or text to support my claims. A descriptive case study was used in this study to 'describe' a phenomenon (which is the experiences of female leaders in higher education) in detail in its real-world context. It is vital to remember that this results section will be completely objective and descriptive, not interpretive. The structure of this chapter will depend on the nature of the study, especially the research questions.

The previous chapter presented the research methodology used in the study on exploring the experiences of senior female academic leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analysis of the data collected from the respondents as regards their perceptions and view on their experiences. The analysis consisted of two consecutive stages of case study analysis, thematic analysis and analysis of themes. The first stage utilised thematic analysis to construct individual case studies for each of the female leaders. The second stage explored and compared the cases through analysis of themes, which explored and identified similarities and differences along categories across the cases. Finally, suppositions emerged from the case study data that may guide subsequent studies.

It is interesting to note that as at the time of the interviews, each of the ten female participants in this study were in positions of leadership at a University of Technology. Each of the participants was interviewed and asked to reflect using semi-structured interview questions.

5.2 INCLUSIVE NATURE OF THE DATA

The analysis of qualitative research data is not easy because the very nature of qualitative research is complicated by the complexities inherent in being human, trying to qualitatively measure and then make sense of behavior and attitudes is intimidating. In fact, it is this overwhelming aspect of qualitative research that lead researcher (who live ed in the real world of time and budget constraints) to succumb to a less-than-rigorous analytical process.

The concept of inclusive research epitomizes the transformation away from research on people, to research with them (Nind 2017: 278). This concept captures the drive to involve people in the design and conduct of research about them, reach and represent their lived experience, respect them and value different ways of knowing. Before I begin to present the data, I would like to present a description of the inclusive nature of the data set within this study. What was remarkable was the differences among participants. There were sizeable discrepancies in the life beginnings, experiences, motivation, and career journeys of even the small sample of ten females who work in the same higher education sector. The participants came from diverse family backgrounds including academic families, religious families, poor families, rich families, supportive families and some were motivated by parents, peers or mentors. Some were married, others divorced, others single and others widowed. Similarities were also evident as all participants had children and most of them started as teachers and progressed along the traditional academic route whilst others entered academia from business or other occupations, such as engineering. What is clear to me is that there are risks in discussing any gender identified group as homogenous because they are different.

Table 4.1 gives a brief overview of each participant's age, marital status, racial group, higher education experience, highest educational qualification and number of children. Due to some confidentiality restrictions, only a few details have been given about each

participant since some preferred that such details be confidential. Others preferred not to respond to some demographic questions. All the participants were given pseudonyms so that they cannot be easily identified. Eight of the participants chose their own pseudonyms and the rest were given by the researcher. Nearly all the participants were reluctant to give their age but luckily (without any coaxing) divulged their ages and whether they were married, single, divorced or widowed. All the female leaders were protective of their personal lives but understood that somehow, somewhere, their personal lives will be discussed as it formed the experiences that led them to their current senior leadership positions.

5.3 THEMES EXTRACTED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Identification of themes that connect with the theory determines the contribution of research. Themes should be far away from the description of any facet of the context. Themes should be closer to explaining the endogenous constructs of a research. Further, often the contribution of a qualitative case study research emerges from the ‘extension of a theory’ or ‘developing deeper understanding—fresh meaning of a phenomenon’ (Mishra and Dey 2022: 187). However, the lack of knowledge on how to identify themes results in shallow findings with limited to no contribution towards literature.

In analysing the data from the participants, the researcher identified themes to answer the research questions: What are the personal and environmental characteristics that support the success of women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education? What helps them persist despite barriers? The researcher independently reviewed interview passages associated with the themes below and subthemes were identified and discussed. An exhaustive codebook was created for each theme. The four codebooks included a description of the subthemes associated with each major theme, as well as at least one example to illustrate each subtheme. Two independent raters coded interview passages into the subthemes. The codes were captured and analysed using the qualitative analysis software package NVivo which is a software for qualitative analysis of textual and audiovisual data sources, including: Organizing and coding multiple data sources in one central project file, assigning attributes to data (e.g., demographics) for comparative purposes, Adding interpretations and notes, querying

and searching data and visualizing data. Interview agreement was reached, though in some instances passages were omitted from the coding process.

The table below lists the themes that were extracted from the interviews with the female leaders:

Table 0.1 Themes identified

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS	Not having a leadership identity, lack of opportunities or support, discouragement and sabotage, and diverse expectations for males and females are some of the challenges females face. Broad scope of the job, isolation, not fitting in-not being heard, the pressure of critical accountability, scrutiny and disapproval, and time demands of the job.
GENDER BIAS FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION	Long-standing biases and gender stereotypes discourage women and younger women from pursuing a career in academia. These gaps in leadership have created an opportunity for institutions to advance the development and mobility of women in spite of the challenges they often experience; specifically, racism, sexism, ageism and classism.
LEADERSHIP ASPIRATION AND SUPPORTING MECHANISMS AVAILABLE TO FEMALE LEADERS	Supports for a leadership role included formal development experiences, early leadership experiences, encouragement and support, and having a role model or a mentor.

GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION	Universities not supporting females if they report issues of gender issues, sexism and even when females reported their issues to the Human Resource department, they were labelled weak and told to be strong as the positions they were occupied were not easy.
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5.3.1 THEME 1: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS

Compared with men of the same race and ethnicity, women leaders in higher education are leaving their companies at similar rates: White women are leaving as frequently as white men, and we see the same pattern among women and men of color. However, there is a large racial gap: people of color are significantly more likely to leave their organizations.

What challenges do females face in their quest for leadership and how do they exhibit resilience in the face of these challenges? Why is it important? The female leaders argued that gender diversity is vital to higher education leadership as when successful women leaders work with male and/or female students, faculty, and staff; it is more likely that fruitful developments and positive transformation will occur due to the diverse nature of ideas and experiences rather than the ones brought forth from gender-homogeneous leaders (Neuenfeldt 2015: 18). For instance, since there are experiences that are unique to women, like experiences with motherhood, female academic leaders are most likely to pose different queries than their male counterparts and see different perspectives and solutions to issues than the ones an all-male leadership team would. Also, women leaders may serve as mighty role models to younger female generations who may want to follow their lead (Schmidt 2015: 813). All the females felt that society is leaning on females to go the extra yard, spend those extra hours, and even read that extra book to a fetus that is not even born. For the sake of their careers as well as for the sake of the female's children, the females felt that maybe it's time for them moms to push back career aspirations and concentrate on their children. Most of the female leaders choose to give up promotion to senior leadership positions so as to avoid messy university politics, sexist behaviors, and/or incompatible challenges between work-life balance (Mudau 2017: 67).

This results to fewer women occupying positions in the senior leadership hierarchies within the academic. Four women stated that, even when women do desire to climb up the ladder to attain leadership roles, scholars have detected four main reasons why women do not ascend to the top leadership jobs; first, there is still the glass ceiling to women's advancement to leadership positions as they are ex-role stereotypes where people tend to associate male characteristics with leadership positions, which is known as the "think leader, think male" phenomenon. The female leaders have found empirical evidence to support the proposition that individuals associate successful leaders with stereotypically male attributes such as independence, assertiveness, and decisiveness. These characteristics are not considered "women like" in the professional environment; hence, women do not cognitively fit the top jobs (Ibid).

The female leaders in his study further argued that the notion that higher education itself felt that women are are not genetically predisposed for senior leadership. This suggests that men and women are inherently different since men prefer a risky, high stakes environment that the top leadership positions have, due to their increased testosterone levels whereas women are more empathetic and relationship-oriented due to the hormone, oxytocin. The notion that women are biologically created as natural homemakers is what social conservatives believed is the reason behind the feminist war of women not attaining equality to men in the professional arena since their genetic makeup won out in the end.

Female leaders focused on the demanding work structure of today's organizations. In a 24/7 economy, it is incompatible to have a top-notch career and raise a family, especially since women in South Africa head the majority of extended family households. The fact that women may have to leave from their office on time to care for their children, or take time off for maternity leave is not attractive to executive leaders; this then forces women to choose between career and family due to the direct conflict between the resources needed to satisfy both professional and family obligations. Although both men and women have less time to devote to their professional life when they have family obligations, still women are most responsible for the majority of domestic work, and consequently their professional careers are affected by the familial roles (Mani 2013: 40).

The literature reviews disclosed differences in barriers/challenges and opportunities due to race. For example: what was a barrier to black females was not an issue to white or Indian females and sometimes the barrier was the same but not how each race group perceived it. McIntosh (2012: 194), who explained that challenges faced by black females were not necessarily faced by white females and vice versa, confirmed this.

Female representation in either senior management or leadership positions still creates a 'cultural dilemma' for most higher-education institutions. Aspers and Corte 2019: 139 defines the cultural dilemma as somewhat not part of, or presents a threat to, the traditional order, meaning and values of a university, society or population or nation. This shows that the presence of formerly excluded individuals, specifically females in senior leadership, creates a problem for higher-education institutions if they are to cope with both men and females in the management of the universities. However, since higher education is male-dominated, there is a need to enable females entering into senior leadership positions to overcome their under-representation and to help them in further developing their careers.

To begin with the barriers to female entry into senior leadership and their subsequent obstacles should be investigated. The findings of this study on the barriers to females in higher education are therefore categorised at different levels. The literature identified some principles which are barriers to females entering and working within this industry are increasing, such as sexist attitudes, selection and recruitment practices, the industry's image and work environment, leadership knowledge, stereotypes and a male-dominated culture (Baumgartner and Schneider 2010: 569). Amongst these, most criteria continue to obstruct females' development while they are continuing their career in senior leadership in higher-education institutions.

The literature suggested that obstacles to female progression into senior positions originate from numerous foundations such as limitations imposed upon them by society, their families, universities, and the females themselves. The participants of this study present several different arguments to explain why females are not represented equitably in senior leadership positions. Two of the most dominant barriers are the socio-cultural expectations regarding female role in the family which represent a huge obstacle to their

upward mobility and discrimination in the form of institutional structures and policies (Neuenfeldt 2015: 18).

The obstacles are even more pronounced for black women leaders. This research found that, compared with White women, black women face the most barriers and experience the steepest drop-offs with seniority despite having higher aspirations for becoming a top executive. Black women also reported that they get less access to opportunities and see a workplace that is less fair and inclusive. Currently, there is a new pipeline problem; whereby women leaders are leaving their universities at the highest rate and at a much higher rate than men leaders. (Göktürk and Tülübas 2020: 12). To put the scale of the problem in perspective: for every woman at the director level who gets promoted to the next level, two women directors are choosing to leave their company

Due to the complexity of race differences, the results of the study are described and analysed according to barriers at personal or individual level; barriers at group levels, barriers at institutional level and barriers at societal levels. Furthermore, the main themes identified can be summarized by Table 4.2 and explained further in the section below.

2.1.1.6 BARRIERS AT THE PERSONAL LEVEL

The primary question at this level is whether respondents believe they possess the abilities and skills needed to perform in their leadership positions. Respondents mentioned the need for learning additional skills mostly when they were just starting their careers. Most respondents reported that they possessed the skills needed by the university and the skills needed by themselves to perform their jobs. Therefore, at least in the eyes of the respondents, the skill level is not a factor in the under-representation of females in senior leadership and the related diminishing of their contribution and performance.

The respondents were asked about factors in their personal lives that supported or hindered their leadership careers (Faulkner 2015: 418). Generally, the tone of the explanations about personal factors was quite different among White, Indian and Black

females. All of them have children and Nelly has three kids and one adopted kid and all of them have or had supportive spouses.

Noticeably, the sample of females for this study was either married, divorced widowed or single. This made the sample more representable. When asked about support in their personal life, the responses were also different. One intriguing response was the one I got from Pamela, who seemed to me like someone who did not understand her husband very well. I was also intrigued by Rose, who was very comfortable with her husband forgetting to attend her graduation. All the respondents were supported through their leadership experiences by their parents although the support was different. For instance, Nelly believed her parents supported her although she said they lived for the struggle. Hlobi, who is single with four kids from the same man personally believed in the support of the father of her kids, her cousin and also her late parents. Religion is Hlobi's ultimate pillar. The female leaders mentioned several supports, including support from their children. Angeline felt strongly about this issue, as she had just lost a very supportive husband, so she preferred not to divulge a lot.

Thandi was also very vocal about the fact that males insist that, the workload at home is 50:50:

“Some of us have to rush out of meetings, pick the kids up from school, leave them at home with the helper (if they're lucky enough to have one), rush to do grocery shopping, cook the supper, serve the meal, clean up, help the kids with homework. It does not end there, females are still expected to have energy for bedroom activities, with a man who left home, went to have a few cold beers with his friends, came home and ate and went to bed. Females still do the majority of the domestic work and are still the nurturers in the family. Therefore, for a female just to be a leader is a challenge. Not to mention the incredible guilt trip they feel when they do take on an additional volunteer capacity, like being a mentor. And that's the start of your leadership career.”

The females all acknowledged the university's role in addressing barriers facing females and female progression into leadership positions. Nelly voiced out her dissatisfaction with the university's slow pace in checking if the policies are implemented:

“Universities have brought in a lot of policies. However, not all the policies in the world are going to change the general attitudes towards females and the clear definition of roles between men and females in the family, in the workplace, and in community. And up until we break that down, females are not going to have full participation.”

2.1.1.7 BARRIERS AT GROUP LEVEL

I asked participants to identify the group they worked closely with most of the time and interacted with on a daily or weekly basis. This was asked because the interaction with group members was recurrent; there are therefore possible opportunities for leaders to experience support, hindrance, or both. Noticeably, respondents received more support from the organisational level through the employee assistance programme (EAP) than the group level (peers). The leadership group is open to dialogue and new ideas. In terms of the female leaders' experiences with a group, the stories related were not all good, but the element of resilience came up once again as none of the participants thought of stepping down when faced with challenges.

A summary of the respondent's experience captures several challenges that female leaders face. At times support is offered in ways that are instantaneously de-valuing, but it may also be the only support that is offered. One burden can be overcome, only to be replaced by another. Too often, the folks close to you who claim to be loyal are the ones who put the obstacles in place. It is a double-bind, in which either the group or an individual close to you openly offers support yet publicly behaves in ways that are a burden. Clearly, not all female leaders face these kinds of situations. However, numerous female leaders do.

2.1.1.8 BARRIERS AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

The participants were asked if they got support on the organisational level and there were mixed responses from the participants. None of the participants got support on how to be a leader or how to deal with stressful situations or how to cope when faced with challenges prior to their appointment. However, there were formal leadership training programmes

that some of the participants attended, and they explained that most leaders also learn how to lead by attending workshops and seminars that concentrate on important skills that are necessary for academic leaders.

The sessions that most of the respondents reported were specially geared toward academics. Sometimes respondents attended these workshops because the institution specifically suggested that they attend them. At other times, the respondents found out about them and attended in their personal capacity. Moreover, some respondents reported that they wished that they had had the opportunity to attend such training programmes. Conditions were such that they jumped right into their positions with little time for leadership knowledge. For example, Sibongile reported not having the time to attend formal leadership training since assuming her position. Nelly reported that her brilliant personal assistant replaced her need to attend leadership training (but those training programmes were provided for her). Irrespective of access to or yearning to attend these training programmes, here, I focus on the respondents' responses to institutional leadership training and acknowledge responses to genderspecific training seminars for female leaders.

Rose, for instance, came from industry into academia and moved into leadership. She had an intentional career path without any research or teaching experience. She was extremely delighted by the fact that she was headhunted by the university because that showed that she was good at what she was doing. However, she faced challenges in class and struggled to transfer knowledge with students. She spoke to her senior who advised her to attend a certain programme. That programme helped a lot. When she moved into leadership, she also faced the challenge of being isolated by her more experienced colleagues. She attended another workshop that assisted her and helped her develop resilience through her leadership journey. Thabsile described an exercise where she engaged in a three-day leadership training.

The females pointed out that they experienced an isolating culture that did not recognise their worth and the value they bring in the leadership positions they occupied. Once again, this overwhelming feeling that the females expressed shows that they feel powerless in the powerful positions that they occupy. If they have to fight to voice their contributions in

meetings, it could be presumed that the powerful male voice always overpowers and suppresses them. This could lead to a situation where these females could give up trying to affirm themselves and become tokens in senior positions. A lack of confidence, as one female indicated, leads to panic, distress and fear because one feels that one's contribution is undercut.

During an institutional assessment, Thandi boldly wrote this:

"I do not have confidence; I feel I am not developing. In this institution, you do not get acknowledgement and respect. Your influences do not matter; you are in this position, but you are not taken seriously. Sometimes you feel like they are curious how you made it to the top, after all, you are just a female. Your voice always takes a back seat. They only listen to you if there is no counter input from the male colleagues."

Rose also indicated that her experiences at the institution had made her conclude that the institution did not trust females as having the required knowledge and capital to lead or occupy senior positions. She recalled an instance when a female colleague was appointed to a senior position:

"When a post in one of the departments was advertised and a female was employed, there was so much gossip that she did not know the job even before she started. I mean, do you think that anyone was going to listen to anything she said? She had already been stereotyped!"

The institutional cultures that do not recognise females as capable leaders worthy to be given credit stem from the constructions that stereotype females as belonging at home and having little space in the workplace (Riegle-Crumb and Morton 2017: 104). Females are often constructed as nurturers who should leave the workplace to the men (Dixon, Correa, Straubhaar, Covarrubias, Graber, Spence and Rojas (2014: 1004). This stereotype spreads the notion that patriarchal societies believe in maledominance and men continue to benefit in the workplaces; thereby, invalidating the presence of females, silencing them, as well as instilling in them fear and a lack of confidence in their abilities in the workplace. Siyanova-Chanturia, Warren, Pesciarelli and Cacciari (2015: 267) also allude to this stereotyping of females when they point out that during the course of history,

societies have constructed good leadership as a masculine feature that females cannot handle. This is clearly seen in this section where females who participated in this study felt that they lacked the confidence to partake fully in senior positions in higher education, feeling as if they were in a 'sinking ship' fighting for their survival.

Most participants acknowledged receiving resources, general support and recognition from the institution. There were, however, a few exceptions. The females in the sample tended to describe the executives of the institution as supportive. Most of the females were given training opportunities that assisted them to increase their skills and become more visible. Unfortunately, these opportunities did not necessarily provide improved power for the females. Most of the workshops helped the females gain visibility and learn new skills, but they unrepentantly left the female leader to face opposition alone.

4.2.1.4 BARRIERS AT THE SOCIETAL LEVEL

The respondents were probed whether the social view that females belonged at home was a barrier to their career advancement to leadership positions (Walton, Murphy and Ryan 2015: 523). The majority of the respondents (7) said it was not a barrier. Only one respondent said that this was a weak barrier. The respondents were logical that the society was changing, and many parents and spouses were educating females so that they could work. Many families appreciated the support females were making to the family finances. It was just the Indian participants who stated that their families still expected them to do all the duties of a wife, but the husbands were supportive of their careers. Then, there was the issue of sexual orientation whereby participants had to voice their concerns.

The results showed that family responsibilities and marital status had major relationships with females' career advancement. This agrees with Geary (2016: 675) who found that family responsibility connected barriers stalled females' career development. This was because females had to continue with their family care responsibilities even if they took up a more demanding job. The white respondents confessed that family responsibilities were a barrier, and they were not keen on leaving their children under the care of a domestic worker for a long time because they would lose that contact with their kids. The Indians felt the same too, but their concern was that they did not trust domestic workers.

However, the problem of family responsibilities was not as strong as alleged. The single female experienced a lesser degree of the status barrier as compared to married females since the single female is more mobile and flexible to more career choices. However, she also spoke about the issue of having children out of wedlock as something that was against her culture.

In this study, a noteworthy relationship was seen between the social view that females belong at home and career advancement to senior positions among the Indian females. This shows that the barrier is vanishing. Patriarchy, however, is still widespread, as the husbands still had to be consulted by their wives on employment matters. This was prevalent among the black and Indian participants. All the same, the factor was not perceived as a major barrier. Although husbands still made most decisions at home, they supported their wives in their career journeys.

Research studies about females in leadership roles indicate the bulk of females believe their major obstacle to advancement is a mindset preferring applicants that fit in a male-dominated environment. Stereotypical male descriptions continue about gender roles and effective leadership. A number of females in this study mentioned expected roles that existed as they began their career journeys. If one looks at theme 1; out of 10 female leaders, six of them became teachers after university. Trimeira remembers a time when it was not commonly accepted for a female to work outside the home. She started working in the family business but later convinced her husband that nothing would change at home if she were permitted to work where she wanted. Trimeira faced the double bind of whether to stay at home and look after her family or follow her dreams. Although females have occupied positions in the workforce for several years, and this has become more socially tolerable, Trimeira described comments she would sometimes receive from strangers. She would be rebuked about having children and not being home with them. She recalls being reprimanded for being a working mom and told that her kids would be neglected, and her husband would have a roving eye. Her reaction to this criticism was...

“... my children are brilliant independent kids, and they are turning out just fine. As for the comment about her husband, she never entertained it despite all the torment society gave her.”

The early years of Nelly's career as a politician and feminist reflected similar expectations in terms of gender roles. When she became a senior leader at a university and elected to

sit on council meetings as the first female member, she observed that some females and males just did not think of females as 'elected' officials. Her observation was that there were so many rumours flying around about her council membership and she also heard that there was a rumour that she had 'dropped her underwear' for the chairman of the council. Another incident was that she was automatically voted as a secretary of the council and her responsibility was to take notes. She declined the position and labelled it sexist (Radke, Hornsey and Barlow 2016: 863).

Thandi also referred to applying for her current position as a major challenge in her career. She attributed the challenge to societal habituation concerning females in leadership. For her, it was about seeing an opportunity and going for it was she had the qualifications and experience needed. But no female had occupied that position before. When she got the position, she started a gender forum at the university, which exists even today. A bit of a barrier may have been broken when she was appointed, but she realised that there were many obstacles that she had to overcome. She then spoke about Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and explained that suddenly, 'she is ugly and has a terrible voice'. These are sexist comments, which shows that South Africa is not ready for a female leader. More disturbing is that South African females are not ready for a female leader, as they are the ones calling Dlamini-Zuma ugly. When she was still climbing the ladder, no one spoke about her 'ugliness', nor did anyone speak about the ugliness of any male president (Mtshiselwa and Masenya 2016; Adebajo 2014). The same happened to Hillary Clinton when she was campaigning to become president of the United States. She was labelled a lesbian (Corbridge 2015: 187).

Pamela explained the importance of education and working hard. She did not discuss her private story but explained that she had an eye for opportunities and seized them. She did speak about the fact that she went to a good school and never struggled as a child and got everything she wanted from her parents. When she was given an opportunity to study as a teacher, she took it.

Pamela gathered all the information she could get about the university and luckily, she had learnt Zulu from her family's domestic worker. Support from her spouse also encouraged her to face her fears and she started an exercise of challenging herself. She

had never faced any challenges from the staff, but the biggest challenge was the students. They called her 'Mlungu', she eventually embraced the nickname that means 'white', and during meetings with students, she introduced herself as 'Mlungu' to the amazement of students.

As a female working in the construction field as a civil engineer, Angeline explained that she got quite a bit of attention since she was seen as different. The female who gave her job card daily always asked her how she was coping and how her skin was affected by the daily exposure to the sun. The males she worked with were also uncomfortable with a female watching over them on site. They made sexist jokes and made her feel unwelcome and uncomfortable. Angeline, felt that it was hard to gain peoples' respect and to convince them that as a female, she was skilled enough to handle the technical aspects of the issues that were consistently turned over to her male counterparts. At first, she was scared of even wearing her uniform because of the gazes and giggles from both males and females. However, she relaxed with her role as a female and a leader, and the fear lessened and was replaced by confidence. Her confidence affected her subordinates and made Angeline realise that there was a need for open communication and trust that needed to be enforced. She became an expert in her field, notwithstanding gender and that is why she never even applied for the job at the university, but word had gone out that she was the best and she was female.

Of the ten females interviewed, eight of them acknowledged various barriers to achieving leadership positions throughout their career journeys. Pamela stated when asked whether she had come across any barriers throughout her leadership journey,

"Oh, plenty of them. I did not have to look for barriers; they were in the air and sometimes they are thrown right in front of you so that you stumble and fall."

Sibongile and Thandi preferred to call them challenges but Rose and Nelly addressed them as opportunities. Hlobi was the only participant who identified all five of the main challenges mentioned by the other females: gender, credentials, race, family, and children. All ten of the participants identified gender issues as one of their biggest

challenges and they all agreed that it was their gender that impeded their successful navigation into achieving leadership positions throughout their career.

Hlobi revealed her career path leading to her current position as a director, she mentioned that she did not feel she had experienced the obstacles or blocks one may expect. She did note, however, that some gender bias was evident when it came to the placement of students for in-service training. She realised that the boys got placements faster than the girls and the girls were often given jobs like answering the phone or making coffee for the boys. She did not experience any gender-related barriers. Interestingly, Hlobi provided an explanation of herself that indicated that females sometimes give away the leadership roles to males:

“In numerous situations, it is the men who took risks and volunteered to be the HOD in my absentia; the females did not see this as an opportunity but saw leadership as a challenge.”

Within this scenario, females may have the same gender role expectations as men, resulting in behaviours that may become obstacles to real female leadership. Hlobi further explained that there is often a perception that females are timid, and that they do not understand how to be a leader. She explained this point as she described a meeting in which she was involved to raise money for furniture, computers and a projector for the boardroom. Hlobi explained that two males were chosen to assist her in getting the sponsorship. The males got the sponsorship within two days, and she tried repeatedly but was informed about budget cuts among other excuses. The truth was not that she did not understand how to ask for money, but she did not know how to ask for money in the way that it was expected to be done.

2.1.1.9 GENDER AS A BARRIER

In 2015, the percentage of females occupying leadership positions was 23% and in 2016, the percentage rose to 28, these numbers still do not explain the issue of female under-representation in senior positions in higher education (McKinsey 2016: 22). Some researchers argue that progress is being made concerning gender equity. The Grant Thornton International Business Report (2016: 25) has however discovered a shift in the

gender issue. Currently, the issue is not about numbers but power and authority. Alsubaihi (2016) did a comparative study between male and female leaders and discovered that females are less likely to hold positions with authority; to have the opportunity for promotion; to be rewarded in their roles and to be part of networks and support systems.

Female leadership prospects and ambitions can be negatively impacted by gender discrimination (Eagly 2007: 12). This is often attributed to the traditional prototype that leadership is seen as male territory. Mudau (2017: 67) over the last few decades has shown how traditional male leadership models and beliefs are still current challenges for females in leadership roles.

The gender issues for the females in this study were related to the males at their universities whom the participants were either required to work with for their professional development and the development of their department, faculty or university, but also whom the participants competed alongside for leadership positions. Nelly, on the other hand, was specific about gender issues in her department and was instrumental in introducing the “Bring a girl child to work” initiative and making it an outcome for all staff members.

Unlike Nelly and Rose, the other participants voiced a gender barrier as females trying to navigate their male-dominated career paths through higher education. Pamela and Angeline not only acknowledged gender as a barrier but also the attainment of specific credentials. Angeline is a 52-year-old director Pamela is a 44-year-old senior director. Both felt that their gender was a barrier, but their credentials were a bigger barrier representing various stages within higher education positions. Gender roles were also brought up as a barrier by other females.

During the interviews, four female leaders were quick to bring up gender role-related responsibilities to parenting in extremely ill-timed situations involving their work and family balance. Thandi, a black female who is the dean in her faculty, indicated that there was a time early on in her tenure as dean when she felt that softening her role, as a mother would have provided her with a more favourable job performance outcome. Her daughter’s swimming gala happened to be on the same day and time as her first presiding office during a graduation ceremony. She spoke about her problem to her superior, who told her that she cannot compare the two. The male boss even went further to comment

that the salary she was getting there afforded her the opportunity to enrol her daughter in a private school that has a swimming gala. Thandi also wanted to be the presiding officer during the graduation as this was going to open doors of networking for her since the university had invited influential guests. The problem was that the location and timing made it impossible for her to be in both places at the same time. She was refused a date change from her host the institution's graduation, yet the invitations had not gone out yet. After careful consideration and full understanding of the possible repercussion that she might face as a new dean who chose not to attend her first graduation, Thandi sent a letter to her boss and said:

“According to the institution’s policy, I have 12 days leave remaining and I have decided to take all of them with immediate effect. Since I will not be present to preside at the graduation, please substitute me with Dorothy who is willing to fill up for me on that day since I will be at my daughter’s swimming gala.”

Thandi never got a response for that sent email. Instead, she sent her leave application to the HR department, and it came back as “unsuccessful”. This was because her boss had to co-sign her leave, and he probably did not but that did not stop Thandi from attending her daughter's swimming gala. She sent her complaint to the head and also copied her Union because she knew that the next step was that she would not be paid for that day and might even face disciplinary action for non-compliance.

Downplaying her role as a loving mother and attending the graduation was the decision that Thandi's boss had hoped she would make. Yet, here, by emphasising her role as a supportive mother to her kid, while it may not have been ideal for the university, she shows an alternative to what others consider suits a female with power.

Similarly, Angeline talked about her experience after being asked to temporarily move from her city campus office to run a department in a campus 65 minutes away from her usual routine. The position she was asked to temporarily move into was a senior position but Angeline (who is a widow) takes her kids to school and fetches them every day. This is what Angeline said:

“The Senior Director asked me if I would be willing to serve as a senior director at a satellite campus for a year because the current senior director was going on sabbatical First, I was excited then I realised that I could not take the position even after I was promised more pay and travelling allowance. I could not imagine doing this job with all the other things that were happening in my life. I was still grief-stricken by the death of my husband and wanted nothing more than to be close to my kids. My senior was very persuasive and said it is only for a year and that it would be good for me to be in a new environment during the day since I was still grieving. I then said that I would think about it over the weekend”.

Angeline stated that she spoke with her children about the opportunity, and they encouraged her to pursue the position and told her they would use Uber to go to school and back. She however decided to go back to the senior and ask him if he took his kids to school. He responded that they had a driver. She then asked for temporary housing for two years to address some of her issues with the position given that a two hour a day commute was just not going to work for her and her family.

“I am sorry I have to decline the offer as nothing compares to the morning and afternoon conversations I have with my kids. I learn so much about their teachers, their sporting activities, their friends, their crushes and most importantly, I get to get a hug from them every morning and afternoon. That is when I feel I have done well as a mother. Getting your kids to talk about anything with exceptions of things that were private to them is nothing compared to this opportunity”.

Here again, it is obvious that Angeline’s highlighting of her role as a mother only came out when she was tasked with a challenge that did not suit her family’s routine. As such, she brought up her role as a mom because it was important to the discussion; her role as a mother was not something that commonly came out in her professional activities and affairs. It was shocking to me as a researcher that most of the female leaders were extremely prone to mention this matter of work and family balance when discussing their experiences as leaders

Lesbian, bisexual and intersexual females are concerned about how their sexual orientation might affect their employment opportunities. One participant expressed

concern that her sexuality had a negative impact on her performance and on how colleagues respond to her at work.

Universities have implemented large initiatives to ensure that their lesbian, gay and bisexual students feel included and supported. However, the same support is not given to lesbian and bisexual female staff. Although universities are aware that if lesbian staff are able to be themselves in the workplace, they are more likely to be productive. This principle applies to lesbian and bisexual females, but participants in this research felt that their identity as a female, and being able to achieve their potential as women, was of greater concern than the need to be accepted as a gay woman. Even those women who saw their sexuality as a very positive aspect of their work persona still felt that their identity as a woman was of greater importance.

“One female participant explained that she gets respect for having the guts to be out. “If you are visibly out it carries with it a sense of honesty and trustworthiness that sort of spills over into people’s view of how you deal with tough situations generally, so it makes you appear good leadership material and in terms of leveraging your career you would be surprised how a bit of powerful talking about it raises your profile.”

5.3.2 THEME 2 GENDER BIAS AND STEREOTYPES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By this theme, the female leaders attempted to make readers of this study understand gender bias in higher education. It clarifies first generation and second generation, gender bias in terms of visible and invisible barriers separately. Firstly, generation bias denies equality in terms of presence and second-generation gender bias holds the female back from attaining senior leadership positions of power. Male controlled universities are hesitant to accept females in leadership roles (Johnson 2014: 835). The females in this study gave personal and individual evidence in terms of their experiences by revealing the gap between males and females in terms of salaries, positions they obtain and senior positions they occupy. Even though it is anticipated that universities work towards gender-just structures, but it is the female who should be the agent of change.

“We've had a highly feminized profession, but feminized means both that women do the work, but also that it's devalued because it is women's work,” Nelli says, pointing to many issues that exist in education, such as underpaid teachers, buildings in disrepair, and even an “inverted” pyramid where men hold far more leadership positions than women.

Hlobi explained that:

“Many people would rather believe that hard work and being really good at what you do could outperform bias, and that's a lie. No matter how good you are, if we live in discriminatory system, that discrimination will raise its head”

Thandi explained that:

“One of the most powerful reasons for the lack of progress is a simple one: we have blind spots when it comes to diversity in this university, and we can't solve problems that we don't see or understand clearly”.

5.3.2.1 GENDER BIAS AT WORK

Females need to recognise the subtle gender biases at work, they should think like leaders, feel like leaders and act like leaders. Further, female leaders should create their identity as leaders rather than a ‘female’ leader. They need to show their uniqueness and individuality. They should also mentor other females in the structures of the university and prepare them for leadership. This will remove gender-based leadership styles. A female leader is expected to ‘act like a lady’, and if such expectations are entertained, females will be expected to lead in a particular way. These biases may be purely in the form of perpetuating the status quo, or an active approach to strengthen the existing structures of male-benefiting customs, traditions, values and beliefs (Grover 2015: 2). As men are in charge of building higher education systems in which both females and males’ function, these gender-based systems will benefit them, even though they may not even identify it or refute recognising it. It has been a tough, demanding and problematic journey for a female to bring the issue of gender bias in boardrooms and consequently, this platform allowed the female leaders to talk about the issue of second-generation gender bias.

Researchers like Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2013: 6) moved away from single-mindedly assuming that gender bias was about numbers. These researchers were able to acknowledge the fact that more females are taking up leadership positions, but the gender issues persisted. Universities are no longer deliberately excluding females' leaders, but there are "second-generation" forms of gender bias resulting in female's persistent under-representation in senior leadership roles. This form of bias is very subtle and powerful yet often invisible but creates barriers for females that stem from cultural norms and organisational structures, practices, and patterns of contact that unintentionally benefit males while resulting in a drawback for females.

Females are often hesitant about leaving the comfort of the roles in which they have done well, because of the uncertainty of a new position. Yet for females to be comfortable with successful transitions into senior leadership roles, they need to shed their previously effective proficient identities and developing new and more fitting ones. Second-generation gender bias can make these changeovers more challenging for females, as most female leaders take up leadership positions without growing a sense of identity as a leader. That is why it is important for female leaders to be aware of second-generation bias so that they can create safe spaces for leadership identity development, which will encourage them to anchor in their leadership position with purpose and zeal. Seven females made mention of second-generation biases:

Females still suffer under-representation in senior leadership positions in higher education. Some females explained that the discrimination against females has developed from no participation to so-called second-generation forms of gender bias. Females face a group of undetectable, salient and elusive barriers that have risen from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structure, practices, and patterns of relations that unconsciously favour men (Ely, Ibarra and Kolb 2011: 475).

Females need to find ways to establish their roles as a leader while at the same time fighting to free the leadership entity from the labels of male or female. Second-generation, gender bias makes these changes more difficult for females, and concentrating entirely on acquiring new skills is not sufficient; the learning must be accompanied by a rising sense of identity as a leader. That is why a better understanding of second-generation

bias, non-toxic spaces for leadership identity development, and encouraging females to anchor their leadership tenacity will get better results than the paths most universities currently pursue.

In contrast with what universities say about their commitment, only around half of all participants in this study thought that their university sees gender diversity as a priority and is doing what it takes to make progress. Around 20 percent of participants say that their university's commitment to gender diversity feels like lip service. And few universities (mostly, traditional universities) are making a strong business case for gender diversity. There are six actions that universities need to take to make progress on gender diversity. Without action on these fronts, the numbers will not move:

- Get the basics right—targets, reporting, and accountability.
- Ensure that hiring and promotions are fair.
- Make senior leaders and managers champions of diversity.
- Foster an inclusive and respectful culture.
- Make the Only experience rare.
- Offer employees the flexibility to fit work into their lives.

5.2.2.2 TOKENISM AS A GENDER OPPORTUNITY

This wrong discernment of gender equality limits prospects for females as a group because it creates false representations and disregards the apparent need to make things better. Token females also find themselves insulated and experience more performance-related stress. Compared with females who are more equally represented, token females are more likely to experience gender discrimination, be given lower appraisals from male colleagues, and generally experience less joy and happiness in their leadership positions.

The literature review exposed that tokenism remains an issue in higher education, even with the numbers of females in senior positions increasing. All but one female interviewed for this study confirmed that tokenism remains an issue in their universities. All the females related a range of types of experiences pertaining to this issue. Sibongile explained tokenism as something that takes away her ability as capable leader. She said:

Tokenism's conflicting thoughts can further complicate an already difficult adjustment. As a black woman in academic leadership, as I describe the challenges of discrimination and how it leads to marginalization and feelings of isolation and tokenism I describe tokenism as the feelings and experiences of being one or few of a group in which they are the extreme minority, such as Black women in higher education. These feelings and experiences can include isolation, loneliness, limited support, and solo status associated with the organizational practices of meeting minimal legal and administrative compliance and public scrutiny in minority use and placement

Thandi explained the concept of tokenism

“as a form of discrimination, marginalization, and oppression, as it refers to the practice of including a limited number of black female leaders to give the appearance of equality instead of true equality and diversity. Tokenism emerges from organizational calls for diversity and inclusion without genuine feelings of belongingness and equal access to resources”.

Tokenism in the workplace and, specifically, higher education can present in many ways. It can potentially look like hiring a minority person because of their race or ethnicity or an organization market-ing their 1% minority population on their website to appear more diverse. In higher education leadership, Black women appointed to serve as a college/university president are continuously challenged and denied by their govern-ing board at every impasse (Davis and Maldonado 2015: 58).

Lucinda felt that:

“In the world of White academia, Black women, regardless of preparation, qualifications, or competency in administration, are invisible and isolated. Although the duality of invisibility and hypervisibil-ity plague women in social settings, it significantly affects Black women in leadership positions. Black women in higher educa-tion leadership are accounted for and visible when it comes to statistical reporting; however, they are discounted or deemed invisible when it comes to

intelligence or academic ability. The sociocultural phenomenon of Black women being invisible or going unnoticed or unheard is not rare”.

Sesko and Biernat (2010) found that Black women are more likely to be unheard, unnoticed, and least likely to be recognized in social situations. According to Davis (2012), the number of Black women in academia has increased; yet, they remain largely invisible, thus presenting as further adversity to overcome to have their voices heard.

Closely linked to tokenism is the random message by media that gender inequality in higher education is no longer a problem. By likening current successful females to the females of the past, news articles occasionally tout examples of successful females as an indication that the glass ceiling has been shattered. Even though a few females have found their way into senior and executive positions of power, large inequalities still exist in the depiction of females generally in senior positions. Discrimination has become increasingly understated and hard to notice, creating a more multifaceted setting through which females need to navigate (Faulkner 2015: 418).

When mass media and cultural references emphasise female progress, they create a deceitful view that current conditions are optimal (Ibid: 417). Discussions of the occasional token female boss and a few females in top positions give the illusion of equality. This is because when institutions of higher education offer a few females limited, token opportunities, people within the companies perceive that the limited opportunities are as good as equal opportunities (Ibid: 419).

When looking at the literature of the occasional token female leader and a few females in top positions, one is given the illusion of equality because when institutions of higher education offer a few females limited, token opportunities, people within the university perceive that the limited opportunities are as good as equal opportunities (Chance 2021: 64). The findings of this study however unearthed the issue of tokenism and its negative impact on females among all races yet, tokenism had been seen as a post-1994 strategy after affirmative action was passed, which implied that tokens were black females only. However, the white and Indian participants in this study also experienced tokenism from their colleagues who assumed that they had been placed in senior positions undeservedly.

The females who felt that they were just tokens the institution used to show the outside world that equity issues are taken seriously by the institution pointed out that they normally got confused when males sometimes disrespected them and then at other times praised them because they were hardworking and always willing to walk the extra mile to assist when the need arose (Naidoo 2004: 124). While the glass cliff theory predicts the circumstances under which females are appointed to leadership positions, the token and role incongruity theory recognises the potential challenges female leaders may experience post-promotion. According to Zaidman (2020: 6), females often experience discriminating visibility and scrutiny, exaggerated stereotypes and exclusion and isolation. As a result, they experience two types of pressure: the burden to perform and stresses to assimilate to the interactive style of their peers. These pressures may shape their post-promotion route and tenure in several ways.

The literature review exposed that tokenism remains an issue in higher education, even with the number of females in senior positions increasing. All but one female interviewed for this study confirmed that the issue of tokenism remains an issue in their universities. All the females related a range of types of experiences pertaining this issue. The females indicated that at times male colleagues would pretend by saying that they should do the work because they knew what they were doing and then piled all the work on the female colleagues. This happened in particular in cases where the female had held a senior position before, which in most cases would be lower than their presently held position. However, to men, it would be appropriate to abandon their own work and duties and leave them to the female. Sibongile explained that in higher education leadership:

“Women in higher education leadership navigate the adverse challenges of intersectionality, stereotype threat, and tokenism. Black women in leadership undergo adversity including limited role models, the concrete ceiling, and the intersectionality of racism, sexism, and ageism, as well as tokenism”.

Hlobi reiterated what Nelly had said:

“Some of the more salient codes that emerged were discrimination such as racism, sexism, ageism, and the intersection of these challenges with identity, cultural diversity and belonging, resilience, and leadership callings”.

Nelly for instance also felt that when men relegate work roles to females, it is not simply because they trust the females' expertise. The reason for these men's behaviour seems to stem from the belief that work that could be done by females has no value and intimidates the selfish supremacy demeanour men attach to masculine tasks. One participant indicated that in the student development department that she managed, a male colleague who had always managed the student development programme transferred the responsibility to her when she joined the office. She indicated that in the beginning, the male colleague would tell her how difficult it was to draw a 'solid student development plan for the year' because one needed to be 'grounded in research' to understand the needs of the students. When the female colleague showed an understanding of research and programmes, her colleague recommended that she be in charge of student development. This could be likened to Peterson's theory of 'feminisation' of roles (2011: 625).

Feminisation of roles refers to a process in which certain jobs or roles that females can do are considered feminine and therefore, become underrated, leading to a degrading of respect and reputation for such roles. The fact that men leave their duties to be done by females and do not get involved means that they regard any work that could be done by females as not significant enough to be done by men and perhaps not promoting the institution in the most important way as constructed through the male opinion. This could be the reason why they relegate the responsibility to females because they do not want to be associated with the job and roles, they feel no longer have significance. Although giving females extra work or leaving them to do tasks could at times be considered as empowering them, according to Peterson (2011: 626), it is just a way of showing that the position has shrunk in standing and power and is therefore no longer fitting for men. This again points to the relations of ruling (Spence 2002) where females are once again put next to men and are socially constructed in a work environment to represent characteristics of insignificance and weakness and as a result, they are not capable to place and position themselves as powerful leaders in senior positions. The only way they are constructed is as creatures that will always be subsidiary to men and only take over what men leave behind. In this case, it becomes obvious that the same male forces that want to put females back where the men think they belong would overpower whatever contributions they make. Therefore, when females feel that they have finally leapt forward

into senior positions, men find ways of degrading such positions in different ways such as leaving the paperwork to females, as seen in the findings of this study.

The wrong discernment of gender equality limits prospects for females as a group because it creates false representations and disregards the apparent need to make things better. Token females also find themselves insulated and experience more performance-related stress. Compared with females who are more equally represented, token females are more likely to experience gender discrimination, be given lower appraisals from male colleagues, and generally experience less joy and happiness in their leadership positions.

Closely associated with tokenism is the casual message by the media that gender inequality in higher education is no longer a problem. By equating current successful females to the females of the past, news articles seldom tout examples of successful females as an indication that the glass ceiling has been shattered. Even though a few females have found their way into senior and executive positions of influence and power, large inequalities still exist in the representation of females generally in senior positions. Discrimination has become ever more discreet and harder to notice, creating a more complex setting through which females need to navigate (Chance 2021: 55).

One of the aims of studying female leaders in South Africa is the challenging difference among them in social groupings such as class, religion, ethnic and racial groups. When making an allowance for several social groups, South Africans are perhaps among the most diverse racial/ethnic groups in Africa. This will not only enhance the understanding of females' experiences in higher education but also update practices and policies to promote an all-inclusive population of females.

2.1.1.10 PATRIARCHY

The Many faces of discrimination refers to the harmful and sometimes dangerous actions of some based on negative prejudice that is expressed in escalating levels of violence to others, ranging from spoken abuse to genocide, according to the seminal research of Allport (1954). Discrimination is fueled by stereotype threat and fear and is expressed as racism, sexism, ageism, classism, or able-ism. Professional discrimination speaks to people's unfair and unethical treatment based on race, sex, age, religion, health, socioeconomic status, and class. It looks like harassment, preferential hiring practices, wrongful terminations, intentional demotions, or unjustly denied promotions, to name a

few. One of the real dangers of racial discrimination that people of color experience is racial trauma or race-based stress. Experiences of discrimination compounded with fear of a real or perceived threat can lead to symptoms that mirror those of posttraumatic stress disorder (Comas-Díaz et al. 2019). Black women have to manage their identities of people of color and as women when navigating society and leadership.

Findings also brought out the issue women's experiences of patriarchy in Higher Education Institution. Thandi articulated that as a female academic leader, she has experience patriarchy:

"It has impacted my upward mobility and affected my academic output. I have experienced male supremacy, disempowerment, and disrespect at work because of patriarchy. Patriarchy has impacted on my upward mobility and continue to deprive me and other females from ascending into executive positions".

Rose explained how she felt about patriarchy:

The the reigning patriarchal environment does not only impact on my academic output but also on their intellectual and emotional wellbeing and my persononality".

Trimeira explained that"

"...it is a known fact in my department that if you are a woman you must know your place... that is, you are a woman and therefore you are a subordinate, irrespective of your rank and qualifications."

Thabsile explained that her experience nearly made her quit her job:

"I have experienced a situation where I decided to further my studies and he pretended to support me but at the time when I was about to taste success, he dumped me. If you want to be in good books of these males, you must ensure that you remain less qualified than them, those who seem knowledgeable are enemies to male leaders to be specific. Obstacles to prevent success are always placed on one's way."

Angeline was once embarrassed in a meeting by a male colleague:

"The male colleagues in my department once told me to shut up not only in meetings because my challenging issues were blocking my upward mobility. I considered that to be unfair, for the reason that promotion should be based on

known criteria and on how thoroughly one debates academic issues and perhaps treads on some sensitive toes”.

In South Africa, we experienced a long history of patriarchal leadership not only in the domains of politics, economics and culture but also in the sphere of higher education (Kiamba 2008: 8). In this regard, many females seeking senior leadership in higher-education institutions experience the familiar “hitting of the glass ceiling”.

Interviews conducted with females who have experienced patriarchy exposed that patriarchy is the order of the day in some departments within the institutions under study. Eight of the females in the study have experienced this oppression from male colleagues, seemingly for the sole purpose of safeguarding male dominance and female obedience and compliance.

Miroiu and Andreescu (2010: 45) argues that patriarchy is part of the organisation of institutions and everyday practices. Miroiu and Andreescu (ibid) highlights the point that patriarchal organisations make men, at any level of society, ‘bosses’ of females. The supposition is that patriarchy has been purposefully institutionalised to entrench and toughen men’s power base and supremacy in the workplace.

The findings of the study led to the following enlightenment of the experiences of females and the effects of patriarchy on both upward mobility and academic output. Generally, the data revealed that an unfriendly academic environment prevails in respect of female leaders. Females are victimised through the patriarchal culture, which in this study has shown, is secure by cultural and gender stereotypes. This does not suggest that institutions of higher learning in other settings are immune from this tendency. The findings also suggest that females are reduced to the position of subordinates through male supremacy, and they are disempowered, disrespected and patterned insensitivity to their issues.

Patriarchy has emerged as a barrier to females’ upward mobility, as demonstrated by the fact that men exercise control by excluding females from participating in activities that would result in promotion. It is also clear from the findings that patriarchy does not tolerate opposition, and as a result, females who oppose it are reprimanded or are labelled defiant

or abnormal. Patriarchy thus deprives females of the opportunity to benefit from prevailing promotion policies as men interfere with these to increase their superiority. Patriarchy affects the research output and the self-esteem of females as it affects their psychological wellbeing.

The findings revealed that some female leaders in UoTs experienced male hegemony, disempowerment, and disrespect of females. Another finding is that patriarchy influences females' upward mobility and denies them the promotion opportunities they deserve. The participants also felt that the ruling patriarchal setting does not only impact their academic productivity but also their intellectual and emotional wellbeing.

These findings indicate that institutions of Higher Education must take stock of their employment policies and conduct impact studies on the workforce; by so doing they will be able to recognise misconduct or injustices directed towards females.

2.1.1.11 INTERSECTIONALITY OF RACE AND GENDER

Racism, sexism, and classism at the societal level pervades throughout all levels of the education system, and conversely, schooling processes reproduce social inequality.

Nellie explained that:

“Even though government and institution’s policies serve to protect females from racial discrimination and gender discrimination, anti-discrimination policies fail to understand how black women’s multiple identities crisscross to leave them vulnerable to the racism and sexism and other forms of oppression. Society’s deeply entrenched stereotypes and controlling images of black women, black children, and black people all together along with societal expectations of girls and women in general transverse to shape perceptions of black females”.

Rose stated that patriarchy:

“The core ideas of intersectionality are social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice”.

Angeline stated that:

“White women experience racism in ways not always the same as black women and sexism in ways not always paralleled to experiences of white women, antiracism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms”

However, Collins and Bilge (2016: 2) explained that “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences,” and further stated that, “Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves”.

For Black women navigating identity, “race does not exist outside of gender . . . and gender does not exist outside of race” (Edwards and Esposito 2019: 12) as such, they face the dual discrimination of the of racism and sexism. The overlap or interaction of the various categories of identity discrimination is referred to as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989). Studies have found that the intersection of racism and sexism in the workplace can result in biases that alter the perceptions of Black women’s competencies thus limiting their ascension into leadership (Blake, Butler, Lewis and Darensbourg 2011: 95). This inter-sectionality has led to more examination and critique for Black women in administrative leadership, making it more difficult for them to succeed (Guidroz and Berger 2009: 65).

Intersectionality has the prospects of a fact-finding tool to transform higher education into a social location that offers people, mostly those from historically marginalised backgrounds, more justifiable chances for economic and social flexibility, in a society that has traditionally been characterised by major social inequality (Rockenbach and Morin 2013: 660). Higher education scholars have recently turned to intersectionality as a lens to explore how multiple social identities across different institutional contexts shape educational processes and outcomes. This research amalgamation aims to find out how higher education can be framed to further irradiate interlocking systems of power, privilege, and domination to shape higher education’s equity and opportunity for all females with social identities.

Nelly:

“The intersectionality lens provide devotion to both structure and identity in the replication of inequality. Intersectionality is mainly appropriate for framing the understanding of diversity among South Africans because it recognises that individuals can hold both privileged and marginalised identities and that these identities affect how I experience my social life, political life, and economic life, and my higher education life.”

Sibongile:

“In higher education, the work performed by females is automatically devalued and classified as sub-standard, worse, if the female is black.” Black females are overloaded with work and there are always high expectations placed upon them. That is why mostly, black females work harder yet are expected to fail. This is a strategy to keep the female in the office and away from communal tasks and networks that might develop her.”

Rose

“As a female leader, I feel that I am continuously forced to choose between a feminist identity and that of my cultural background.”

Thandi

“Being a female provided opportunities for challenging dominant practices as I began to understand multiple identities at work, though demonstrating that intersectionality can lead to the buildup of an advantage as well as hindrance in relation to individual uniqueness such as gender and ethnicity, and a radical identity such as feminist.”

Rose spoke of the critical race theory and explained how it places her experiences as a black female leader at the centre of this study. She spoke about established racism as a central factor affecting leadership outcomes, advancing social change, and identifying the intersectionality of groupings such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, language, and citizenship status in shaping life opportunities. The female leaders in this study are increasingly navigating into senior leadership positions. However, multiple social

identities have been a challenge. These female leaders have to understand how these multiple social identities relate and interconnect.

The data from the respondents above clearly show that females face leadership challenges more than white men. However, the data also reveal that the particular challenges that females face are different in nature. White females suffer agency penalties because agentic behaviour disturbs expressive and prescriptive stereotypes. Black females do not suffer an agency penalty because they are not subject to the same descriptive or prescriptive communal stereotypes as white females, nor do they represent the same threat that black men do. Even though black females are not disciplined for being direct and assertive in their relational manner, they are punished for being ambitious power-seeking and self-promoting individuals. Moreover, they are also unduly punished for making mistakes in a leadership role. While this study focused on all females in South Africa, it is possible that other subgroups of females such as lesbians might suffer less agency penalty. Consistent with this idea, research has shown that 'asexual' females are not prone to the same backlash as 'feminised' females (Rudman and Glick 2001). Given both the significance and the complexity of the present findings, it is critical that future research examine the intersectionality of various social categories to get a broader picture of the dynamic ways in which social group membership affects one's prospects of attaining leadership roles and the constraints that might face people who occupy these roles.

5.3.3 THEME 3 LEADERSHIP ASPIRATION AND SUPPORTING MECHANISMS AVAILABLE TO FEMALE LEADERS

Leadership aspiration is defined as the personal interest in reaching a leadership position and the determination to accept the offer to take over such a position (Chandler 2011: 5) argue that there is a psychological linkage between the person and the employing organization that can inspire rather than weaken female leadership aspiration. This linkage is the connection between the individual and the organization and it is called organizational identification (Ibid). Organizational identification is defined as "a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own" (Ibid: 13).

Explaining about her capabilities, Rose said:

“if our universities gave us [women] support and encouragement, we would work as hard as we can, really blossom!”

Pamela explained how she sees herself as a female leader in her position as manager,

“I like to think of myself as a gardener . . . watering the flowers, helping them flourish and grow, all I need is support and a team that believes in my abilities to lead them and also to be an example to young women out there”.

Organizational identification can thus stimulate women’s leadership aspiration, which in sequence can trigger and increase women’s leadership participation at the top jobs. Women with high organisatioal identification who reach the top can serve as role models by possessing and displaying organisatioal identification, which can bring more women to attain OID and thus lead them to leadership aspiration as well (Fritz and Knippenberg 2017: 1018).

2.1.1.12 DESCRIPTION OF CODES FOR BARRIERS THAT FEMALES FACE

The barrier subthemes comprised the following: not having a leadership identity, lack of opportunities or support, discouragement and sabotage, and diverse expectations for males and females. The subtheme, not having a leadership identity, was used to code stories of females limiting themselves because they did not see the prospect of being in a leadership role or did not see the likelihood of being a leader while continuing to be authentic. Passages coded as lack of opportunity and support were about females not being offered leadership roles or requested to apply for leadership roles or prospects. Stories were also about men being well networked in a fashion that gave them access to leadership opportunities via acquaintances while a female who was just as qualified was disregarded. Descriptions of discouragement and sabotage included understated as well as direct disheartening comments and acts of sabotage.

While the former barrier (lack of opportunity and support) included passive occasions, discouragement and sabotage was a theme that demonstrated active examples from people in these females’ lives. Passages coded as different expectations for men and

females mirrored expectations and standards that were at times held by the females themselves (internal expectations) and in other cases were common social norms (external expectations) that females would not be able to execute well in a leadership role. Some stories echoed the experience that females have to perform at higher levels than their male counterparts did in order to be accepted and considered competent.

2.1.1.13 DESCRIPTION OF CODES FOR SOURCES OF SUPPORT THAT FEMALES IDENTIFY

The subthemes connected with supports for a leadership role included formal development experiences, early leadership experiences, encouragement and support, and having a role model or a mentor. Tracks coded under the subtheme formal development experiences referenced a formal leadership development experience (e.g. a leadership growth programme or an official mentoring programme) that helped define success, increase skills, and improve self-confidence. Passages coded as early leadership experiences were stories of experiences that occurred while growing up or before entering into a formal leadership role that taught the interviewee something valuable about their leadership or leadership in general. The subtheme of encouragement and support includes any reference of support or encouragement the interviewee received from others at any point during the interviewee's profession. The having a role model subtheme was used to code passages in which the interviewee revealed having a person or event in her life that she learned from by observing or networking with that person.

2.1.1.14 DESCRIPTION OF CODES FOR NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF BEING IN A SENIOR LEADERSHIP ROLE.

The subthemes linked with the negative aspects of being in a leadership role comprised broad scope of the job, isolation, not fitting in-not being heard, the pressure of critical accountability, scrutiny and disapproval, and time demands of the job. The subtheme wide-ranging scope of the job represents the stress and pressure of having numerous, and sometimes-opposing roles within the institution as well as balancing varied stakeholder relationships. The passages coded at the subtheme of isolation included references to a decrease or lack of contact with social and/or professional networks. This is due to the nature of the role. Females who were initially in faculty positions noted that

colleagues tended to view the decision to go into administration as going to the 'dark side', and their previous peer group no longer trusted them.

Passages of not fitting in-not being heard included missing out on prospects because females are not part of the 'good old boys' network. Stories reflected feelings of not fitting in and missing out on decisions or conversations because the interviewee was not included or requested to participate. Interviewees also expressed the feeling that often a female can say something, but until a man says it, it is not acknowledged or recognised as a respectable idea. The subtheme pressure of ultimate accountability included references to forces that come with making challenging decisions and being blamed for everything within an institution. Passages in the subtheme scrutiny and criticism included females feeling continuously watched, interrogated, and criticised by others. The females often specified they felt like people were watching them with the supposition that they would certainly fail. Some interviewees shared stories about regularly having their qualifications questioned. Time demands of the job was the last subtheme within negative aspects of being in a leadership position. Passages comprised managing the long hours of the job and the stress of several roles (such as being a parent on one hand and leader on the other). Many females noted that female leaders tend to play more roles than a male leader would. For example, some female leaders mentioned the burden to personally attend social functions of institutions, whereas for married male leaders with a female spouse it was acceptable for the wife to play that position. This feeling of always being 'on', the increasing impact of extra roles, familial burdens, and a lack of individual time summarises the most common time demands and work-life alignment challenges in higher education.

2.1.1.15 DESCRIPTION OF CODES FOR POSITIVE ASPECTS OF BEING IN A SENIOR LEADERSHIP ROLE.

It was interesting to note that all the leaders spoke about the positive aspects of being in a leadership role. The positive roles included the following subthemes: having an influence on staff and students, making an impact in developing changes within the institution, broad scope of the job that stretches them to think outside the box, power, authority (irrespective of cultural barriers), and independence (having to decide), and being a role model to upcoming female leaders. Passages coded as having an influence

were about the interviewees' involvement in and engagement with the decision-making processes. The female leaders talked about the benefit of having a voice in meetings and being able to represent viewpoints, areas, or populations in situations where those viewpoints are not always present or deliberated. Stories associated with the subtheme making an impact showed that generating positive change was rewarding.

The stories involved changing someone's path for the better by opening doors and helping them, encouraging members of faculty and students, influencing higher education policy, and starting or changing institutional initiatives. Passages coded as broad scope of the job conveyed the role-based opportunities and connections that allowed them to have a more wide-ranging perspective. The subtheme power, authority, and autonomy were used to code passages that defined the benefits of having sufficient power to make and implement decisions. The subtheme being a role model was used to code passages that articulated the reward females felt from knowing that their presence in a leadership position acted as a source of encouragement for others.

2.1.1.16 ORGANISATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Leadership aspiration is defined as the personal interest in reaching a leadership position and the determination to accept the offer to take over such a position. Female leaders in this study argue that there is a psychological linkage between the person and the employing organization that can inspire rather than weaken female leadership aspiration. This linkage is the connection between the individual and the organization and it is called organizational identification. According to two female leaders in this study, organizational identification is defined as "a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own. Organisatioal identification is the cognitive perception of oneness with and belongingness to an organization where the individual defines either male or female with the organization in which he/she is an affiliate. It is a specific form of social identification where the person associates him/herself as a member to a particular professional organization and sees him/herself as psychologically interweaved with the destiny of the organization. Organizational identification according to one female leader is positively associated with several beneficial outcomes such as the attachment to an individual's workgroup and profession, job association,

organizational commitment as well as job and organizational satisfaction. These dynamics may also be related confrontational outcomes such as the intention to leave. Moreover, organizational identification is also associated with the motivation to behave in a way beneficial for the organization; due to this link to collective interests. One leader insisted that organizational identification is positively related to leadership aspiration since leadership itself aim is to collaboratively pursue collective objectives

A recent argument by Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Ristikari (2011: 125) that females do not advance because they do not try, is titled the 'ambition gap', the perceived propensity for females to choose family before work or to avoid opportunities that might interfere with their family. This argument, "The myth of the ideal worker: Does doing all the right things really get females ahead? Was questioned by Carter and Silva (2011: 2) in the *Catalyst's* report and all the respondents of this study. The study by Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell and Ristikari (2011: 125) involved over 3 000 MBA alumnae who stayed on a traditional career path and did not take leave for education, personal or family reasons. It summarised the myth that females did not ask for promotions. Nelly said:

"Females were more likely than men to ask for a variety of skill-building experiences, to proactively pursue training opportunities, and to make achievements noticeable, including asking for feedback and promotions".

These actions were not, however, reflected in their progression. The males and females in the study group who enthusiastically pursued advancement found different results. Twice as many males advanced to senior executive levels as females. Further, the study found little difference between the females who keenly requested advancement and those who were less proactive in their efforts, unlike men who found significant progression by asking for it.

Therefore, although females are commonly perceived to have made great strides towards equality in achieving senior positions, the fact remains that females still do not share equal representation in senior leadership roles. Executive females are atypical. Multifaceted, inescapable and ongoing barriers limit the progress of millions of females who wish to move into positions of power in higher education (Schmidt (2015: 812). The structural, prejudicial, and discriminatory hurdles these females face, are often subtle and

misunderstood, creating a complex, pervasive, and multi-faceted labyrinth that frustrates any progress they may make. To correct this imbalance, institutions of higher learning must distinguish the study from the myths and act accordingly.

2.1.1.17 MENTORING

The females in this study described experiences, both positive and negative, and the contribution mentoring experiences had on their development as leaders. Most respondents referenced the scarcity of female leaders who could serve as role models during their careers in education. Thabsile expressed that some white men exclusively granted her opportunities to be mentored. Thabsile also explained that men either provided them with access to leadership opportunities or encouraged them to pursue a leadership position.

Most leaders interviewed did not have formal mentoring but felt an obligation to mentor others since they were beneficiaries of mentoring. All the females cited their previous experiences with mentoring as having had an effect upon their mentoring of others. Positive previous mentoring experiences invigorated a personal interest among each of the respondents in mentoring other people. Some of the females also commented on previous negative mentoring experiences or a lack of mentoring as influencing their interest in mentoring others.

Mentorship seemed to be an increasingly important feature of organisational development and appears to have benefited all the females in this study. The females interpreted mentorship to something that assisted them during their progression and as still relevant even today as they continue to face organisational challenges and need to be guided along the way. As stated, Joseph-Collins (2017: 4) females who are mentored tend to advance in their careers. The study's literature review suggested that there are different types of mentorship models such as formal and informal, structured and unstructured mentorship programmes. There are also different purposes and functions of mentors in the willingness of females to mentor others such as career, psychological and gender-related. The females in this study leaned towards unstructured mentorship over structured mentorship (Ragins and Cotton 1999: 529; Chao, Walz and Gardner 1992). There may be varied reasons, but Ragins and Scandura (1999: 420) contend that if there is a heavy

focus on negotiating anticipated outcomes, persons may choose not to mentor others. This is possibly due to the perceived unnecessary pressure or commitment to the mentoring relationship. Notably, none of the females in this study re-counted having structured mentorship relationships.

For all the females, their earlier experiences participating in mentoring relationships, especially as a beginner, influenced their mentoring of others later in their career. Five of the participants refer to their being drawn to specifically mentoring other females *linked to their previous experiences as beginners*. Hlobi emphasised this when stating:

“In my past, I didn’t have anyone mentoring me, I mean to make leadership easier, and I guess that is the reason why I chose to mentor new entrants into the department (especially females).”

Hlobi further revealed this same thought,

“I think the responsibility I feel is toward females because of my own experience because of the absence of females from my life.”

For Pamela, the experience of being mentored by the other females, older and more experienced, made her realise the importance of mentoring junior staff that were fraught with career decisions and career issues.

“I thought, if I did not pull up this ladder behind me, I have to continuously monitor the junior staff”.

Angeline revealed upon not having females before her when she took the leadership position and how it made her struggle with her role, and she too ensured that new staff are mentored and that to model career advancement. Thandi, the youngest participant, discussed the importance of having had female mentors earlier in her career and the motivation to provide that mentoring to other females. Since the 1990s, as discussed in the literature review of this study, there has been an increase in females achieving leader positions (e.g. Chief Executive Officers, University Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Directors) in different organisations including institutions of higher education. Therefore, it is understandable why Hlobi would want to mentor females based on her experiences of the lack of female role models early in her career. This historical perspective also

supports Rose's contention for access to more female leaders who helped by mentoring her and the ensuing influence of these female mentors on her career journey.

Eight of the ten females interviewed, expressed an interest in seeking collaboration, people and community as reasons for mentoring others. Each participant had an individual reason for mentoring. The females in this study mentioned teaming up with people as a reason for mentoring others, but also discussed mentoring as their duty and responsibility as leaders to help other females. What was noticed from the responses, was that white females felt comfortable being mentored by white males and females and black females felt more comfortable being mentored by black females. Only Thandi was mentored by her white friend. When asked why they chose people of their same colour, most of the respondents said there was no choice. It just happened and at the time when it was happening, they did not even think about race. Trimeira, stated that in her community, there were females of her race only, but she wouldn't blink an eye to mentor other races. Instead, she said:

"We all should be mentors and lift one another because if you are mentoring others, the respect that you develop for each other is priceless."

Hlobi was the only participant in the study who revealed the angle of spirituality rather than mentoring but felt that as a leader she feels obliged to take on mentoring roles as part of her institution's focus and a part of the general mission of higher education.

Hlobi also stated that she had reached a period in her life development where she felt it was time to mentor and acknowledge mentoring as a part of her identity but will never lose focus from her spirituality.

When asked to reflect upon the meanings of their mentoring experiences and mentor identity development, seven of the females remarked that they had not reflected upon that before the interview. Many of the females hesitated to think about these meanings and expressed emotions demonstrating the challenging nature of classifying these meanings. This was like their struggle to define pitfalls of mentoring relations and the time in their life when they experienced mentor identity development. Sibongile stated that:

"My mentors have certainly assisted me to become a stronger leader and better female leader. That is because nothing was sugar-coated. I was told the truth and I was first mentored and then told to dive in nonetheless because they will be there

to catch me if I drown. The barriers and obstacles were laid bare to me, and the choice was mine whether to take the baton or not. I chose to take it and now I have handed it over to numerous other females.”

Thandi was honest in that she wanted the senior position because she loved the salary and the fact that she had a whole team behind her. She thought she was not going to do a lot of work but as she started her senior leadership role, she realised that she needed to be more professional. She did not realise that on her own, but her mentor assisted her:

“The mentoring side helped me grow and change as a professional. So, mentoring has had great meaning to me because it has given me counsel at critical moments of my career. I learnt how to grow and develop a character that is appropriate to the everyday challenges of senior leadership roles, how to enlarge my vision, my ability to admit when I am wrong and hear different voices, how to stay motivated and focused on the ultimate goals are while being inclusive.”

Angeline’s experience was that:

“I gained knowledge and skills about myself and how I fitted myself into the business environment and into the university’s goals. I think mentoring is vital in building that image of your sense of self to be an effective leader.”

Nelly’s experience of mentoring was that:

“The mentoring relations have defined my professional identity and personality. The mentoring relationships also reinforced my sense of self that I could do and command a certain level of presence whilst doing it. It reaffirmed my sense that you can be kind and generous and have influence instantaneously...”

All the females in this study re-affirmed that mentoring as an experience improved their professional advancement from the perspective of an apprentice to where they are today.

Ten female leaders with leadership positions in higher-education institutions (UoT’s) were interviewed in this study regarding their leadership experiences. The interviews with the participants delivered understandings into the need for mentoring and answered the following question of this study: ‘How do personal and/or professional support networks influence the success of females in a senior position in higher education? What other factors do females leaders feel played a role in their leadership growth, either as a support

or as a barrier?’ The females in this study offered not only their experiences as apprentices but also their standpoints as mentors. In addition, they revealed their experiences with various mentoring relationships and their mentor personality formation.

As part of their career journeys, the study participants all spoke about having mentors who helped them through barriers and in realising their leadership qualities within higher education. Since all the participants had not planned for their careers to take them to such great heights, they were assisted by other females to realise that all is possible, and that life is all about challenges and barriers but there are ways of manoeuvring through those challenges and barriers. The main barriers cited by the females included: gender, credentials, and family and children. While the females acknowledged the benefits of participation in both formal and informal mentoring, they seemed to struggle the most with identifying the drawbacks of informal mentoring relationships. Their intuitions exposed that the structure of the relationship may equally be a benefit and pitfall of all types of mentoring.

The key meanings of mentoring experiences as expressed by the participants included: individual upgrading and professional development, helping others, gratification, and a connection to people. Helping others was also stressed as a meaning of mentor character, in addition to mentor identity having meaning in one’s leadership role and as a duty and responsibility as a leader within higher education. Based on the reflection of the females during each interview, the significance of mentoring experiences and mentor identity may be framed and recognised as a person grows older and reaches higher levels of leadership positions.

This study has broadened the understanding of mentoring relationships and the meanings females hold concerning their mentoring experiences and mentor identity. This may assist more females in realising their own meanings of mentoring and mentor identity and broadening an understanding of the impact that mentoring has on the individual and professional development of other females seeking leadership positions in universities. Understanding the meanings of one’s mentoring experiences and identity as a mentor may inspire more females to enter formal mentoring programmes and support others through informal mentoring. Increasing the mentoring of females within universities could aid more female apprentices in attaining leadership positions within their departments and moving closer to the capability of ultimately mentoring other females to do the same.

This is echoed by Sherman, Munoz and Pankake (2008: 254) who suggest that if females who in leadership positions identify and practice the roadblocks in front of them; they need to aggressively seek ways to help other females overcome to overcome them.

It is clear that the females in this study were mentored more by females than males. That is why Bouffard, Boileau and Vezeau (2001: 589) argues that men's ability to successfully mentor females depends to a great extent on their acceptance of the challenges that females excessively face in developing their careers. Mentors who are experienced in adapting to the gender-related needs of mentees will contribute to females' retention and growth in academia; enrich the leadership capacity of universities and their careers and spread out their own legacies. Participants of this study saw mentorship as an appropriate means of gaining support and guidance in universities and of achieving career success. All participants communicated the need for mentoring as a support system to lessen their often-hostile environments and as an effective managing strategy. They expressed the need for female mentors in particular.

All the participants saw mentoring, coaching and/or sponsoring as effective ways to increase the number of females in senior leadership positions and inspire females to pursue senior positions in higher education.

Through these mentoring experiences, it is clear that mentoring is a valuable resource to equip female leaders with skills during their leadership journeys. Therefore, in order for more females to serve as leaders, careful efforts need to be made in establishing or encouraging the idea of making mentorship an important part of the university's structure. Mentoring should be part of the overall university's citizenship behaviour. Such careful efforts can only have positive effects on the growth of female leaders to serve higher-education institutions, possibly affect the rise of females in other leadership areas and create a university that plans for leadership successfully.

2.1.1.18 NEED FOR COACHING

As educational organizations are seeking methods that will increase the performance and effectiveness of their leaders, executive coaching appears to be among the differentiator that sets the best organizations apart from others (Reiss 2015: 14). Thabsile explained that:

“higher education leadership can also benefit by initiating leadership coaching programs into its system, this, on the one hand, will help increase women’s leadership aspiration and on the other hand, will help reduce the hurdles and biases that still exist in these kind of educational organizations”.

Vital coaching competencies as meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards, trust and intimacy, active listening, powerful questioning, direct communication, creating awareness, designing actions, planning and goal setting, and managing progress and accountability are vital relationship components of the coach and the coachee with which can lead the coachee to overcome barriers and reach the full potential of her development (Reiss 2015). Higher education systems need this powerful approach to facilitate and support women leaders, develop their performance, increase the levels of employee engagement, reduce attrition and improve team working and collaboration (Reiss 2015: 16). This approach can increase the organization's communal characteristics, which as mentioned earlier, are essential to leadership and leaders who incorporate communal traits in their leadership schema are more effective than purely agentic leaders (Gartzia and van Knippenberg 2016: 458).

Pamela commented that:

Today’s leaders need to be coached more on entrepreneurship, so that they can focus on innovation. This way organizations will be more prepared to cultivate and incorporate strategies and a vision necessary to enable institutions to improve their performance and create and maintain a competitive advantage”.

Rose added that:

“To succeed, a leader needs to create a strong network of people ready to work together. Thus, leveraging the infinite power of internal and external networks of colleges is what needs to be integrated into the leadership style of higher education today. This way higher educational institutions can be in a competitive position in this market. Leadership capability must be tactically designed and implemented to enable transformation, which is imperative for every academic institution”.

Hlobi added that:

The individuals who lead universities hold the most important role of educating and shaping the future societies; hence, a strong and diverse higher education system is imperative to contribute to a country's ability to compete in the global marketplace. For innovation and productivity to occur, diverse and inclusive leadership and workforce are needed. However, diversity is lacking in the high ranks of higher education systems today due to lack of coaching”.

Nelly stated that:

Every year her university hosts and organizes regional and national leadership development programs for mid- and senior level female academic and administrators who have the leadership aspiration to advance into the higher ranks of higher education leadership. My university has also started this year to organize leadership development training for women in higher education leadership via its extended network of female volunteer leaders throughout the country, this is an exciting initiative indeed”.

Rose explained that:

All higher education institutions in South Africa need to start and promote a national awareness of the significance of gender equality in higher education leadership and to suggest methods and practices to help attain gender parity in senior leadership positions”.

Hlobi concluded by saying”

Women can do this and are needed in the top ranks to help bring higher educational organizations at higher levels via their contributions, as women leaders bring diverse strengths, perspectives, and innovation to the exercise of leadership; therefore, there should be more networking, mentoring and coaching of female leaders. Hence, organizations and institutions can improve higher education leadership via increasing women developmental schemas, via increasing organizational identification, which in turn can increase women's aspiration to leadership positions and encourage diversity concerning culture and

gender. The psychological linkage with the organization can trigger the desire of women to strive for the top and help shape tomorrow's new workforce and new aspiring leaders for a promising and idealized society".

2.1.1.19 BUILDING RESILIENCE

Leadership and the method individuals use to lead has transformed in recent years. This shift in leadership style has evolved since women have been actively participating in higher leading roles. In the past, leadership was more of a top-down, hierarchical approach, where leaders made all the decisions, and their power of authority was prevalent. Today, leadership is more about collaboration, communication, sharing of power in the decision-making, improving relationships, and a democratic philosophy is contemplated as more ethical and appropriate where everybody's opinion is valued, shared, considered, and a communal environment is cultivated and encouraged (Kezar 2014: 120).

In a study comparing similarities and differences in the ways women and men lead, Hengesen (1990: 582) concluded that women work at a steady pace, they are comfortable with unexpected difficulties, they care about activities not related to work, they cultivate and preserve professional and social networks and relationships, and more than anything; women are resilient (Ibid: 585), which encompasses a social perspective in their leadership schema. An ethical angle is at the core with a scope to benefit society as a whole and create an environment for information sharing with others. "Sharing was also facilitated by their view of themselves as being in the center of things rather than at the top; it's more natural to reach out than to reach down" (ibid: 619). That is the female notion of being in the middle of things and being connected to those around her, "bound as if invisible strands or threads" (Ibid: 809).

Manoeuvring well, despite potentially hostile challenges and bias in the male-dominated work setting, was one of the qualities that these women leaders portrayed. Various orientations, attitudes and obvious strategies emerged from the participants' narratives. The participants used them in order to allow them to cope, modify and continue motivated in their male-dominated occupation.

The purpose of this theme was to explore the experiences in the professional and personal lives of females in higher education leadership to better appreciate the role of

resilience females have when faced with difficulties. Females in this study perceived themselves to be value-driven and displayed persistence and determination by focusing on priorities until success was attained. The females tirelessly refused to give up. Having the means of a strong personal and professional support base at their advantage during tough times was important to the success of the female leaders.

There is no doubt that as female leaders in universities of technology, these females are living in an ever multifaceted and challenging world. This theme explores the concept of resilience during challenging times or in extremely pressurised environments. Individual resilience is not only about strength through difficulties and hardships, but also the ability to develop and adapt because of interference, to move forward stronger than before. During the journeys of these females, this study hopes to understand and learn ways in which these females manage challenging situations more effectively and build resilience in themselves and their team. Resilience is typically only talked about from a personal perception, but universities are highly assimilated networks that also need strategic resilience. Therefore, the females will take us through resilience at both personal and strategic levels.

The literature on successful leaders facing harsh working conditions and that on the development of resiliency provided a perspective on which to investigate the resiliency of leaders. The expectation was that the stories of successful leaders' ability to bounce back from hardships have the characteristics identified in the data regarding resiliency development in female leaders. Collecting the stories of these successful female leaders permitted an analysis to identify what experiences, characteristics, relationships and supportive conditions contributed to their ability to be resilient in their professional roles.

The female leaders' voices as individuals as well as a collective described the strengths, achievements, the role of hardship, and the motivation for these females to continue in the position. Taking the path less travelled curved into a journey into the unknown, yet these ten gutsy and brave females continue to persevere seeing their work as a calling from a higher power. Images of success for students keep them committed and on the right path. These females have a keen sense of self, tenacity and appreciation. Their appreciation of their subordinates, mentors and networks in their personal and professional lives was evident in their resilience. They set sail withstanding many storms for the sake of their passion for serving students. They know where they need to go,

leading with their hearts and depending on their values to guide them in their role as leaders in universities.

The female leaders absorb a great deal of stress from the structures in which they work, no matter how much they might love their careers. They work hard to dispel the cultural stereotypes by over-working, over-achieving, and over-functioning. They are stretched to the limit from living their everyday lives as females who care sincerely, but who are not always cared for by the broader culture. The female leader needs to remember that what she does as a leader, stems from who she is as a leader and that leadership identity starts on the inside. Resilience as a trait or model is good, but these females should remember that too many of them are ‘cracking’ on the inside (Catalyst 2015a).

The participants were aware that their capacity for staying the course and handling difficult situations increased with experience. One participant described becoming stronger with each round of adversity. All participants indicated that they had never experienced a state of affairs where they were willing to give up and abandon the cause but expressed the importance of staying the course with a focus on the goals of the university. A spiritual quality resonated throughout the interview with Hlobi who indicated a strong spiritual connection to her professional roles as a Christian leader.

5.3.4 THEME 4 GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite gender inequality in higher education’s rocky start, colleges and universities have put in a valiant effort to increase their campuses’ diversity, and in turn increase gender equality in the workplace by producing qualified graduates. Where women were once relegated to separate institutions, now they help to run some of the same schools that excluded them. The progress toward gender equality in the workplace overall mirrors the progress toward gender equality in higher education. More female university graduates mean more women qualified for leadership positions, not just in higher ed but also in the corporate world, nonprofit organizations, the financial sector, and other centers of power traditionally dominated by men. Though women’s representation at the top of higher education leadership for elite four-year research institutions has yet to catch up to men’s,

it's only a matter of time. With student body demographics at colleges and universities becoming ever more diverse, recruiting women, particularly Black women and other women of color, into senior administration roles will be a priority going forward. In the near future, expect to see a reflection of the trend that led to women becoming the majority of college graduates continuing to play out for women in higher education leadership.

Nelli explained that there is need for a:

“top-down commitment to building a pipeline for women to access key growth positions. This can be done with efforts including ensuring half of all candidates are women, posting salary ranges and committing to fair pay. For example, Salesforce has commissioned salary reviews and used them to adjust the salaries of employees who were not receiving fair pay, which has turned out to be mostly women”.

Thabsile commented that

“Universities must ensure equal opportunity to gain the skills, experience and mentorship needed to encourage women in leadership positions, have programmes that enable employees to enrol in training, among others”.

Hlobi explained that:

“Universities should improve on their supportive policies around parental leave, including offering paternity leave so both genders can share caregiving responsibilities and make commitments to ensure paid parental leave”.

Trimeira explained the need for:

“Flexible, family-friendly arrangements can also enable more women in leadership positions. For example, most traditional universities, offers a range of flexible and remote work options, including allowing employees to work remotely some or all at the time at various hours, as part of the company's efforts to increase the share of women in its workforce”.

And lastly, Lucinda suggested that:

“her university must focus on creating inclusive work cultures and combatting unconscious biases that hold women back and make efforts to avoid systems that tend to favour men, such as self-reporting for promotion”.

In an effort to level the playing field, rules and regulations have been legislated by government in an attempt to reduce bias, eliminate discrimination and eradicate sexual harassment. While progress has been made, it remains an uphill battle. Women continue to experience barriers, challenges and prejudice that impact their paths and progress.

5.4 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

All the findings of the study were the outcome of coding the information collected through semi-structured interviews, identifying themes that emerged from the data and grouping of the themes to form descriptions, and answers, to the research questions posed.

The findings and discussions of this study indicate that the attainment of voice and support for females in senior positions in higher education is a grave challenge that these females need to overcome. The challenges that have been acknowledged include questions around the females' aptitude to lead, their leadership styles, their place in the work environment and the creation of the female's role as the nurturer and carer at home who should not be involved in serious decision-making dialogues in higher education. The resilience theory that has been used highlights that this is the frame, within which females in the work environment, not only in academia, are placed. It states that when females step into the work environment, they need to think of these societal constructions around femininity and then shape their existing experiences around these constructions. Important in this theory, as highlighted, is that females should embrace these constructions and use them as an empowerment tool that would give them support within the work environment. Through the responses of the females in this study, it has been recognised that such a standpoint is possible, in which the females feel that they can use the undesirable arrangements formed about them by the male-dominated world to advance their agenda of being the means of change. Therefore, as the objectives of the study were stipulated, the current study has effectively drawn on the experiences of the females who partook in the study to understand the challenges they face when they get

to occupy senior positions as well as finding and accepting the mechanisms of resistance that they use when faced with their negative experience.

This study explored the personal and professional experiences of female leaders in higher education. By means of storytelling, this study provided a platform for female leaders to share their lived experiences along their educational and leadership journeys. A summary of the shared elements across the multiple stories are presented to highlight barriers and catalytic agents amongst the female leaders, as well as a union of their shared experiences that was of assistance in shaping their leadership journeys. Their stories provide an overview of what female leaders experience along their higher education senior leadership routes. Recommendations for policy, practice, and further research are presented on how female leaders manoeuvre through their leadership journeys. Overall, conclusions and implications were consequences of the findings related to the research question of the study.

The path to the seniority for each female was filled with obstacles and barriers that required navigation. These obstacles are fixed on ethnicity, gender bias, sexism, race and skill development. Each female leader was obliged to find a way to improve her leadership skills as they were appointed to their positions and were expected to fix the mess they found there. Each participant had refined her academic experience, joined academic committees and had at some point, undertaken unpaid positions to get to where they are today. Each female leader received support from different types of mentors. However, for the most part, each female steered her leadership path based on her individual intuition. There was no manual, instruction or handbook. Most of the females were supported by their families who played a vital role in crafting an individual support system. In the end, each female leader created her own way around each obstacle through individual decisions.

In some instances, the females experienced gender stereotypes and misunderstandings about their ability that turn out to be barriers to the advancement of their careers. Other challenges faced by the participants relate to process management, gender issues and organisational politics. Universities should realise that the issues and studies of females are not just about numbers, but the bigger picture is in the re-making of leadership. New leadership models need to be implemented to ensure that universities are progressive

and have all-inclusive practices at all levels of any university. This is because ground-breaking ideas are not the product of a single gender or sector of society. The South African government should also fast track the implementation of equality laws as progress has not really been as expected. The issues of racism also need to be dealt with since a racial environment automatically demoralises certain people with capabilities.

Important skills were required to navigate through cultural and organisational barriers. One of those skills is the labyrinth as described by Eagly and Carli (2007: 225). The description of the labyrinth in Eagly and Carli's research is supported by the findings of this study. The series of stops and starts with turns and re-routing, as the way females move to the organisational senior position were evident in the three most senior female leader's paths. These females did not make career moves in a direct route. Gender bias may cause females to be held to the highest standards. When applying for senior leadership positions, each of these females needed to make sure, her qualifications and credentials surpassed the criteria. Each female needed to fill the job application with a scale of academic and leadership experience because she knew any holes in her application would be a reason to eliminate her from the aspirant pool. Yet, skill development was not easy for some of the females to access as they grew up in an environment that was more political than academic. Some of the females had to take unpaid positions within a university in order to gain access to academia. The responsibilities of children and family make it challenging to commit to a university's challenging position. These females through continued determination navigated through these barriers successfully. None of the participants regretted her career path, although they all stated that the journey was not easy, but they had no regrets whatsoever. In the end, their success at navigating the labyrinth was a celebration of their struggles, sweat and hard work.

The ensuing conclusion is based on the findings of this study. Females in general are underrepresented in senior leadership positions in UoTs in South Africa. There are persisting barriers and obstacles resulting from culture and socialisation that keep females with high-level educational qualifications, outside of academic leadership. Universities are also not prioritising barriers and issues that make females in leadership comfortable in their positions. What is sad is that females face difficulties in all spheres –

at the family, societal and organisational levels. There is a lot of talking pertaining the issues that challenge females in leadership but there is no action.

I also conclude that the females who are in senior leadership posts are also to blame for female under-representation in leadership. This under-representation causes female networks not to be functional and successful as there is so much talk about the challenges and less talk about the successes. Female leaders discourage fellow females from being involved in leadership by continuously talking about barriers, which are being navigated successfully by others.

Although individual, societal and organisational factors are connected and are to be blamed for negative female experience in leadership, society's culture, norms and values are to some extent the most influential factor. Society's culture, principles and customs affect the rules and regulations for recommending or appointing female leaders. Society has low expectations of females, which fuels the minds of those who practise bias along gender lines. Similarly, society socialises females to be less confident, and always puts female roles more on the family than on work. This makes some females to feel inferior and make them comfortable in their inferior positions. The success of a female as a leader is not celebrated and instead, such females are labelled as Queen B's and arrogant. The fact that most female leaders in UoTs are appointed leaders when there is a crisis is another way of hoping that she will fail, and a masculine male will rescue the situation. Hence, an all-inclusive view of society, university and individuality ought to be used to gain an understanding of leadership experiences female in UoTs.

Participants acknowledged what for them was the toughest challenge in the senior leadership position phase even though two did not find any one challenge as most difficult. The responses exposed that half the participants acknowledged sexism, intersectionality, racism, social class and the masculinist culture as the most difficult challenges. The remainder cited isolation, dealing with staff and the challenge of balancing home and work as their most difficult challenges. Due to the diverse nature of the participants, the black females were more vocal than the other races and they all narrated the challenge of developing relationships with the white race.

Although the study was on females in leadership, all the participants were concerned about the few females taking up or being promoted into senior positions. To me, it felt like

there was a cry of loneliness. One of the focal recommendations of this study is that related reasons for the scarcity of females in very senior positions in UoTs should move away from individual and person focused factors. The need for a focus on structural or policy implementation and monitoring was also mentioned (Kanji and Cahusac 2015: 1415). It was indeed concluded that the logical narratives female leaders produced of themselves in their worlds offer a valuable point of entry and expose hegemonic dialogues, hence power inequalities (Savigny 2014:794).

It was obvious that the female participants of this study saw experiences of hardship as opportunities for growth and advancement. The females described experiences of exclusion, isolation and timidity among male colleagues as well as an awareness concerning their role as a female in a male-dominated senior leadership position. All the females who participated in the study shared stories concerning the endless difficulties and hardships experienced in the position but were quick to demonstrate their resilience. Hyde (2014: 375) describes leadership resilience as follows: “even in the toughest of times, educational leaders develop an unshakably show of ability to recover and learn from a crisis and they confront it head-on. Resilience is not an all-or-nothing, permanent characteristic but it is a virtual concept”. Some female leaders are rather more resilient than others are and have no desire of stepping down or allowing challenges to overcome and cut short their leadership aspirations and journey. Resilience is also recurring.

The resilience cycle, according to Lipton (2015: 65), commences with a stage known as normal conditions or homeostasis. During this stage, events are moving along with no major interruptions or difficulties. A hostile situation occurs, and conditions possibly decline, putting the female leader into phase two, the weakening phase of the resilience cycle. During this phase, leaders may blame others or blame themselves. During the interviews, several female leaders described their struggle with blaming themselves and learning over time not to take hostile situations personally. They stressed the importance of learning from experiences being well prepared for the next hostile situation. According to McReynolds 2014: 5), if one fails to reverse the undesirable challenge or negative behaviours, then one moves towards dysfunctionality. However, if one reverses the undesirable attitude and behaviour and has a more optimistic set of responses, one advances to the adapting phase (O'Connor 2015: 310).

The results of this study are alarmingly disturbing and should be tackled as a matter of urgency as few positive stories were communicated by the female leaders. Regardless of the extent to which females have proven themselves, higher-education institutions in South Africa are still gender biased. Some of those barriers are second generation gender biases and not easy to identify. Acknowledgement should be realised by universities that females are consensus makers and having them in senior leadership positions could support in alleviating some of the problems faced by universities. University councils should force their executive managers to implement and monitor equity plans to ensure that females are empowered to lead to their full potential. Some universities need to be forced to abide by government policies that protect female leaders in higher education. The females in the study hardly spoke about the policies and only one respondent spoke about the fact that those policies are a joke, and no one took them seriously as they do not get to the roots of issues facing female leaders. Females in this study felt that they were navigating the leadership journey on their own with support from their mentors and families. Most of the respondents also spoke about support that universities give to female leaders to be able to deal with challenges instead of removing the barriers.

5.5 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The research questions were discussed as they related to the responses from the participants during the interviews. The results for the first research question, which addressed the experiences of the female leaders was. Research question two focused on the challenges that the female leaders encountered. This section was the longest and there were many sub-themes that came up from the main theme. The third research question which wanted to find out if there are any supporting mechanisms available to female leaders to acquire leadership skills. The participants explained that there is a gap in this regard.

The findings and discussions in this paper indicate that gaining voice and agency for women in senior positions in higher education is a serious challenge that these women need to surmount. The challenges that have been identified include questions around the women's ability to lead, their leadership styles, their place in the work environment and the construction of the woman's role as nurturer at home and a carer who should not be

involved in serious decision-making discourses in higher education. The standpoint theory that has been used highlights that this is the frame within which women in the work environment, not only in academia, are placed. It states that when women step into the work environment, they need to remember these societal constructions around femininity and then shape their current experiences around these constructions. Important in this theory, as highlighted, is that women should embrace these constructions and use them as an empowerment tool that would give them agency within the work environment.

Through the responses of the women in this study, it has been established that such a standpoint is possible, in which the women feel that they can use the negative schemes formed about them by the male dominated world to advance their agenda of being agents of change. Therefore, as the objectives of the study were stipulated, the current study has successfully drawn on the experiences of the academic women who participated in the study to understand the challenges they face when they get to occupy senior positions as well as finding and understanding the mechanisms of resistance that they use in the face of their negative experience. And lastly, the participants explained that government legislative framework is not monitored, however institutional policies were slowly improving in favour of females in most institutions.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the results of the analysis of the data collected from the respondents as regards their experiences as senior female academic and administration leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa. Therefore, this chapter will deliver a summary of the study, implications, recommendations, and steps for further research in this chapter. I draw from theories of gendered organisations and feminist standpoint theory. Using data from Chapter 4 that informed the analysis, I discuss how the findings inform the research questions, and show how the research fits into the ongoing deliberations in the literature about females in leadership. To conclude, I offer recommendations.

6.1 CHALLENGES

Drawing from the data presented, the female leaders spoke a lot about the challenges they faced as female leaders; citing gender issues whereby they complained that most of their institutions have no gender policy and the fact that there are too many gender stereotypes in the management levels of universities in South Africa. The female leaders who took part in this study outlined that, since top management in South African universities are largely staffed by men, the selection criteria is crafted in a way that fits male candidates. The women also quoted that selection processes and expected qualities of the leaders resemble a masculine figure, something that women do have. This concurs with available literature, which indicates that women often find themselves disadvantaged by selection processes that are mostly formulated by men, who fail to come up with a system-based strategy that favours both genders (Gandhi and Sen 2020: 47). There were also issues of the lack of support that women leaders need and this results in the females being seen as failures because support like coaching is not given to them (Awang-Hashim, Norman and Kaur 2017:3).

The research concludes that discrimination has been a further factor hindering the progression of women to top management positions in South African universities. Five of the six faculty deans who were interviewed experienced discrimination at one point in their efforts and endeavours to be in management positions. The discrimination included being seen as weak and ineffective just because of one's gender. This resulted in women being required to prove their abilities twice as much as their male counterparts, lessening their chances of becoming leaders.

Women experience discouragement to an extent that they end up being reluctant to take leadership positions just because of their gender. The women shared that there were times they were discouraged by family, colleagues and friends from taking up the position of dean. The research also concludes that reporting to a male boss can be a fertile ground for discrimination. Based on what was stated by the deans, it is clear that they face discrimination in conducting their work due to various social construct issues such as gender roles or patriarch values or sexism. This is because female subordinates are expected by their male bosses to execute the role in a way that is rooted in masculinity.

Furthermore, women fail to progress to top positions because of racial discrimination. Racial discrimination as experienced by the women in this study had the effect of slowing down their advancement into the position of a dean. Due to the fact that leaders in South African universities are men, they tend to have power to influence what is seen as right or wrong, and this largely disadvantages women who harbour leadership aspirations. The conclusion is that women are discouraged from taking up leadership positions due to gender-based discrimination and to some extent racial discrimination. This corroborates with the findings of a research conducted by Gandhi and Sen (2020: 49) where they concluded that gender discrimination is a challenge that women from all professional backgrounds continue to grapple with.

According to experiences of female faculty deans, lack of support from colleagues and mentors to prepare them for leadership roles posed challenges to their efforts to take leadership positions. A number of participants shared that a lack of networks and relationships in the workplace to support their ascendancy to the post of a dean in the higher education institution was a setback. The deans felt that although their colleagues

were not the appointing authority, their support is invaluable in as far as seeking promotion is concerned.

Lack of financial support and connections within the system is another setback that results in women being reluctant to take up leadership positions in universities. Men are usually well resourced, and they have connections within the university leadership system, which make their chances of taking up leadership roles higher than those of women. This finding corroborates findings of a study by Goryunova et al. (2017: 69) who concluded that lack of adequate support is an impediment to achieving leadership goals.

The study also concludes that work–life conflicts hinder the progression of women into senior leadership positions within South African universities. Due to demands of top management positions, women often end up choosing roles that enable them to balance work and family responsibilities. The women said that they consider the process of balancing family roles and work responsibilities as a key challenge that can reduce one's chances of being promoted. For example, the women said that they experienced challenges relating to work–life balance because they have been required to work beyond required hours as way of showing job commitment. However, this often conflicts with their roles as wives and mothers who subscribe to the cultural role of a women at home. Furthermore, the finding that work–life conflict is a common challenge faced by women in leadership agrees with an existing study. The study revealed that the challenge of conflicts between work responsibilities versus family responsibilities largely shouldered by women, especially in the African context, is a hindrance to leadership ambitions (Toffoletti and Starr 2016: 489).

6.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The South African Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (South Africa 1998) encourages females' right to equal employment prospects; yet the representation of South African females in senior leadership has deteriorated from 3.9 per cent in 2008 to 3.6 per cent in 2012 (Business Women's Association of South Africa 2012: 10). Although study by Ali et al. (2021: 6) show that female leadership style guarantees their suitability for senior positions in higher education, females are still underrepresented in these positions. Traditionally, the dialogue on females' position in society developed out of feminist

rhetoric and can be mapped out back to the nineteenth century (Addabbo et al. 2021: 4589). However, it was only during the past two decades that the research focus shifted to females in business and leadership (Hopkins et al. 2018). Research within the dominion of females in leadership attributes the under-representation of females at the executive level to a mass of barriers hindering their progress at this level (Krimmer 2019: 190; Carozzi and Gago 2020: 1301). The lop-sided number of males in leadership positions spreads socialised patriarchal norms, thus preserving this invisible barrier (Firdausia et al. 2020: 55).

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors that affect the success of senior level female leaders in higher education: to determine how they attained their positions; their motivations for remaining in senior leadership and the factors that played a role in developing their leadership potential. This study wanted to explore information collected from successful females, who are currently holding senior leadership positions at Universities of Technology, in order to develop a theory that might encourage existing female leaders who would like to attain higher postings, and in so doing, create better experiences for females who aspire to senior positions in higher education. I have summarised the findings according to the implications that have come out of the data for each of the primary research questions.

Senior academic females in universities of technology, as elsewhere, have shown a continued experience both direct and indirect to discrimination, with the narrow male leadership profile an overriding factor in this discrimination. While higher education remains a hostile work environment for females in senior positions, their participation rates are unlikely to increase. This closing chapter explores further the theoretical framework of the study by designing and analysing a resiliency model for female leaders in higher education. The aim of this model is to deconstruct the discourse on gendered leadership and assist female leaders navigate through the leadership barriers that they experience on one hand, as well as to contribute new knowledge to the existing body of knowledge on female leadership in higher educational institutions.

The motive of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of female leaders as well as their reasons for maintaining leadership positions. It also addressed challenges these females faced on their journeys and described their definitions of successful leadership based on the experiences they shared. The qualitative nature of the study

made it possible to tell the stories of the participants' journeys in order to understand their career progression, and their conception of leadership.

The ten recruited participants for the study were females in positions of senior leadership within their universities including Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans, Directors and Heads of Department from six Universities of Technology in South Africa. Purposeful sampling was used so that the selected participants would have experience with the principal phenomenon being studied. Not all the females contacted to participate in this study gladly agreed to be interviewed to share their experiences. However, the desired number for the study was reached as all UoTs had at least one participant. There were evident differences in the level of diversity as regards the age group, ethnic backgrounds, and education level of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. Open-ended questions were used so the responses of the participants could guide the development of themes and the route of the study.

Once the data were collected through audiotaped interviews, codes were allocated to fragments of the text to help identify themes. A coding table was developed to explain how the themes for the discussion developed from data obtained during the interviews. The stories of the participants were interlinked based on the themes and analysed in terms of the obtainable research. A discussion of the findings combined the literature and provided evidence of related concepts. Approaches including inter-coder agreement, rich description, and elucidation of biases were used to reinforce the study's findings.

Ethical issues were addressed throughout each stage of the study. All participants were requested to sign an informed consent form that outlined the procedures of the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. Consent was granted by the Institutional Review Committee to complete the study and the researcher who transcribed the interviews signed a confidentiality form.

6.3 DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Higher-education institutions face huge challenges in the current context. The labour market is also getting very strict in the evaluation of the graduates' skills and abilities and thus, of the study programmes in universities. A university that is attractive, is one with a

large demand for studies, with many stakeholders and projects, with a high prominence at national and international level, and a significant research production.

The glass cliff issue as described by Glass and Cook (2016: 51), was mentioned by two participants and explained the conditions proposed for females when promoted into leadership positions. Very few studies to date have advanced the question of promotion context by integrating the subjective experiences of senior leaders themselves (Baker and Cangemi 2016: 35). By analysing the career journeys and experiences of the successful female leaders, it was easy to fully understand the mechanisms that drive the glass cliff process (Lublin 2016: 104). While research on the glass cliff focused on barriers preventing the progression of females in senior positions, Cook and Glass (2014) expanded this approach by analysing the experiences of females who were already leaders but who faced different challenges because they were promoted into high-risk positions. This provides more a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities females experience as they achieve professional mobility in higher education.

This data assisted in identifying the challenges female leaders face post-promotion. Understanding the challenges that may limit females' ability to lead successfully is serious to advancing female representation in leadership positions, because of a lack of success, risks strengthening stereotypes and bias regarding female leadership capability. By identifying challenges that limit female leaders' success can inform policy and institutions in ways that limit bias and support females' flexibility and success.

At present, the lack of resources describes the difficult situation for decision-making procedures, which is a huge challenge for the academic leadership. On one hand, the competition requires the need of unceasing development and of differentiation plans while on the other hand, inadequate financial, human, material, informational resources, as well as time as a specific limitation generate huge opportunities and pressures for institutions. Therefore, university leaders always have to possess possibilities of being efficient at all times. Situations and years as well as the challenges are different every year. Thus, a great, innovative yet resilient leader is needed in universities to ensure that they are sustainable, yet there is lack of financial resources to ensure the smooth running of the university. However, leaders expected to come out with new approaches to grow

productivity in higher-education institutions. It is, therefore, vital that capable university leaders contribute to new clarifications on leadership strategies in order to increase productivity in higher-education institutions. Male leaders alone cannot achieve high productivity without the involvement of female leaders as well.

Four leadership theories informed the researcher about leaders' qualities, leadership styles, and behaviours. Though leadership theories and literature on leadership development provided valuable information, they do not provide understandings on how one comes to be a leader. While the leadership development literature concentrates on the development of leadership proficiencies, career development literature offers richer information on occupational paths and choices. In the pursuit on how one learns to be a leader, adult theories and career development theories are explored. The literature discovered that current views of both adult learning and career development are consistent. Both are moving toward a constructivist view and pay attention to the single reflective meaning making of an individual.

Individuals' gender perceptions influence female's experiences as university leaders. The occurrence of traditional gender roles that exist in the domestic sphere are thus occasionally observed in various contexts, even once a leader obtains a position of authority. Yet, as institutions become used to having females in senior leadership roles, we are seeing a mitigation of females' gendered experiences that depressingly affect their work. Regardless of females' personal experiences with gender-based reactions to their leadership, it is obvious that we have not yet arrived at a situation in which females are free from being labelled 'queen B' (B- which stands for bitch) when stakeholders discuss their decision-making and general institutional authority. Over time, females in leadership roles may also become either resistant from or insensitive to gender-disparaging comments that can frequently occur in the workplace. As some respondents witnessed that females may in fact have benefitted from an emphasis on ridding universities of the boy's networks that once ran the show through greater attention to females' professional development.

In conclusion, the intimate stories female leaders shared here collectively prove that gender still figures prominently into the chronicles of academic leaders. They signify that

we must not be blind to the meaning that gender plays a role at all levels of an academic leadership hierarchy. Both females and men as leaders, experience gender in very meaningful ways whether or not it is through their own experiences or their analysis of others' experiences. The females whom I interviewed revealed extraordinary prognoses for gendered experiences as leaders. The promise of degendering leadership can only be achieved through this ongoing focus. Attention to and an emphasis on weakening the labelling of leadership as "feminine" or "masculine" is part of this attempt. Furthermore, a focus on gendered power dynamics, on the part of females in academia facilitates a feminist de-gendering movement.

This section discusses the findings of the study in the context of the research literature. First, the challenges and barriers that exists in higher education and that are experienced by female leaders from various universities of technology in South Africa are presented. Second, findings of the benefits of government and institutional legislation are compared to the available literature and their impact (if any) on female leaders in higher education. And lastly, findings of the qualitative data are also presented.

The findings from the female stories show, that customary laws are still in support of the male-primogeniture and the female-stereotype still applies in conventional sectors. As a result, female leaders are often undermined by both men and females and forced to breaking point. Female leaders are faced with the challenge of female-to-female bitterness as most females prefer the worst man instead of the best female as a leader, on other hand most female leaders suffer neglect from their male and female counterparts, unfair restrictions from their superiors and denied required support by men to thrive in their leaderships because the majority of the men wished not to be led by a female either.

Further findings prove most female leaders are faced with the challenge of balancing leadership and family, building a supportive administrative system, conveying their worth as leaders and most importantly, having low representation due to high level of female illiteracy in South Africa. Most females are susceptible to some challenges such as having courage to study further or develop oneself for leadership positions after birth, marriage or certain age, while most are restricted by their husbands who believe that female leaderships are limited to household's affairs, mainly in the bedroom and kitchens. This has caused many potential females to give up their dreams of becoming leaders, while

many others who managed to climb the leadership ladder often lose the urge due to certain ordeals imposed on them. It is against these premises that the need for resilient females is rising from the ashes and rising up against the systems created to suppress them.

Furthermore, what is being described is a thin masculinist definition of acceptable behaviour in higher education leadership usually associated with transactional leadership (McCleskey 2014: 76). On the one hand, senior male leaders can be aggressive, loud and overbearing, but on the other hand, females cannot express themselves in a way that leads to losing emotional control. Females as leaders often prefer a more open, communicative style described as transformational leadership; that is, to use a shared style, share power and information, use personal power, develop people's self-worth, and make them feel part of the organisation. Ghasabeh, Reaiche and Soosay (2015: 450) similarly talks about connective leadership styles that is collaborative and contribute behaviour in which females excel. However, it is obvious that higher education leadership continues to reward transactional leadership.

There is also the issue of female's struggle to 'fit in' which shows the challenges that females have to undergo in order to be part of higher education leaders. Females need to understand how leadership operates within higher education and how masculinist leadership is the only acceptable form of leadership rather than to challenge these accepted norms. Pamela explained that:

"I think leadership is defined by powerful leadership, it is, if you look at the words you use to describe leaders, they incline to be male words and sometimes they put in the unusual thing about nurturing and engaging people, that's a girly thing. Things like that. They tend to be male in that sense. Essentially, the way that the leadership club is likely to be like that, a club. Let us have a few drinks or let us meet for breakfast. That is all the ideas about meetings. You go to meetings, and you have to stand from the floor and speak. That's a very male thing, rather than sitting down and partaking in a discussion."

This account elaborates on the hostile domineering behaviour described above. As well as the aggression, there are strict rules of conduct for university leaders. The language they use (which is male) and ways of meeting people which operate like a male club with rituals such as having a beer or having breakfast together. This 'clubbiness' then translates into how higher education leaders behave in more formal settings: in meetings men stand from the floor and talk - signifying a sense of performance and wanting to impress that strengthens a sense of entitlement men have as university leaders (Burkinshaw and White 2017: 11). In contrast, females might desire to sit down and discuss an issue.

The study found that even females who had succeeded to very senior roles in higher education still experienced risky careers in the process. Even though it might be expected that colleagues would treat females who had reached top positions with respect, their experience of leadership may perhaps be quite confrontational and characterised by men behaving in a hostile, loud and bossy manner, particularly in meetings with other senior leaders. The double bind is that females can try hard at 'fitting in' but they cannot do so in the way that men do. However, it is not clear what the standard mode of behaviour for senior female leaders is in higher education.

It is also worrying that some female leaders are often stressed out at work because of the challenges they face. It is apparent that instability in the workplace and stress sometimes take a toll and adversely influences the ability of the female leader to think straight and to remember. Another female had an experience where she felt she was not coping and having time to think about her career and to learn and reflect on the work in the university,

"I realised I was not coping with work-life at the university, and this has acted to convince me that I am a poor fit with this university".

These females were aware in their analysis of the problems they encountered as leaders and argued that seeking higher education leadership was not a priority in the current organisational climate with its exclusionary structures and practices. Unless the leadership culture of the university could be altered and what they considered poor leadership could be fixed by introducing gender mainstreaming, they would remain on the

side-line. Thus, the above narratives support a resistance model evident in the experiences of these female leaders. They took a social justice opinion that fixing the university leadership model/culture could aid in addressing the disconnection and disempowerment of female leaders.

These experiences by the female leaders from different universities in higher education indicated that they experienced gender power relations that impacted on their careers. It is not the intention to compare the cases of these female leaders or to present the findings as in opposition, an either/or scenario. Instead, the rich information, which emerged from the data, explores the lived experiences of female leaders in higher education leadership during the course of their careers and the challenges male cultures pose for them.

The female leaders in the study had learnt throughout their careers to navigate and negotiate the gendered and gendering leadership culture, and these skills were responsible for their success. Only when these senior female leaders had made it to the top did they feel safer in leadership to the extent that they could 'be themselves' to some extent, while still admitting the straight jacket that hegemonic masculinities shaped for them.

However, the very senior female leaders found that being a minority creates instability in itself. As Nkayi 2013: 6) notes, females aspiring to senior leadership positions "in order to be accepted ... have to conduct themselves in ways which are fitting to the organisation and the job". Invariably during their careers, the female leaders in this study had been the only female in the room (Crites, Dickson, and Lorenz 2015: 8) and their experience of frequently acclimatising to this minority status was emotionally draining. The females were positioned as outsiders on the inside, or what can be described in communities of practice of masculinities as not yet full members (Duguid and Thomas-Hunt 2015: 343).

Referring back to the description of my theoretical framework in the literature review section of the study, I agree that consistently the females in higher education have just achieved 'genuine marginal participation' in leadership groups of practice of masculinities, while their male equals achieved full membership almost by default. These groups of practice function on an organisational level (as well as individually of course) to establish gendered understandings. For example, symbolically organisational masculinity creates reification of leadership enigmas (Burkinshaw and White 2017: 10). Similarly, the myth of

organisational shrewdness whereby the way universities function through their structures, practices, and processes strengthens masculinities (Acker 1990). So much so that, leadership communities of practice of masculinities work to strengthen organisational cultures where masculine power is circulated (and sometimes repelled) (Burkinshaw 2015). Yet ironically, the females in the study were top university leaders functioning successfully within this masculine organisational context.

However, it was only once a 'critical mass' of diversity was achieved that these women felt more secure in leadership, at whatever level. They argued that this critical mass helped to dilute their insecurity and inevitable precariousness, although any minority needs to reach beyond 30 per cent for this to occur (Epstein, Clinton, Gabrovskas and Petrenko 2013: 110). This finding reinforces our argument regarding the entrenched organisational exclusivity of HE leadership communities of practice of masculinities, where lack of diversity in organisational leadership at all levels is both cause and effect. A major feature of communities of practice of masculinities is that existing full members who generally shun difference thus perpetuating masculine organisational cultures police them from within. Nevertheless, Martin and O'Meara's study demonstrates how strategies used by women leaders can challenge and change institutional culture to advance gender inclusion (Martin and O'Meara 2017: 80), although the experience in Austria, for example, indicates that the use of quotas to get more females into leadership positions does not necessarily impact organisational culture.

6.4 THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE LEADERS

Social influence is distributed unequally between males and females in many higher education institutions. In human societies, gender inequality is particularly evident in access to leadership positions. Understanding why women historically and cross-culturally have tended to be under-represented as leaders within human groups and organizations represents an inconsistency because there is lack of evidence that women leaders consistently perform worse than men. Also, it is known that women exercise overt influence in collective group-decisions within small-scale human societies, and that female leadership is pervasive in particular contexts across non-human mammalian societies. Here, this study offers a transdisciplinary perspective on this female leadership paradox. Synthesis of social science and biological literatures suggests that females and

males, on average, differ in why and how they compete for access to political leadership in mixed-gender groups. These differences are influenced by sexual selection and are moderated by socio-ecological variation across development and, particularly in human societies, by culturally transmitted norms and institutions. The interplay of these forces contributes to the emergence of female leaders within and across species. Furthermore, females may regularly exercise influence on group decisions in less obvious ways and different domains than males, and these under-appreciated forms of leadership require more study. We offer a comprehensive framework for studying inequality between females and males in access to leadership positions, and thus the study discusses the implications of this approach for understanding the female leadership paradox in higher education and for redressing gender inequality in leadership.

The findings above described the life journeys that led to self-directedness, self-efficacy and self-determination for ten selected females of achievement. Through the patterns in each story, the females grew a sense of self-efficacy and self-determination. Their self-directed learning attitude grew from their childhood homes, families and communities. As each female pursued her education and career, the negative encounters and learning continued, but their inherent motivation grew, and they continued to pursue additional goals and achieve successes. The females were open to opportunities through their career and lifework. Some were asked to assist, while others saw a necessity and found a way to meet it. Throughout each story, the females have identified individual transformations that continued their paths towards success and achievement, but not without challenges along the way. In the discussion, each research question is examined to connect the findings above to the literature on self-directedness, self-efficacy and self-determination.

Mendez and Busenbark (2015: 20) stated that for higher education to look more like their student population, meaning more females and racially and ethnically diverse; it must create a culture and infrastructure supportive of all females, which means the culture, structure, policies, and rewards must be consistent with encouraging diversity and females in universities. However, 23 years after the new dispensation and a call to action for higher education to be supportive has largely gone unsolved. As this study

established, the current structure and culture of higher education does need to be altered, as the male hegemonic structure creates challenges and barriers for female leaders.

Over the last 23 years, the pace of change in higher education (HE) associated to the broader economy has speeded up such that females now comprise over 50 percent of university undergraduate students across most developed countries, although these percentages do not decipher into senior female leadership in higher education, nor do they transform gender relations (Davis and Maldonado 2015: 3548). The gender gap has reversed for undergraduate students but has remained resistant for females in senior leadership, as male power still dominates. The problem of gender equality in universities, and the influence of feminist studies is a highly touchy topic. The claim that gender equality has been achieved is true, but it only applies to the balance of male and female students, and not at all about female leaders.

This study is concerned with females' experience in senior positions and with the extent to which such positions are seen as places for females to offer an insight into their commitment to enduring in them. Senior leadership positions in universities are exclusively elite in terms of income; those who occupy them are somewhat powerful internally, although relatively powerless in relation to the community standards.

Females remain underrepresented in South African higher education leadership along with the rest of the world, in spite of legislation promoting gender equity (Mall 2015: 6). The struggles to address this challenge reveal the need to review the principles that drive them (Nkomo and Hoobler 2014: 246). Studies conducted into gender inequality in higher education leadership normally focus on representation, but fewer explore females' struggles in exercising power and influencing the programme of action in universities (Stainback, Kleiner and Skaggs 2016: 110). Female leaders' discourse of power needs to be better understood to facilitate a more mindful approach to gender transformation that considers females' perspectives.

The literature review and the data collected demonstrated that there is a direct relationship between the stress of the leader's job and her ability to remain resilient in the face of continued contact with adversity. This theory deliberates on the resilience theory as it relates to leadership development. The thoughts associated with resilience, which includes thriving and toughness, is explored with the belief that resilient leaders are

important to the sustainability of higher-education institutions. Endurance, recovery, and being successful are concepts associated with resilience and describe the stage at which a person may be during or after facing hardships or difficulties. The concept of 'thriving' speak of the female's ability to go beyond her original level of functioning and to grow and function regardless of recurrent exposure to stressful experiences. The model suggests several variables that describe resilience and thriving. These variables include positive self-esteem, toughness, tough coping skills, and sense of consistency, self-efficacy, hopefulness, strong social resources, flexibility, risk-taking, and low fear of failure, willpower, determination, and a high tolerance of hesitation. The findings in this study suggest that those who develop leaders need to create safe environments to help emerging and existing leaders.

Previous studies over the years have shown that many female leaders assume authoritarian models of leadership and are openly criticised for this because an interpersonal approach is expected (Matsa and Miller 2013: 140). The criticism is accompanied with labels such as the 'Queen Bee' or 'Dragon lady'. These labels are given to females who pursue individual success in male-dominated work settings by fine-tuning to the patriarchal culture and distancing themselves from other females (Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers 2016: 456; McCleskey 2014: 121). The label is considered sexist by some researchers (Sheppard and Aquino 2013: 55) because it problematises females' behaviour that goes against stereotypical beliefs of female communality versus male agency.

6.5 RESULTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

What was the result of these leadership experiences? For each leadership experience, I asked how it was to be in the leadership position. All the respondents spoke about things they still wanted to do. They acknowledged the good pay, holidays and networks, and the respect and power they have achieved. The power was not for selfgratification nor was it a competition against anyone, but it was about having the ability to make changes in the university and to ensure that the beneficiaries are the students. For the current position, I asked about their aspirations for their next career move. Nine of the participants are looking forward to the next level of their journey and one said she is happy to stay in her current position. Two of the participants said they are groomed to move up to a very

significant position and have been told to be ready. One female said she has gained all the experience she wanted and was ready to go out there and make a change in politics. Four of the females are thinking of retirement years, and one hopes to be the Vice-Chancellor of the university. All the participants suggested that they would appreciate a pay increase as they felt that they are not paid according to the correct scale of the university. Only one female is hoping for a significant promotion to a post that has been vacant for four years, but she stressed that she would still be content to stay where she is if she does not get the position. Hlobi said this was her last year as HOD of her department and was hoping to move up as well to be a full-time research co-ordinator at the university. She was unhappy with the fact that if she does not get the post, then she would be going back into the classroom, that would be a downgrade for her, and she would feel under-utilised.

The above leadership outcomes raised some key issues. Some authors suggest that females hold fewer senior leadership positions because they are not as ambitious, not willing to put more effort into their work, or because they have children (Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne and Cao 2015: 657). The results of the study showed a different story. The female leaders in this study all have ambitions, they all work hard, and only one took time out because of children. Moreover, the issue of children was actually disturbing as one participant said that she once brought her daughter to the office because her helper had not come in for work, and she was called irresponsible. The gossip outburst was shocking because white females always brought their kids to the office and the kids were even allowed to use office equipment while waiting for their mothers. This made the black female feel the issues of race, which she had not really considered before.

Another female felt that when you are in a leadership role as a female you have to have a stereotypically masculine leadership style that is directive and assertive to be able to achieve that level of success: of running a department. That, then counted against her, because men are looking for stereotypically feminine females and when she was operating in a mode that they did not feel comfortable with then that is another point against her. She insisted that females have different variables working against them and that makes it very difficult for them to succeed as senior leaders in universities. Lucinda felt that she needed support or comforting after taking a decision that was not favourable among her staff. She ended up doubting herself and agonised about the effects of any

decision she had to take or implement on her staff. This was common among three of the female leaders, who, at times, felt devalued by their staff and their university. Rose, on the other hand, simply does not see any possibility for someone to move up from her current position, given the structure of her university. In one of the more dramatic examples, one female reported leading a key position serving the university with dignity and sacrificed a lot of her time, energy and emotions, only to be overlooked for an executive position. Instead, the university hired a male from another university to take up the position that she was in line to occupy. She explained how she had demonstrated the most leadership during the 'fees must fall campaigns, where she really stepped up to the plate. She explained that the effects of the 'fees must fall campaign became personal for her. She was driven, to the detriment of her health where she had to be in the office about five o'clock in the morning and worked until eleven or twelve at night. She explained that she lost weight and acquired grey hair through that experience, but she still was not promoted.

6.6 OUTCOMES OF THE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

More universities are committing to gender equality. But progress remain slow unless university executive leaders confront blind spots on diversity, particularly regarding black women, and employee perceptions of the status quo. Women remain underrepresented at every level in higher education, despite earning more degrees than men. There is a pressing need to do more, and most organizations realize this: company commitment to gender diversity is at an all-time high for the third year in a row.

Many employees think women are well represented in leadership when they see only a few. And because they've become comfortable with the status quo, they don't feel any urgency for change. Further, many men don't fully grasp the barriers that hold women back at work. As a result, they are less committed to gender diversity, and we can't get there without them. Many companies also overlook the realities of women of color, who face the greatest obstacles and receive the least support. When companies take a one-size-fits-all approach to advancing women, women of color end up underserved and left behind. This year we take a deeper look at women of color to better understand the distinct challenges they face, shaped by the intersection of gender and race.

This work shows the situation of gender imbalance in senior leadership positions in UoTs. Currently, even though females have the same level of preparation as men, they are still less under-represented in senior management positions. The scarce representation of females in senior decision-making positions in large companies throughout different UoTs demonstrates that the current situation is far from a situation of gender balance. Amongst the barriers that obstruct the participation of females in senior management have been detected as those related to gender stereotypes and the prejudices they produce. In this sense, the study has mentioned that stereotypical gender roles produce differences in certain workplace behaviours of both men and women, which can result in a corporate culture within universities that is less oriented towards the career development of females (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto 2017: 341). As a result, females often have less opportunities and incentives for promotion on an organisational level than men (ibid). Likewise, expectations about what females are like and how they should act often call into question their leadership ability and can socially and economically penalise females who access senior positions in universities.

A great deal of the research on leadership styles links females to a democratic, participative leadership style focused on personal relations (Rincon, Gonzalez and Barreto 2017: 341). Likewise, several studies mention the tendency for females to use a transformational leadership style, which is often related to leadership that is more effective (Gipson, et al. 2017: 38; Seo, Huang and Han 2017: 35; Longman 2018). However, some authors defend this type of female leadership by stating that it stems from the undesirable reactions and the social rejection that females must face when they use a command and authoritarian leadership usually associated with men. In any case, current data on gender balance in management positions show that the efficiency of allegedly female leadership does not seem to be important enough to overcome the obstacles that complicate access by females to positions of responsibility (Schwanke 2013:1; Burkinshaw and White 2017: 30). This scarce presence of females in senior management positions represents an important cost for society as a whole. The imbalance between the educational level of females and their career development suggests a waste of human resources that prevents taking advantage of the talent and abilities of highly qualified people. Moreover, in terms of business competitiveness, organisations with low numbers of females represented in senior leadership positions are foregoing benefits that gender diversity can provide for managerial teams. For all of the

above reasons, we believe that it is crucial to increase awareness in the corporate sector of all the advantages there are of increasing the participation of females in senior management positions. The increase of measures aimed at improving opportunities for the career development of females can accelerate change towards a situation of gender balance that would benefit all of society. All actions aimed at stimulating the compatibility between one's personal and professional life, as well as those focused on providing females the support they need for leadership positions, can produce progressive results.

While the number of years of experience in higher education leadership was wideranging among the participants in this study, they still had a lot in common when it came to experiences shared during their leadership journey. The results showed that the participants shared the awareness that there were definite barriers and challenges that they had to overcome in order to navigate the journey toward a senior leadership position such as negotiating family and personal obligations. When deliberating on further obstacles, participants recurrently shared that working with female co-workers was one of the main challenges. Even though the females in this study acknowledged these as challenges, each of the participants found ways to manage and address these issues. The analysis indicated that there are techniques to combat these challenges by building a support structure and finding a mentor either within or outside of the institution where the participants are employed.

The participants identified people who stimulated, encouraged and provided them with motivation throughout their professional journey. Additionally, the participants admitted that these people were both male and female in either their personal or professional life. In discussing their ability as it relates to gender, participants constantly acknowledged their work ethic and hard work as one of the key reasons they were given the opportunities they received throughout their journey to senior leadership. Lastly, regarding recommendation for aspiring female leaders in higher education, all participants encouraged females to continue their journey and to embrace the challenges as it works to their advantage in developing the skills and abilities that are required for leadership in a challenging higher education environment.

6.6.1 FACTORS LEADING FEMALE LEADERS ALONG THEIR PATHS

Each of these females' achievements was motivated by early childhood messages from family or important persons in their lives. The females grew and developed as leaders within their own surroundings and through communications and contacts with people who mentored or influenced them throughout their lives. Sometimes, these females were encouraged and mentored to grow as church leaders and as experts in leading other young community members. At other times, their particular development was a reaction to a challenge provided by someone else. Time, place and culture contributed to the directions and responsibilities that these females assumed. While they were surrounded by social restraints regarding gender, race and class, each female found a way to become accustomed to those environments and make changes for the better through their contributions. Steadily, these females transformed and realised that their actions made a difference.

As a researcher, I believe these females are examples of self-determination formed through understanding and skill. These females are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them. They became leaders through a blend of their own abilities, their environment and encouragement from others.

6.6.2 OPEN TO OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the consequence of realising their actions made a change, these females developed an awareness of life choices and were open to prospects, which served as a source of self-directed motivation enabling optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life's domains (Deci and Ryan 2008: 237). The females became leaders and then learnt that they actually had leadership skills within themselves. It does seem like some choices were bound by time or chance. For example, career varieties were limited to those available to females of a particular generation or were influenced by old traditional role expectations for females. In addition, during their times of self-doubt or concern, participants noted their intrinsic motivation and self-talk assisted them to refocus on their goals and recoup their positive thinking. The resilient belief that one has what it takes to prosper provided the necessary staying power in the face of recurrent failures, obstacles, and sceptical or even critical social reactions that are naturally discouraging.

The females in this study continued to expose themselves to new opportunities. When they did not have solutions on how to make something work, they learned, contacted their mentors and acted as they approached different problems in their journey. Most of these females did not have a preconceived plan that they followed from the beginning. Instead, they were receptive to their environment and relationships and persisted to say 'yes' to new challenges. One 'yes' led to another and assisted these females develop themselves into successful females, who would become leaders to individuals around them.

Many of the females did not see themselves as leaders. They became leaders gradually while developing interests and attending to the needs around them. Through mentorship and experience, they found leadership abilities within themselves. The females then mentored and taught others to continue a legacy of leadership.

6.6.3 PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Irrespective of limitations, all the participants remained selfless and intrinsically goaloriented. Concerning self-determination, these females achieved more satisfaction and efficiency with a sense of independence that enabled optimal motivation and emotional well-being across their life's domains. Turner, Norwood and Noe (2013: 22) noted that as basic needs of relatedness, autonomy and competence are met, people follow intrinsic ambitions or life goals. These basic needs are often found through the approval of parents, assisting others and finding success in a career or education that leads to aspirations, such as stimulating the personal or career development of others.

The analyses of the stories of females in this study are excellent examples of the paths that females have taken towards leadership roles. Each female became selfdetermined through a blend of her own skills, environment and encouragement from others. The female leaders found a way to persist through challenges and not be afraid to have an opinion and stand up for what they believed and cherished.

While females are gaining more education and positions of influence, many females still do not see themselves as leaders. Some are persuaded and pushed into leadership roles, while others decline. Females who do become leaders often act on a need in their environment or with inspiration through their social interfaces. Through their community and social spaces, females contribute as members of society and professional organisations and in the process, grow as leaders (Eagly and Carli 2007: 24) Leadership

comes in many forms and continued research into how females become leaders is still significant. Through understanding and honouring the stories of female leaders, other females can learn to see leadership in a different way and assert their own leadership qualities and abilities.

6.6.4 A NEED TO BUILD SOCIAL COHESION

Even though, since the dawn of democracy, there has been serious reforms in order to promote the development of females and the advancement of black females in particular at an institutional level, there is still a trace of old prejudices. In day-to-day interactions, these prejudices continue to challenge rather than support black females in particular. Such attitudes live in the prearranged speech about what is and what is not acceptable by society and ensures that discrimination continues for those who were most marginalised under the apartheid system. A form of compassionate paternalism prescribes, in veiled hints that females ought to remember their obedient position. As a result, they must still navigate the often-hostile environment of higher education because, irrespective of how hard they work, and how much they are able to prove their capability, theirs are considered as token appointments, appointments based on race, class and gender.

In his recent work, 'A Bantu in my Bathroom' (2012), Eusebius Mckaiser explained the opinion that prejudicial attitudes continue to permeate South African societies because South Africans fail to see the close links between the private and public arenas of life. As a result, there exists a deep discrepancy as far as racial acceptance is concerned. Briefly, Mckaiser explains "that the reach and endurance of racism finds its birth in the private sphere – in the homes and hearts of South Africans". As a result, racism and I speculate classism and gender discrimination are deep-seated in the collective social psyche of South Africans. Even though we are able to wear masks of nonracialism in public (the breeding ground of such attitudes), the private sphere remains unaffected because we dare not encroach on the right of an individual to be whomever she/he wishes to be in so intimate a space. It is here that people unequivocally defend their right to exercise preference. Yet, it is also here where views of hierarchical orders, gender, class and racial perceptions are developed. This means that the entrenched social inequalities enacted under apartheid continue to grow and influence how we interact in the public space. Compliance and involvement in the rainbow nation in some instances are merely

a superficial measure, a measure that masks deep-seated prejudices. What we need, to truly be a rainbow nation is an inclination to work on prejudices in the private space. This “contributory connection” between the private and public space, according to Mckaiser, must be recognised and addressed if we are to eliminate prejudice successfully in our democracy (Mckaiser 2012: 26-27). I contend that there is a need within the academy to build social cohesion. We cannot maintain the denialism that inequalities do not exist. These inequalities are often dismissed as unsubstantiated accusations of overreaction.

Furthermore, inequalities and discrimination often remain undetected, especially when those who do not experience them fail to understand how deeply belligerent and hurtful, they are. We must also concede that those females who find themselves on the fringes of senior leadership in higher education employment at academic institutions are more likely to encounter discrimination. Social cohesion within the academy means that all individuals are made to feel sheltered in their jobs and their irreplaceable contribution is recognised and acknowledged. Within the work environment, people must be able to experience social inclusion; such inclusion acknowledges their need for partnership with other scholars and communities and their need for access to services. It also recognises the fact that individuals within the academy are not lone agents but have deep connections and responsibilities to their local communities and families. Discrimination against any individual not only emasculates that individual’s personal growth and development but also obstructs the individual’s academic progress, thus hindering the smooth running of the institution in which they are employed.

6.7 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study explored the experiences of females in leadership positions in higher education. The purpose of the study was to contribute to the total understanding of female leaders and both the environmental and personal mechanisms that help support their success in their careers. Much of the existing literature focuses on barriers females face as leaders (AAUW Barriers and Bias 2016: 123; Bain and Cummings 2000: 47); my study, however, considers the ways females are currently successful in their personal and environmental features that contributed to their success. Although the researcher has used a positive lens to collect data and answer the research question, females continued to face barriers in their positions. The findings from my study suggest that much of the literature on barriers females face is true and still commendable of further research.

The study identified a number of key barriers and enablers that affected women's career and leadership development. The main barrier included the competing demands of work and life and male dominated organisational cultures that discriminate against women in covert ways. The main enabler was mentoring and the building of professional networks that provided their careers with direction and support. For the black majority of the participants, the main barriers were unconcealed and included male-dominated organisational and societal cultures that limit their career and leadership development opportunities. Their main enabler was having a sponsor or person with power in their respective organisation who would be willing to support their career advancement and gaining recognition from colleagues and peers.

All the participants were females who worked at UoT institutions. Six different universities were represented in this study. All participants were in positions at the Dean level or higher, including Deputy-Vice Chancellor, and they had been in these positions for at least eight months. Additionally, all the women had been in some sort of leadership position prior to their current position; some had been department chairs, associate deans, deans, or associate provosts at institutions prior to their current position of leadership. The length in their current positions ranged from eight months to 11 years.

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the research findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations and concluding opinions. It is organised to include a discussion of how the research findings contribute to the review of the literature. Finally, the researcher delivers recommendations for additional study and concluding considerations. This study aimed to explore leadership journeys of females in senior leadership positions in UoTs. It precisely wanted to understand meaning behind female leadership experiences. The main research question was: What are the experiences of females in senior leadership in universities of technology in South Africa? The conclusion of this study is that the culture of universities is both gendered and homophobic, in other words, it is gender biased. This is in spite of government legislation and institutional equity policies; power remains in the hands of men.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found the challenges of women in higher education to be a heavy workload, lack of opportunities for career development, voice not being heard and lack of support. It is necessary that these challenges be tackled at the organisational level, by allocating the reasonable amount of responsibilities and workload to match the salary in order to eliminate discrimination and maintain pay equity. It is recommended that career development opportunities should be provided for women, in order to ensure maximum participation suitability. As a result, women equipped with knowledge and skills will strengthen higher education. Also, leaders of higher education institutions should provide opportunities for women to express their feelings and grievances, which should be addressed and measures are taken to accommodate the needs of the women by providing flexibility. In addition, leaders should create mentorship within higher education to provide support to women in order to help them maintain a healthy balance of life and work responsibilities.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends the following strategies:

The ethical and antiracist imperative- Achieving gender parity in leadership is, first and perhaps most important, a matter of fairness. When women are excluded from top leadership positions, they are denied the agency to make a difference in their workplaces and societies. Leaders enjoy power, high status and privilege, and leadership in one area opens doors to other opportunities, which further amplify the perks of leadership.

Unfortunately, however, stereotypes and biases present subtle yet significant obstacles for women, and particularly for women of color. In addition, the structure of higher education and the culture of the workplace deter women from being productive and being heard. For example, women of color are often viewed, and used, as token representatives. Successful ideas and programs that they develop and direct may be appropriated by and credited to men and sometimes white women as well. Or ideas and programs that women initiate may be perceived as “soft” responses and dismissed.

The business imperative- As higher education institutions strive to create workplaces that are productive, respectful, collegial and inclusive, we should remember that having diverse women in leadership positions can be beneficial to the bottom line.

The higher education imperative- Gender intersects with race in higher education. Less than a third of university leaders have been women, and the majority of them have been white women. Not surprisingly, among faculty members, white men make up the largest numbers of people in senior positions, and in recent years, white women have made significantly more gains than black women. Black women persistently must deal with suspicion and questions about their competency based not on their accomplishments and potential but rather on their motives as well as how other people perceive their identities. That is why this study identified a chilly climate for black female leaders that virtually all women in academe experience, and for women of color, it is especially relevant today and becomes even colder at the top.

The few women in administrative leadership positions may not fit neatly into male styles and cliques, and they may become more isolated and yet increasingly visible for scrutiny. People often judge their actions and words from a white, privileged lens. Solo status -- being the only representative of a social category in an otherwise homogenous group - - worsens effects of such stereotyping and isolation, which can negatively impact how such women are evaluated.

The student imperative. Women may relate their own challenges to those other people now coming through the academic career pipeline are experiencing and may serve as mentors to faculty and students. They contribute to diversifying experiences, bringing to the center experiences of those who are marginalized and excluded -- both faculty and students.

With black women leaders, students are exposed to perspectives beyond those of the dominant majority, particularly as the demographics of the student population are projected to change (toward a multi-racial category) over the next few years. Additionally, it has a profound effect for black women female leaders as their abilities and knowledge are incorporated and integrated into the enterprise of higher education. As I have conversed with women who have experienced being women or black women in a leadership position, there is a need to ensure that institutional policies on gender are implemented.

6.8.1 A NEW APPROACH TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Perhaps the most crucial element that has to change in higher education institutions is to respond to these imperatives is a change in perspective or mind-set. We, women, have each experienced significant support at different points in our trajectories, in our own careers and those of others we are familiar with. But we have also noticed ways those in senior leadership being perceived as angry, emotional, hysterical, reactive, assertive and ambitious -- usually in connection to particular proposals and ideas associated with gender and diversity more broadly. Of course, women are angry because change is very slow. Conversely, when women leaders receive support and encouragement, too often it is accompanied by praise that refers to women as passionate, nurturing, warm, enthusiastic, articulate and exotic. While well intentioned, this sort of support and encouragement can, in effect, undermine women leaders' intentional, goal-driven and research-based strategies and efforts and power. Given the intersecting identities and the various roles each person embodies, we cannot underestimate the damage of this approach to women of color's success and well-being. Our own experiences of being stereotyped and tokenized and implicitly (and at times explicitly) having our leadership and ideas attributed to supposedly innate gendered and oftentimes racialized attributes are part of a larger trend.

It is time we do more to support and recognize women leaders as intentional, strategic, intelligent, deliberate, goal-driven, focused, accomplished, successful, ambitious and visionary. Let's rethink how we approach women's leadership. Rather than well-intentioned comments and perspectives that may in practice be dismissive, patronizing, sexist and racist, and provide little power and resources, we recommend starting with a few questions to approach women's leadership in all of its heterogeneity across our institutions.

Some of those questions include: How are women represented in senior leadership positions? How are black women included or excluded in these forms of leadership and decision making? How are queer identities included or excluded? How is the labor of women leaders, and black women more specifically, being recognized and compensated? How can black leaders be considered capable of moving up the ranks and appointed to positions of formal power and authority? How is leadership being

supported through the provision of resources to bring about sustainable change? What forms of mentorship are available or being developed to support women as leaders?

The challenges experienced by women leaders in higher education in South Africa were found to be the heavy workload, lack of career development opportunities, voice not being heard, and lack of support. To empower women in higher education institutions, it is recommended for employers to offer flexible work schedules, focus on productivity, offer diverse professional development and training opportunities, provide mentorship and support networks, tackle persistent sex-discrimination, and strengthen pay equity.

6.8.2 SUPPORTIVE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The respondents indicated that the executive management in their institutions provided a supportive environment. However, the same universities overloaded the females with work, resulting in burnout amongst many leaders. Gender forums were identified as 'useless' and non-functional when it came to issues of leaders in senior positions. Due to the assumption that once you have achieved senior leadership, you do not have challenges; therefore, the female leaders always feel that they are on their own and have no one or no structure to support them.

As stated in the literature review, the choices made during foundational periods of the females shaped their life paths through careful development. Each of the females identified a consistent theme of receiving affirmative messages during early childhood from family or through other interactions and experiences. Such assertions inspired them to consider their abilities and advance their talents through education. As the skills of the females developed, networking and interacting with others who encouraged their growth also remained important. The result was increasing relatedness, competence and the awareness of the available choices leading to the self-directed motivation identified (Deci and Ryan 2008: 182). The females identified intrinsic motivation with a theme of persistence and the extrinsic rewards of serving others, advancing human rights and economic equality, refining others' health, being valued and valued by family, friends, and co-workers, and having a successful career.

While being open to opportunities is an obvious requisite for success, the study realised this route was more difficult than one might assume. Opportunities for females to achieve

were bound by place, time, environment, culture and background. Important personal relationships, partners, spouses, co-workers, research associates or project partners Opportunities were restricted by perceptions of female roles when the female entered higher education. For example, participants entered teaching, as this was a more acceptable career path for females. Through relationships and mentoring, each woman identified her abilities as well as self-direction. The researcher noted that people do not live their lives in individual autonomy. Most of the things they pursue are achievable only by working together through an interdependent effort. The females in this study heeded the messages they received from others about their abilities, and they said 'yes!' by stepping up to higher education leadership. Many females needed to have someone else re-frame the opportunities before they took a self-directed path. They did not realise what kind of leaders they could be until somebody else inspired and motivated them to action (Shillingstad, McGlamery, Davis and Gilles 2015: 18) who discovered that females in certain professions were more likely to seek leadership roles after partaking in a course that made them more aware of how to deal with gender bias.

Another key aspect was the fact that outcomes did not always go as planned. Opportunities closed, but other prospects became available and were pursued. Resilience played a very important role in ensuring that the females were never discouraged. The important point is that each female maximised the opportunities that arose and re-framed them as a positive outcome.

In the females' stories, the study identified a shift from being led towards something and then being fanatical and excellent in their practice and leadership. Through the development of self-efficacy, self-determination and self-directedness, the females were able to re-define themselves in order to grow their desire and excitement for the work. Success with solving problems, unrelenting curiosity and engagement to continue with the work were key elements for the female participants. Each found selfreward and an association with their area of interest as it became their own task and calling. The goals they established were exciting, motivating and made their adrenaline flow. Personal transformations also happened because of barriers as they solved difficulties and upheld the diligence to address inevitable challenges. A resilient sense of efficacy provides the essential staying power in the gruelling pursuit of novelty and excellence. During challenging endeavours, people have to invest a great deal of time and effort and have to be eager to take risks during uncertainty (Bandura and Schunk 1981: 586).

It is vital for the success and transformation of institutions in terms of gender equality that female leaders be offered support and an enabling environment in order to perform to their best. It would, therefore, be vital for management to show staff that they are committed to transformation. This could be addressed by improving communication with staff members. It could be that management is committed, however, because it is not communicated properly staff do not perceive the commitment of the institution.

6.8.3 TRAINING PROGRAMMES/SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The Higher Education sector globally encourages academics to publish their research. The culture of research has become enormous. Former Technikons being merged into universities of technologies (UoTs), which places a lot of importance on research publications, support this. The university's research outputs have been on the upward path over the past few years (2008 - 2011), however, it is important to encourage a further increase. For females in senior positions, one of the important aspects is the research record of applicants, and this is a challenge that the university could address by providing research capacity development initiatives for the workforce (Bakuwa and Mouton 2015: 10). This would not only benefit females, but all staff members at the university. Skills Development Levy funding ought to be explored for this purpose, as it would support all skills development initiatives. Females in senior leadership positions also need to re-tell their stories of success and challenges in order to assist young female aspirant leaders and inform policy development in universities.

6.8.4 ACADEMIC NETWORKS

This study sought to explore the perceptions of internal and external barriers and motivators experienced by female leaders in higher education. Attention was focused on whether gender played a negative role in the career trajectories, opportunities and aspirations of females. This study hoped that the data collected does not reveal that universities are responsible for females not pursuing leadership positions and viewing leadership as a dark side filled with challenges and barriers. This study, therefore, deduced that the elements that were assumed to cause challenges for females still exist and thus discourage females in leadership to recommend such senior positions to aspirant candidates. The data showed female leaders are challenged but who are on a

mission of resilience in order to achieve their goals and the goals of the institutions. Networks that support females support such tenacity.

Ratcliff, Vescio and Dahl (2015: 25) conducted a study on the importance of females creating networks. They discovered that this could be a strategic move for females to provide support for each other. These networks/associations provide increased support, not only in terms of skills, but also emotional support and increased competence levels, access to power and control. In 2008 Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) launched the Women in Research Association (WIRA), which is a platform to inspire and support female academics. The association never took off, but a similar programme is successful at Rhodes University. Research needs to be conducted to find out the reasons for the failure of the programme and assist UoTs in revitalising programmes that are meant to capacitate and provide support for females in order for them to excel in their careers.

6.8.5 MENTORING

Mentoring is another opportunity that the universities should explore and maybe include in the policy of the institution. A number of traditional universities currently use formal mentorship programmes with good results in terms of providing support not only to female academics but also to all new staff. Mentorship programmes tend to generally focus on research only. However, good mentors should offer support in terms of capacitating and incubating new female leaders so that these leaders do not experience the challenges they are currently exposed to.

6.8.6 ROLE OF MALES

The role of males in building and inspiring female leaders should be explored. This could be heightened by making sure that men are involved and included in the initiatives that support female development in academia. The fact of the matter is that in these research findings, there were suggestions that since males have been in the leadership game longer than females, open communication and encouraging transformation should be inclusive of males as well. Males have been stated to be involved in mentoring and sponsoring females. While past scholarship has highlighted the negative effects related

to gendering leadership and an individual's behavioural capacity to lead, there is a need for more studies that focus on de-gendering leadership through classification and dialogue. Therefore, having males in the system would accelerate change and de-gendering of the institution.

6.8.7 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Examining the experiences of females in senior leadership positions, this study has resulted in a number of policy implications:

- Motivate females to pursue leadership positions. Active participation by females in all areas of their occupations will conclude in an interest to even participate in leadership roles in universities. This could be done by engaging and appealing to female leaders to give motivational speeches to assure females that being a leader is an area they could venture into and surpass all expectations. This could raise the spirits of females to also aspire to be leaders as well as to have confidence in themselves.
- Approve and encourage the status of females in the workplace. In the light of an assault of criticism, females in general and female leadership abilities in particular, has become imperative that the status of females in universities be acknowledged and confirmed as similarly important as men. Criticising females for every move they make has the possibility to discourage them from aspiring for senior positions.
- Empower females in leadership skills. Any job necessitates satisfactory training if those doing the job are to excel. There is a need to spread leadership training to more female leaders and females in general, in order to give them the skills and power needed to lead.
- Create networking opportunities for females. Networking has been considered an opportunity-loaded event. Opportunities for females to meet and share concerns that affect them need to be created. Promote an all-out support system for females. It is important to know that if approaches towards female leaders are to change, men have to get involved. It cannot just be females who support female leadership in universities.

The findings of the study reveal institutional policies, support from senior management, and family support as apparent in females' successful leadership. The study concludes

that despite the support, females may not be attracted to leadership because the policies in place are gender-biased, as males continue to control the senior positions, as well as the patriarchal tendencies that reserve leadership for men. Once equality has been achieved; it is then that, universities will experience a 50-50 gender balance that will enable a de-gendering of the institutional environment. If females are to enjoy equal opportunity in the workplace, such declarations need to be enforced in all areas including in universities. This is essential today in the light of the many females now working in higher education than before.

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that patriarchy is an ancient reality that thrives not only in homesteads but also in universities. It is not an easy task for females to challenge patriarchy, but this has to be done if females are to reach their full leadership potential and aspire to those positions presently dominated by men. It is recommended that female leaders vote other females into powerful structures in order to warrant equality; in the present structure, this will flag the dominance of men over females. Females should also mitigate the issues of equity, equality and discrimination against females by means of policy. They should advance their skills through workshops and discussion forums so that they are able to grow additional skills and the necessary confidence to occupy various senior leadership positions. It seems that men are united in their patriarchal attitude towards females, while the opposite seems to be true with females. It is, therefore, recommended that the females, in the study, must start female networks. It is through such groups that females can promote programmes such as raising their research profiles through publications, journals and encouraging females to take up leadership positions. It is also recommended that female leaders engage with females at other academic institutions in order to overthrow the patriarchy. Once that is achieved, then de-gendering of the institutions led by the revolutionary females will be achieved.

6.8.7.1 SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Increasing returns to education in a more globalized, service-oriented economy may be increasing the rewards to women's preferred strategies to acquire leadership. Women now outpace men in educational attainment and life satisfaction in many of the most economically developed societies (Stoet and Geary 2019: 44). However, gender inequality in access to leadership positions in business, government, and other sectors

persists. Consideration of the linkages between evolution and cultural norms provides a more comprehensive toolkit for dismantling contemporary gender inequality in access to top leadership roles. We offer five policy-relevant suggestions, which are neither the only ones that could follow from our integrated framework, nor necessarily what other evolutionary-informed approaches suggest.

First, we may be unlikely to generate gender equity in leadership largely by promoting behavioral similarity in women and men, such as simply encouraging women to “lean in” (Sandberg 2013: 15). Even in the absence of negative evaluations of women leaders who violate existing gender norms (Rudman and Phelan 2008: 63; Hoyt and Burnette 2013: 633), women and men, on average, may be motivated to pursue different leadership styles, with women, on average, adopting a more democratic, relational style (Eagly and Johnson 1990: 569; van Engen and Willemssen 2004: 7). A contribution of sexual selection to gender differences in competition and cooperation suggests average differences in leadership style are unlikely to universally disappear, but rather may be moderated by norms and institutional settings that change the gender-specific costs and benefits to particular forms of competition and cooperation (Gneezy et al. 2009: 1638). Across societies, increased gender equity may even associate with increased (not decreased) average gender differences in many values and motivations (Falk and Hermle 2018: 66) – a phenomenon known as the gender equality paradox (Stoet and Geary 2019: 55). However, inter-individual variation independent of gender has and will likely continue to eclipse any average gender differences in predicting leader behavior (Bass and Stogdill 1990: 47).

Second, we can limit the extent to which certain gender differences privilege male leaders by calling attention to their limited or even negative impact on leader effectiveness. This includes men’s greater tendency for self-promotion, overconfidence and exaggerating their competence, which helps elevate many unqualified men to positions of power (Chamorro-Premuzic 2019: 52). To the extent men, more than women, prefer to socialize in larger same-sex groups (David-Barrett et al. 2015: 122) and to build larger social networks comprised of many “weak” ties (Fromhage and Jennions 2016: 7), men may be unduly privileged in the pursuit of leadership, particularly in the mixed gender hierarchies

of large organizations (Van Vugt and Smith 2019: 952). Effects of social networking on gender differences in leadership are exacerbated when leaders tend to be male and leaders in general prefer to hire and promote similar others (i.e., the “old boys’ network”) (Koenig et al. 2011: 620). We should scrutinize the extent to which organizations reward men’s more than women’s preferred forms of competition and cooperation (Cassar and Rigdon 2021: 5201). Not just to redress inequality in leadership access, but also because organizational goals can suffer when competitive (“toxic”) masculinity dominates an organization’s culture (Berdahl et al. 2018: 47). We can also call attention to implicit preferences regarding leaders’ physical formidability and dominance (Berdahl and Anderson 2005: 47), and the ways in which the media and politicians stoke fear of out-groups (Lopez 2020: 56) to draw out these preferences. Studies with WEIRD participants find male leaders are preferred during war whereas preferences for female leaders increase during times of peace (de Waal-Andrews and van Vugt 2020: 75).

Third, we can make use of other evolved motivations, particularly our tendency to emulate prestigious role models (Jiménez and Mesoudi 2019: 6), to chip away at cultural norms favoring men in positions of leadership. The more often that existing leaders, men or women, promote women as leaders, the more we normalize women as leaders and change stereotypical associations of leadership with masculinity. In a now famous study in India in which villages were randomly assigned a requirement to elect women as chief councilors, girls in the villages were subsequently more likely to aspire to higher education and politics (Beaman et al. 2012: 582) and men acquired more positive views of women’s leadership ability (Ibid). Institutional requirements for gender equity and inclusion can be transformational in shaping male and female preferences and female access to leadership.

Fourth, organizations can accelerate cultural change in gendered divisions of labor by making work more compatible with childcare and by adopting more charitable parental leave policies. Expansion of paternity leave can boost men’s contribution to childcare and housework long after the period of paternity leave (Buenning, 2015: 31; Patnaik 2019:

164). While women and men may differ on average in preferred work-childcare tradeoffs, such tradeoffs can be highly contingent on not only cultural norms and institutions but also on the biological changes that can accompany fatherhood. Parenthood can decrease men's desire to compete and advertise mate value as suggested by cross-cultural evidence that reductions in testosterone can follow new fathers' direct involvement with their children (Gettler et al. 2011: 16194).

Fifth, societies can benefit by harnessing the diversity of leadership styles that come with a more equitable mix of female and male leaders. While average sex differences in preferences and motivations do not tend to be very large (Archer 2019: 1388), they can still have important effects. In certain contexts, leader effectiveness may hinge more on risk-seeking, overt competitiveness, and creation of rigid hierarchical coalitions, on average favoring male leaders. In other contexts (Post 2015: 1155), and some argue the majority of contexts (Kramer 2010: 420), leader effectiveness may hinge more on less direct forms of competition, risk aversion, and more empathy-driven forms of relationship building, on average favoring women leaders. For example, a study of gender quotas for firms in Norway found that more female directors decreased a firm's shorter-term financial performance but also decreased exposure to risk, with potentially longer-term positive consequences (Zell, Krizan and Teeter 2015: 12). In addition, women leaders can be more likely to prioritize issues like healthcare, welfare, and education (Funk and Philips, 2019: 21) that advantage the most disadvantaged in society. Moreover, women's empowerment in general may be a key driver of transitions to greater democracy and transparency in government, and, in some cases, promote better outcomes during times of crisis (Wittemyer and Getz 2007: 675).

6.8.8 DE-COLONISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Opportunities for advancement for female leaders have increased; however, a deeper level of exclusion continues. The final borderline of gender and racial equality exist in access to informal networks apart from cronyism and the de-mystification of white male leadership authority. The simple practice should be the top candidate for the leadership role. When social inclusion, gender and racial equality, and acknowledgement of best talent and best performance are the accepted academic standard and business practices,

the diverse and ground-breaking outcomes from these practices will benefit the progression of student education and role modelling through the university system, producing a universal academic community whose primary focus is on the best results and solutions for higher education.

Decolonising has recently become the new buzzword in South African higher education, where almost all stakeholders are demanding the decolonisation of the curriculum in particular and higher-education institutions in general. While this is not shocking, it is, however, startling that it has taken twenty years after the advent of democracy for this movement to surface. The higher education sector in South Africa has been concentrating on transformation since the introduction of the Higher Education Act of 1997. South African universities have revealed diverse empathies of transformation and have endorsed the same in their institutions, but this has brought little or no change in their institutions and the society, hence the call for decolonisation. This call for decolonisation took another turn when a student vandalised the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (a central figure in apartheid South Africa) in the University of Cape Town, which is located at the centre of the university. Many students took up the call from other universities including Rhodes University, where students called for the renaming of the university. Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal concealed a statue of King George V with white paint and students at the University of Witwatersrand held transformation talks (Smith, Lacey and Hayes 2017: 285). However, the South African higher education system is not the only higher education system to be struggling with such challenges. All of French or Francophone Africa is yet to develop a higher education system for itself (as independent nations) and move away from the colonial regime. While Kenya as far back as the sixties struggled with this, other African nations are yet to engage the notion of decolonising the higher education system. Contemporary, nations like Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have taken up the initiative to decolonise the education system while the Caribbean currently deals with decoloniality. This points to the fact that decolonisation is circumstantial in nature and was experienced differently by different people and nations. This study, therefore, recommends the decolonising of higher education in South Africa in general and in UoTs specifically in an era where globalisation and internationalisation are the order of the day. This view of decolonisation goes beyond the political or traditional notion of decolonising which means the process of abandoning control of a territory by

the coloniser to the colonised, to the more severe complexities of flaking away colonial legacies from the education system be it material or philosophical.

6.8.9 LEADERLESS LEADERSHIP

To take a slightly different angle, as a researcher. I buy into the concept of leaderless leadership. The way I deduce this is that leadership is an act or process that can come from anyone at any time and does not depend on an individual who has been defined as the leader or appear as the single leader. In this definition, leadership becomes embryonic (emerges from the group and dissolves back into the group), distributed (can and should come from diverse people within a group) and sporadic (only lasts for a distinct and often short amount of time). This goes against the usual model of leadership where a single leader is defined and needs to have numerous qualities and act in a particular way (often following a specific style). For this approach to work and engage the range of talent and motivation available in a group, the environment needs to be carefully formed, curated and enabled. Along these lines, I think that there are many characteristics of leadership, which rest on the group and the person providing the leadership at any time. Since the definitions of leadership given in leadership research are so incredibly broad and understandable, it is clear to me that asking what is essential in leadership (across all situations and individuals) is not the best question to ask. Of course, that might make the work being done (the reason behind the question) more complex and lead to less clear-cut results.

6.8.10 ENVISIONING A DE-GENDERED VISION OF LEADERSHIP

Envisioning a de-gendered vision of leadership means instituting a framework for what constitutes effective leadership in universities. I build on research that notes that higher education leaders need adaptability (Nyoni, He and Yusuph 2017: 45), academic credibility (O'Connor and Goransson 2015: 326), selflessness (Mythili 2019: 62) collaboration and transparency (Mazerolle and Barrett 2018: 249). This scholarship emphasises the gold standards of academic leadership. Through the study interviews, I showed how females are capable of upholding these standards. This is not to say that the females in this study are without fault or have never failed; they also have made errors and in their leadership journeys but have through resilience risen above their failures and are currently successful leaders. Gendered differences are not always effective in how

leaders perform their jobs. There is no doubt that building a successful career demands dedication and hard work, and globalisation made travelling and working in multiple spaces part of the package of any senior leadership position. In addition, it cannot be denied that having to leave your children behind every so often and missing some milestones in their lives can be taxing. However, females possess the emotional intelligence to navigate the numerous spaces successfully.

Furthermore, self-centred and non-transparent female leaders, who have little regard for an institution's culture will find their term of office short-lived or ridden with conflict. This chapter, therefore, suggests that regardless of gender, universities need to find leaders who will effectively lead their institutions toward future prosperity. Leaders that dispel myths such as masculine or feminine leadership. Data from this study revealed that several factors contribute to a leader's efficiency, one of which is the ability to adjust to new situations by listening to followers and learning from the mistakes of others. As such, effective academic leadership is not feminine or masculine. Effective academic leadership includes accepting the institutional culture and respecting the position by prioritising the interests of stakeholders through clear and transparent decision-making. Such standards are not gendered; they are universal to both females and men leaders and shift the challenging feminine and masculine leadership divide.

Upon completing my Master's degree, I was honoured to join a company that was servicing one of the UoTs. The company comprised females from previously marginalised racial groups, even at the senior level. I was fascinated by the company's organogram because by and large, men still dominate formal leadership positions and leadership is still constructed in masculine terms. I wondered what it would mean to be a subordinate to a female leader. I had read widely about the so-called "feminine" and "masculine" leadership, with female leaders being described as tough and masculine in order to affirm their position and power. A year later, I learnt that these theories can be awkward, as they only serve to promote bias against female leaders. To suggest that gender identities bear influence on productivity in the workplace disqualifies females and perpetuates the stereotype that men are better suited for senior leadership roles. Through my own experience, I have found that females and males can lead organisations successfully because good leadership requires competencies that both genders can acquire through mentoring, training and commitment to personal development. During my journey, I have observed different tactics being used by my female seniors to respond to situations and I

believe that good leadership informed them. They have exercised decisiveness, analytical skills and strategic thinking, all of which are considered attributes of masculine leadership. Similarly, I have experienced democratic, compassionate and nurturing traits in them, not because it is in their nature as females, but because it was the fitting response to particular situations. This personal experience moved away from risky and destructive gendered characterisations that separate females' experiences from men's experiences.

The respondents of this study also noted the importance of leaders' recognition of their leadership potential. Modelling best practices of mentors in addition to figureheads with whom respondents did not have private relations also proved to be appropriate for the female leaders who acquired strength from their counterparts. On the other hand, learning from the failings of others was just as important as learning from their achievements. This transparency and on-the-job learning through listening and action proved to be outstandingly noteworthy for the female leaders who care for their institutions and want to ensure their sustainability. These above-mentioned experiences, which did not present any notable gendered differences, suggest an absence of a gendered framework in how females refine their leadership skills.

6.9 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

This study only focused on universities of technology. However, the country has traditional universities, TVET Colleges and private universities and colleges. It would be beneficial to conduct such a study at these universities and colleges so that interventions can be directed from a national point of view. Whether the experiences of female leaders in South Africa are the same or similar at all institutions should also be studied.

Gender equality in higher education is of late receiving increased attention and consideration. Focus on gender equality in higher education reflects mounting concerns that females in higher education are not getting the same treatment as their male counterparts. In the higher education sector, there is less prominence of females in leadership positions, especially in senior leadership positions. Despite government and institutional policy intervention in the improvements in gender-related matters in education, there has not been much of a change. As Morley (2013: 120), explains the number of females in senior positions is growing very slowly. By the year 2015, South

Africa had only five female Vice-Chancellors out of 23 Vice-Chancellors in the country (Council on Higher Education Statistics 2015). Without hesitation, this worrying trend takes place against the backdrop of more females now entering the field of higher education than before. There is no doubt that to reverse this trend, there is a need to elevate more females to senior positions in higher education. However, this study suggests de-gendering of institutions.

Females' increasing representation in higher education leadership positions offers forecasts for change in the social construction of leadership, yet it is a systemic subject that will involve adjustments over time. Hossain and Noor (2016: 320) stated that even if all female leaders in higher education in Africa and globally, got together and attempted to work on de-gendering leadership, it would be impossible to end the division between male and female. Even though there are more female leaders in senior positions in higher education currently, those females are not sufficient enough and are from different races, classes and ethnicity. Therefore, future research should continue to incorporate the stories of females in senior leadership positions in order to further recognise and problematise the goal of weakening, gendered leadership. Female leaders are currently at the beginning of a radical period in which the popularity of females in so many key leadership roles present the prospect of a de-gendered leadership. In future work, researchers need to explore further the relationship between leadership and gender by examining the experiences of both females and males. Male leaders also have a role to play in the de-gendering of institutions, especially since they are part of the reason why females have gender-related issues in the workplace. Additional research might also question the patterns of females in previously male-dominated leadership roles and compare them to men's experiences in previously female-dominated leadership roles. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of males that 'ride the glass escalator' (Gouws 2008: 22), in traditionally female-dominated fields. Future studies might also study the role that a gendered leadership model plays regarding men's experiences. For example, men's experiences as leaders at female colleges and female rights-based institutions would be a key place to start with this line of investigation.

The females whom I interviewed in this study come from institutions with open-minded views concerning non-discrimination toward females in leadership roles at all levels of a leadership hierarchy. While the prospect of having a female as a Vice-Chancellor, for example, had not yet happened at all my respondents' institutions, it was not a foreign

concept. As such, future studies ought to reflect on females and men's views at institutions that are closed to senior females' leadership. These studies might deliberate leadership definitions at religious institutions that are unwelcome to female leaders as part of rigid practice, military institutions, and large public research universities that have never before seen female leadership. Furthermore, in a varied setting such as South Africa, it is irrational to assume that gendered perceptions are the same. This study can further investigate whether regional cultural differences concerning gender affect gendering in leadership. I was hoping that the data from this study was going to permit such an analysis; however, it did not. Therefore, future research should examine this linkage. Moreover, I suggest that researchers carefully look at race and sexuality, and how they influence an intersectional understanding of de-gendered leadership. By intensifying the research to new topographies in the corporate and governmental frameworks, researchers will have more opportunities for coming across leaders from traditionally marginalised frameworks. While race and sexuality are acknowledged in the literature review of this study, I have not analysed the data through these lenses given the under-representation of respondents from these marginalised backgrounds.

To capture the nuances of leadership that surpasses advantaged white heterosexual male patterns of leadership, research should look at how race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality contribute to defining leadership. Lastly, future research might consider how university stakeholders de-gender leadership or reproduce gender stereotypes through their opinions of female and male leaders in leadership roles. Findings of this study probe female leaders for their responses on the gendering of leadership that are extremely valued given their public roles and path setting potential. Yet, insights from students, staff members, former students (alumni), university councils, the community, and business and governmental partners regarding gender and leadership would allow for a diverse angle and successively further augmentation of de-gendered leadership.

6.10 PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE STUDY

It is rare that women leaders across different parts of the higher education sector get a chance to sit down and share their experiences with each other. That is probably not the result of the differences across our delivery of academic programs or a reluctance to talk to one another, but more that of a time famine, a term that came into being in 1999 to describe the universal feeling of having too much to do but not enough time to do it. With

the increasing diversity of higher education and the corollary needs and expectations that accompany it, such triangulation is not only rare but significant. Despite not serving in any leadership positions in a higher education institution, from what I have experienced personally, the experiences of navigating leadership within higher education have been remarkably similar in so many ways.

This study has resulted from a discussion among colleagues about the experience of females in senior leadership positions in universities. It was noted that in spite of employers of choice and action to counter discrimination and to boost equity, many females of quality are not being used to their full potential or are leaving these institutions for a more supportive environment. In this environment hungry for human talent, the cost to both individual institutions and the nation is important. The issue also has an important social element as females of quality are often discouraged and deprived of their fullest chances in life.

Much of the research in this area has focused on experiences pertaining to issues of structure and workplace policies such as those connected to work-life balance, affirmative action in recruiting and so on. However, it was felt that the essentially hidden story was in the subtler areas of culture and social and interpersonal crescendos which affect the quality of females' experience, and therefore career choices and ability to contribute. The proposal to undertake this research attracted the ready support of several open-minded female leaders in various sectors who were willing to help guide the study.

Engaging in research focused on the voices of females empowered me as the participant-researcher. Throughout the research process, I probed the need for such a study in an age when conservative understanding and media suggests gender equity has been achieved. When I commenced data analysis for writing the results section, I still quizzed whether my research held any significant results that would be of value to society. As I unrepentantly continued to read more literature and plug through the dissertation process, I recognised my feelings of insufficiency were reminiscent of much of the research and the experiences the females participating in the study shared with me. It was through their words that I felt the stimulus to continue on my journey. If the only impression the reader takes away from this study is by hearing the voices of female leaders allows for an upward web of connections other females can cling to as they strive to find their voice and

inspiration. How extremely important encouragement is for other females to continue along the same path as the fierce and fantastic females in this study.

Living in a rural area in Swaziland, where speaking about gender discrimination and feminism can be identified with a scarlet letter, created a passion within me. It is of concern when the word feminist can make individuals uncomfortable. During the course of the study, I found myself incapable of bringing up the word feminism, for fear the females participating in the study might shut down and decide not to contribute fully to the study. None of the females spoke about being feminists either, which only solidified in my mind that it might be a risky term to use. I used the terms gender equity, double-bind, and dual expectations, all terms that have encircled the feminist movement. When I wrote about the limitations of the study, I avoided the word feminism but kept asking myself if the word was a limitation?

My uncertainties about adding this to the line of questioning specifically come from personal uneasiness and my uncertainty of how it would affect the study and the research questions. It was clear from four out of the ten females interviewed they had to think for a moment about a time when dual expectations were placed on them. In a way, do they force themselves to turn out to be gender blind? If so, is this damaging or helpful for the acceptance of females in leadership?

This dissertation began as a response to conventional media's gendering of leadership and self-help books for females that described females as the humans that needed emancipation from the claws of males both at home and at work. We live in a society where university females and females at all stages of their careers are often faced with the message that if they wish to break through the glass ceiling, they must learn how to act like men. As a former student of political science, women in leadership roles, whether behind the scenes as first ladies or first mothers of presidents or women in political office, have always interested me. Reading about the socially constructed, gender-based challenges and barriers that these females have historically confronted has always been a source of encouragement for me. With this in mind, I was extremely sensitive and reactive to my exposure to insights that females ought to change their gender.

Having females in senior university leadership positions sends the message to other marginalised groups, mostly among the student population, that opportunities exist for them. Moreover, there is a general sense of fairness that an institution can gain from

having females in leadership positions. An institution creates a reputation for itself that subsequently improves its future (Dunn, Gerlach and Hyle 2014: 33). Having females in senior positions sends a message that an institution is forward-thinking, advanced, and prepared for path-breaking innovations. We still live in an era in which witnessing first females Vice-Chancellors at universities is common. While progress is slow, females are indeed being part of the decision-making in universities. Some respondents referred challenges they have historically faced (and some continue to face) due to gendered disadvantages in the workplace, they admitted that females' gender identity could also serve an empowering role toward leadership advancement.

I found this research to be of particularly strong interest and importance to the leadership public. With an increase of females in senior positions, it is essential to stop doing business as usual and to challenge institutional norms. With a mounting number of females obtaining decision-making power, researchers might ask, "Has the work to obtain gender equality only begun?" Could a revolution be approaching, creating work environments that integrate a feminist model of shared power, no matter one's gender? Could the conventional idea that men create the culture of the workplace and females adapt be up for a fundamental change? The voices of the females in this study add to the potential of a new system that encourages authentic leaders and concurrently advances the interests of the university.

6.11 THEORETICAL REFLECTION

This research has made a unique theoretical contribution to the subject of female leadership because of its scope and depth, as well as of its approaches that have been applied for the first time to deliver a new and dissimilar understanding of the factors that influence and contribute to the experiences of females in senior leadership positions.

Starting with leadership in general, this research progressed on to the question of the successes and challenges faced by female leaders in universities of technology. It has been noted that while there is a wealth of research on female leadership, there is a shortage of academic studies relating to the equally important area of female leaders in universities of technology in South Africa. This research has filled that gap, especially regarding the factors influencing females who have been particularly underrepresented. During the development of this research, a wide range of data has been found, read, and

subjected to severe scrutiny, categorised, evaluated and discussed and a higher education perspective context contained in them, considered.

The following theoretical contributions to knowledge are identified:

1. This study has contributed to existing knowledge through an organised search, review and identification of the dynamics found by scholars of pertinent academic studies to influence female leadership in UoTs, which might have not been thoroughly reviewed and previously identified from a viewpoint of factors influencing UoTs. It is also the first study on females that are already in senior leadership positions in South African UoTs.
2. This study has provided a further important theoretical understanding of the influence of the identified important factors affecting female leaders, as well as the benefits of being in a senior position. This was done in order to make senior positions attractive to aspiring females and to show that such positions are achievable irrespective of the challenges, masculine culture and female isolation in boys clubs. This has led to the proposed de-gendering of institutions and their workforce.
3. This study has added to the theoretical and practical understanding of factors that female leaders are exposed to and their influence on UoTs and made a positive contribution to the debate and literature dealing with the existing challenges facing different UoTs in South Africa.
4. This study has opened many directions for further research, and the potential for such research is virtually limitless. It, therefore, will become a useful tool for interested scholars and experts, and an appreciated starting point for further discussion on the subject of female leaders in senior positions. This study will also begin an interchange in both the academic and private sectors and encourage other researchers to conduct further studies on the factors that influence females to take up senior leadership positions.

Finally, in terms of future lines of research, the study proposes an analysis of the effectiveness of the different measures aimed at increasing the presence of females in senior leadership positions. Likewise, with regard to the proposed recommendations, the author of this study believe it is critical to delve deeper into the social and cultural processes that prevent a permanent transformation towards gender equality in our

society. Besides studying how gender stereotypes that obstruct the job promotion of females are created, it is key to identify the discourse logic behind said prejudices and social norms and the possible causes for their persistence

6.12 FURTHER RESEARCH

From the rich literature of the gendered nature of leadership, it is evident that there has been much research conducted about women's underrepresentation in leadership positions both in the higher education system and the corporate environment. I would suggest further research into the male leadership characteristics about the possible challenges men might face when adopting stereotypically female leadership tasks such as promoting cooperation, being receptive of others' emotions and opinions, and working toward a consensus for the good of the group (Burkinshaw and White 2017: 5). How are men perceived by their peers when their agentic leadership style is blended with a communal, female blend? Could biases and the adverse effect that stereotyped masculinities play in their leadership effectiveness and diversity?

6.13 SUMMARY REMARKS

Gender equity continues to be a challenge not only in higher education in South Africa but in all industries globally. It is imperative that this topic continues to be researched, and that conversations are open to accepting the de-gendering of institutions and roles of the workforce. It is important to note that several initiatives from institutions perspectives would require funding, however, many humanitarian organisations are looking for opportunities to fund such initiatives in order to provide support through developing funding proposals that will enhance development within universities.

The aim of the study was to investigate relevant factors, which relate to the experiences of females in senior leadership positions. The findings in this study confirmed that certain obstacles challenge female leaders and negatively impact the growth of female numbers willing to take up senior positions in higher education.

I found that gender-based dissimilarities are detached when an already-accomplished female is preparing herself for further advancement on the leadership hierarchy. At this time, she may turn to, or she may be stimulated to attend gender-specific leadership

training programmes that are a response to females' historical marginalisation from leadership positions. These training programmes provide an opportunity for females to network within a gender-specific context in which they can share insights on surviving strategies for gender-based inequalities that they may have faced in the workplace concerning harassment, work and family balance, or gender roles. I see a new generation of females who continue to advance to higher education leadership positions in larger numbers and who may find more reluctance to attend gender-specific or separate training that suggest men's natural command of leadership and females' need for further training. Training, as my respondents pointed out, can be very helpful for female leaders, especially those with narrow and limited prior leadership training through their academic studies. Such training can assist females to build networks to eradicate the old boys' network and inspire a degendering of leadership in higher education.

Upon analysis, some unswerving aspects of the participants' descriptions of their experiences emerged. First, each female described key mechanisms in their contexts that assisted their sense of success as university leaders, emphasising the role of family, faith, support, and education in career success, during the course of their lives. Furthermore, the participants in this study described themselves as having various identities in their work and communities that frequently overlapped. However, these identities were, at times, the predictions of others' expectations of females within their context. Finally, the participants often imparted characteristics and expectations associated with 'being a female' that prompted a sense of performance, or 'gendered work'. The following section will expand upon these findings and provide gripping data from the study participants to explain the nature of the females' experiences.

This chapter presented the experiences gathered from ten females in senior leadership positions in higher education. It summarised each participant's personal and professional experiences along their leadership journeys. As they described their stories, they shed some light on how they navigated their leadership journeys, the barriers, challenges and catalysts they experienced as they ascended into their roles as female leaders, and the important roles played by their parents, communities and mentors. Their experiences provided them with the capacity to comprehend, connect, and empathise with a range of individuals and groups. Re-storying was used to deliver the participant's experiences and

the participant quotes were used generously to allow the reader to hear each participant's story in their own words (Burkinshaw and White 2017: 11).

The chapter presented the descriptions of experiences of females in senior leadership positions in universities of technology in South Africa. The data were organised by themes which developed through the semi-structured interviews conducted with ten females. The themes related to each research question. The analysis of the data focused on descriptions of the unique experiences of female leaders and on understanding their apparent challenges and retention strategies, applied to succeed and advance in their careers. The ten female leaders gave testimony on their path to leadership, as well as their interpersonal leadership styles and ideas. Most of the females in this study entered into higher education by 'accident' or were motivated and encouraged by parents, friends, teachers or community members to advance in their careers. The descriptions of leadership styles primarily focused on the power of relationships as leaders, and how those relationships not only assisted them in advancing their careers but enforced them to be resilient, flexible, innovative, diligent and committed professionals. The females in this study voiced several race and gender-related challenges and loneliness because there are few females at the top. Another factor was the absence of support from colleagues. The sinister nature of being labelled was quite challenging for some females in this study, which put pressure on them to work harder in their careers to dismiss the assumptions.

Though the females in this study faced many challenges, they possessed a host of approaches and coping mechanisms to effectively and successfully continue to advance in their careers. The research insisted on the importance of leaders being mentors and Thandi, emphasised this in, "our history dictates that we empower other females, but females also need to 'show up' and want to be mentored".

The females in this study learned a lot about leadership by learning about leadership from others and integrating what they had learned into their own styles and actions.

The most dominant strategy was remaining connected through the circle of support from friends, family, religion to aid them in balancing their personal and professional lives, in addition to calling on a divine power to protect them during the difficult conditions they faced.

2.14 CONCLUSION

There is enduring discussion worldwide about the lack of females in senior leadership. Regardless of years of discussion about the supposed benefits of gender diversity, progress has been glacial: senior leadership roles and senior positions of power throughout society (in general) and higher education (in particular) remain largely the preserve of males. This critical review explores how females' power is narratively created in all cultures in UoTs in South Africa and how stories told about females' experiences in senior leadership positions may impact different cultures in South Africa and specific identities, possibilities and ambitions.

In 1963 Friedan coined the expression, 'the problem that has no name' as a label to the dissatisfaction that many females in senior leadership positions felt. Female leaders, in South Africa (27 years after democracy and freedom) still feel that they are overburdened with gender-structured roles. The current description of 'the problem that has no name' relates to the frustration females now feel on the journey to the acquisition of high-level leadership positions. Participants in this study have indicated that the barriers that existed in the literature years ago remain for females today as they climb the senior leadership ladder. As Bradley (2013: 59) expressed that females' rise to leadership positions has been excruciatingly slow and sometimes painful, and there is still a severe gender imbalance among senior leaders in higher education. Attention should be given to organisational gendered culture in higher education. (O'Connor 2015: 310) and at a much expansive social level or as Morley (2013: 126) stated that higher education needs new rules for a very different game.

This study began with an exploration of the personal accounts of the participants' journeys in higher education prior to their present positions in senior leadership that directly influenced the governance of the university. The stories of these females, who have worked in universities reveal both encouraging and undesirable experiences along with times of hopefulness and disappointment. While there were obvious inconsistencies in the stories of these senior female leaders, they have all approached their leadership roles by trying to make a difference to students, staff and the universities. There were stories of exclusion and inclusion in an environment where they have few if any, female

predecessors in senior leadership positions (Redmond, Gutke, Galligan, Howard and Newman 2017: 332).

Females went to work in universities with an expectation that they will be treated the same as men, and they expected that the assessment of their work will be on its merit. Lastly, they had a theory that they would advance in the same way that men rise to senior positions. However, this has not always been the case, as this study has exposed. In this study, I conclude that in spite of substantial efforts to fight gender inequity in higher education, the challenge still exists. Females play a crucial role in every sphere of South African society. The responsibility of teaching children generally falls on females, whether in the home or the school. Higher education in South Africa needs more female representation in faculty and administrative positions. Such females will serve as role models for female learners and decrease the continuing shortage of females in senior positions in numerous faculties in South Africa's higher education. What is required is a more compassionate, shared, family, and communityfriendly culture within the university, which support females. As Hyde (2014: 375) unequivocally states, the struggle is far from over, but the goals are not impossible. The universities in South Africa need to play a more responsible role in this effort. In affirming the role of universities in promoting good citizens, it behoves these universities to be in the frontline in pursuing social goals that work towards greater justice and more caring communities.

The patriarchal nature of South African society has gradually crept into the universities. This culture, consciously or unconsciously, shapes females' experiences in higher education. Most researchers have indicated a low presence of females in senior positions in higher education in South Africa. However, some females did their best to overcome difficulties and are successful leaders of universities today. These females have been able to find a balance between their jobs and family life in spite of the huge responsibilities both at home and at work. These females are heroes in the eyes of other females, and this study has learnt that staying in senior positions in higher education, is a combination of resilience, hard work, networking, and other factors, especially because the media has sold stories of female leaders as failures when faced with challenges.

It appears to me that what we can learn best from the stories of female leaders in education is what we do not want to repeat for those coming after us. In discussing and outlining the circumstances in which we find ourselves as leaders in sometimes hostile

conditions and under depressing environments, we are giving ourselves the chance to re-define the space if we want things to be different for the young females who will lead soon. The females in this study have navigated their careers from humble beginnings and are now occupying senior positions like DVCs, Deans, Directors and HODs. These females have shaped the profession differently. I hope females are striving to lead higher education so that every student gets the education necessary to participate fully in our democratic institutions, prepared to protect and strengthen them with a critical eye.

Headway towards gender equality in higher education remains a pipe dream for many female leaders where females are by far still under-represented. Many obstacles are still present in universities that, if sufficiently addressed may pave way for females to assume leadership positions and for female leaders to see leadership as a possible route for them. These exposés show that females still have a long way to go to reach gender balance in higher education. Taking academic power to achieve equality is a significant step for females across higher-education institutions in South Africa. The argument above supports that such changes may be a step in the right direction. These issues have implications for the context within which females function at work. It calls for diverse and understated forms of facilitation strategies. Essentially, in such a gendered environment, unions should intervene such a way that both females and men become empowered to be active participants that can also aid them in the fight for gender equality. Moreover, that will increase the chances of them overcoming gender bias.

The under-representation of females in senior leadership positions in higher education continues to be a problem in South Africa and globally. This study looked at the experiences of females who have made it into senior positions. In doing so, these females have redefined their roles in society and showed us that, even though the route to senior leadership is challenging, it is possible to have a career as well as fulfil other roles outside of the workplace. The females also adopted the transformational style of leadership that enabled them to have positive experiences and avoid hostile response while occupying their senior position. They show us that these roles are not necessarily incongruent, and it is possible to hold several roles. This study provides hope in that over time the leadership and gender role may come to be viewed as not being incongruent but as parallel roles that can be held concurrently. Further, this study may contribute to interventions that will aid females in advancing females to the highest positions within

their respective universities and females that want to pursue leadership in the private sector.

These females have shared their stories in an environment of extensive and constant change in the sector, and I thank them for their honest comments and the time spent from their busy lives to decide to be part of this study. For young females joining the sector or those in their mid-academic career, it is hoped that these accounts and the resulting suggestions will assist them in their career progression at a more natural pace and with less disappointment than those who have traversed the gendered leadership landscape before them.

The intimate stories the female leaders shared here collectively demonstrated that gender issues are still prominent in higher education leadership. They indicated that we must not be blind to the worth that females play at all levels of an academic leadership pyramid. Both female and men as leaders experience gender in very significant ways whether or not it is through their own experiences or their interpretation of others' experiences. The females that I interviewed revealed remarkable projections for gendered experiences as leaders. The capacity of degendering leadership can only be achieved through this constant focus. Attention to and an importance on eradicating the classification of leadership as "feminine" or "masculine" is part of this attempt. Furthermore, a focus on gendered power crescendos, on the part of females in academia enables this feminist degendering movement.

The findings and conclusions of this study mentions that female employees and females who wish to be future leaders should take advantage of the changing social view to advance their careers to senior leadership positions. The data generally supported the idea that there is value in understanding how each level of inquiry affects individual females as they take on leadership roles. All of the females faced genderrelated challenges in their leadership, but the challenges came from diverse sources and/or through different mechanisms.

In higher education, females are not only underrepresented, but their distribution throughout the industry is extremely lop-sided. Though their representation is increasing in senior levels, the actual representation in senior level remains marginal. This underrepresentation in senior levels results in fewer role models for young brilliant and capable

females who are willing to lead universities into a new order where inferences of gender are not mentioned. The entry of females in to senior-level leadership will have to be enhanced in order to change the attitudes and the culture of higher education to attract more leaders that are talented with diversity and innovativeness. Therefore, not only higher education or the other stakeholders who influence females' career but also the females concerned should take the interest to overcome their own obstacles for entry into senior leadership positions.

The findings also have several implications for policy makers and higher education employers. There is need to provide a flexible work environment to female employees to enable them to cope with family responsibility roles and leadership roles. Career advancement opportunities should be provided to all irrespective of their marital status or association. The acknowledgement of soft skills to females has both positive and negative implications for females. On the one hand, it may serve to raise the standing and value of females in higher education leadership, but it also works in ways that contribute to females' marginalisation in leadership. Thus, females need to become valuable and viable contributors to the senior leadership in higher education, not by doing menial work but in indispensable jobs, pushing through the glass ceiling and pushing aside glass walls to turn into leaders in their own right.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, recommendations for females in senior leadership, suggestions for policy and practice, future research recommendation, and a conclusion to the study. In closing, this quote by Arianna Huffington summarises what female leaders need to do in order to manoeuvre through challenges, but they also need to bring something unique and a force to be reckoned with to senior leadership.

“Don’t just climb the ladder of success – a ladder that leads, after all, to higher and higher levels of stress and burnout – but chart a new path to success, remaking it in a way that includes not just the conventional metrics of money and power. But a third metric that includes well-being, wisdom, wonder and giving, so that the goal is not just to succeed but to thrive.” (Huffington 2016: 12).

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Similarity index report

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APPENDIX B: Permission to conduct research (CUT)



Central University of
Technology, Free State

■ INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Ms ZT Mabaso

Student Nr: 21144070

Durban University of Technology

Hospitality and Tourism Department

mabasoz@dut.ac.za

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEACH "EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR FEMALE ACADEMIC LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA"

Dear Ms Zanele Thandeka Mabaso

**This is to confirm that you have been granted permission to conduct research at CUT
campus for your DTech studies entitled "EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR FEMALE
ACADEMIC LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA"**

The conditions of the permission are:

- **The research will not interrupt any of the official activities at the CUT;**
- **You will supply us with the copy of your report;**
- **The cost of all related activities will be covered by yourself;**
- **Recruitment of participants is the sole responsibility of yourself;**
- **Voluntary nature of the potential participant's decision to consent to participate should be strictly observed;**
- **You should not disclose a potential participant's decision to participate or otherwise to any other party;**

APPENDIX C: Permission to conduct research (DUT)



DIRECTORATE FOR
RESEARCH AND
POSTGRADUATE
SUPPORT

Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Trompsburg Annex, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946
E-mail: moyses@dut.ac.za

15th June 2016

Ms Zanele Thandeka Mabaso
c/o Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

Dear Ms Mabaso

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) has granted full permission for you to conduct your research "Experiences of Senior Female Academic Leaders in Universities of Technology in South Africa" at the Durban University of Technology.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings can be submitted to the IRC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards,
Yours sincerely

PROF. S. MOYO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT

APPENDIX D: Ethical clearance certificate (VUT)

	Vaal University of Technology <i>Your world to a better future</i>	RESEARCH DIRECTORATE Tel: (016) 950 9531
Research and Innovation Ethical Clearance Certificate		
Applicant:	ZT Mabaso	
Project:	Experiences of females in senior leadership positions in Universities of Technology	
Institution:	Vaal University of Technology	
Date Approved:	25 July 2017	
Ethical Clearance Number:	ECN52-2017	
Approved: Yes/No	Yes	

D^{rs} SM NELANA
CHAIRPERSON: RESEARCH & INNOVATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date: 25 July 2017

**Research and Innovation
Ethics**
Private Bag X021
VANDERBIJLPARK
1903
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South Africa • Tel: +27(0)16 950 9000 • Fax: +27(0)16 950 9599 • www.vut.ac.za

APPENDIX E: PG2A approval letter (DUT)



27 May 2015

Reference: Proposal Approval: ZT Mabaso, Student number: 21144070

Dear Ms ZT Mabaso

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MANAGEMENT SCIENCES (BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION)

This serves to confirm the approval of your research proposal by the Faculty Research Committee, at its meeting on 13 May 2015, as follows:

1. Research proposal and provisional dissertation title:
EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR FEMALE ACADEMIC LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisor: Dr IG Govender

Co-supervisor: N/A

Please note that any proposed changes in the dissertation title require the approval of your supervisor/s, the Faculty Research Committee, as well as ratification thereof by the Higher Degrees Committee.

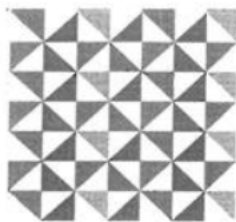
2. Research budget to the amount of **R15 000.00**

Please note that this funding is not a scholarship or bursary and is therefore not paid directly to you, but is controlled by your supervisor. Any proposed changes to use of this funding allocation require the approval of your supervisor and the Faculty Research Committee.

The Institutional Research Committee has stipulated that:

- (a) This University retains the ownership of any Intellectual Property (patent, design, etc.) registered in respect of the results of your Masters/Doctors Degree in Technology studies as a result of the award and the provisions of the above Act;
- (b) Should you find any of the terms above not acceptable then you are given the option to decline the Research budget award to your project in writing.

APPENDIX F: IREC approval letter (DUT)



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Health Sciences
Room MS 49, Mansfield School Site
Gate 8, Risson Campus
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 373 2900
Fax: 031 373 2407
Email: irec@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

13 January 2016

IREC Reference Number: **REC 126/15**

Ms Z T Mabaso
72 Manor Drive
Manor Gardens
Durban
4001

Dear Ms Mabaso

EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR FEMALE ACADEMIC LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

I am pleased to inform you that Provisional Approval has been granted to your proposal REC 126/15 subject to:

- Obtaining and submitting the necessary gatekeeper permission/s to the IREC.

Full approval is subject to meeting the above conditions.

The Proposal has been allocated the following Ethical Clearance number **IREC 001/16**. Please use this number in all communication with this office.

Approval has been granted for a period of two years, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification Report form which can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures [SOP's] of the IREC. This form must be submitted to the IREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Professor J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC



APPENDIX G: RAW DATA / CODING

THEMES IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

THEME 1 GENDER AS A BARRIER

Research Question 2: What are the barriers and challenges are faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

"The only blatant thing that I have experienced as a female as far as the work environment was being talked over a couple of times by white men and females. One day, I called a meeting in my Department and while I was speaking, one male colleague kept on correcting my sentences. I know there was nothing wrong with my gramma, but he kept on interrupting and saying things like "what the Dean is trying to say is....." When it started I was so stunned that that I had to check myself and ask did that really happen. In our next meeting I knew that if he does that again, there is going to be a problem. So I brought in a recorder and recorded the meeting and once again he interrupted me and corrected my gramma. So the guy starts talking and I carried on talking. He got louder and I also got louder until he stopped talking, then I said, 'Yes I was interrupted I want to state it clear that when one of us is still the talking, the rest of us should be quiet and if there are any grammatical changes that any one wants to share, please do it after the person has finished talking'. Then he says, 'Well, I'm sorry I didn't realize, I was correcting your gramma". So, I said, 'As I was saying, please show some respect'. He left the meeting and I sent him an email later requesting to see him. When he came to my office, he apologised without me saying anything to him.

PARTICIPANT 2

"Now getting back to that intersectionality, I am naturally a no nonsense person and as a Virgo, I am known among my friends and family that I say things as they are. I don't beat about the bush or gossip. During Council meetings, I don't know if it's persona, my persona, gender, race or all of the above. I was never consulted when decisions had to be made. I felt like a token But, I did not think for whatever reason that I was being used to add up numbers. It happened once when I was asked to sign off minutes from a

Council meeting and I saw a point which was said by me in the meeting attributed to a male colleague. I started understanding sitting in my office about some of the things that Council members have been doing to other female colleagues who were members of the Council. I wondered how they got away with that. For a long time, I was the only female on the Council.

PARTICIPANT 3

“My experience was that during meetings I was made invisible, voiceless, discriminated, isolated, undermined, treated unfairly, oppressed and challenged. These negative experiences of race and gender discrimination seemed to dominate during the meetings until one day, we had a visit from the Minister of Education when I reflected on my past experiences. All the men in the house were embarrassed and all I wanted to bring to the fore was that even though I was a female, and had been voted into this Council as a member, it was my responsibility to engage in issues that affected the University and also, I clearly stated that the colour of my skin has nothing to do with my brain. I gave them a short lecture that they will never forget that black females, constrained from openly participating in many aspects of political, economic and social life, and ignored by white men, but also by black men and white females, have a unique perception that, if heard, would benefit not just black females but all of society”. The strength, courage and willpower that defined me on that day demonstrated my ability to rise above difficulty and forge ahead into a more senior leadership role.

PARTICIPANT 4

‘One mistake I made when I started in this position was to become like my predecessor who was a man. I later realized that I was not myself, thus not productive and I realized that I wanted to continue someone else’s legacy, instead of starting my own. One thing I know for sure now is that females should never try to be a man. I am a female and you do things in the way a female does.

PARTICIPANT 5

‘As a female leader, I think in reality if you start to say a lot, eyebrows are raised from male colleagues which is sort of a “Oh she’s go on a bit”. If a man is going on and there’s a lot of lengthy and expansive stuff, even if he is boring, but you just don’t sort of just

write them off. But if a female starts to go on and on, and it might be somewhat to do with tone of voice apart from all else, there is a bit of, "She's one of those females who just talks a lot". I have had to a certain extent senior people say, "Is she one of those females who talks a lot?" That is a classic saying. I however don't hear that so much about, "Oh he's a man who goes on and on and talks a lot".'

PARTICIPANT 6

'It's so funny because when I put my foot down I am aggressive and I am sure the Director before me when he was putting his foot down, he was said to be decisive. When I went into administration it was a very mindful decision. Working with books was one of my dreams and when I was employed as a Librarian, I took the job since I always had a keen interest in what was going on in the library. Eight months into my job, a post of being a Director at the Library came up. Since internally, no one was interested in the job, I applied for it and got shortlisted which shocked me since I was told by my colleagues that I was not going to get it because the university was employing black staff only as a form of Affirmative Action. I got the job"

PARTICIPANT 7

If you are female in a senior leadership and you want to stay in that position or even progress further, you have to have the approaches of a man for them to keep back you up or support you. In other words, you have to be like a man. I was always annoyed with racism in my university. I felt that if we would only make some simple changes we could benefit not only ourselves but the students as well. After just two years working in the university as an administrator, I moved into academia as an HOD and because I wanted a more senior position so that I could be in a position to influence policy, I did my PhD in a record time of four years and when a post of Deanship was advertised, I applied because I saw that if I occupied the position of a Dean I would make things better. Unfortunately, the university's culture was not easy to change and before I knew it, I had stepped into people's toes. This did not discourage me from pursuing my agenda. I still occupy the same position but see myself as a Vice Chancellor of the university one day"

PARTICIPANT 8

"I was hired as IT specialist assistant after having studied and obtained my degree in IT. I also started my own IT business on the side. I then got much more interested in the

whole area of bringing the internet in impoverished rural communities, especially since the university at that time was also interested in connecting with the communities. "I moved from being a normal assistant, to driving the outreach programme. When I realized the impact it had on children, I started looking at other programmes to help more people, and especially more females, in farming, and that led me to want to make sure there were courses in place to assist them. The work I was doing was a driving force that continuously put my name 'out there' and when a leadership post in the university was advertised, I applied and got it. Today I am in charge of the university's Information Technology Department and this has positioned me to oversee not only the university's IT Department, but to sustain more outreach programmes in my province"

PARTICIPANT 9

"Another issue in my department was that promotion to senior positions required more than a person's skills and experience. It was often prejudiced by undistinguishable rules and limits such as good-natured relations with influential individuals or other unspecified expectations. Further, the ways to partake in opportunities for career development as a senior leader, such as training or travel, are often oblique in secrecy. This vagueness increased I joined the department as the first female".

PARTICIPANT 10

"The staff and students in this university are either from the township or from the rural areas. Somehow, it is better to lead people who understand your background and who are willing to learn with you. My female colleagues [in traditional universities], they need to fight more, they don't feel as included. I would share with some of them about that, it is a feeling that I cannot say I have ever experienced in this UoT".

For the black female in this study, almost all of the black participants felt the bearing of both race and gender discrimination in their careers. The blend of race and gender for black females still hampers the probable for moving up to senior positions. Race and gender are intertwined and are not separate entities. Through the lenses of this study participants experienced their race and gender jointly. Feelings of racial and gender bias reverberated with all of the black participants. For these females, race did not outplay their gender nor did gender outplay their race. In their development as leaders, they confronted a double bind in spite of their leadership abilities. This was unavoidable in this

study, although I did state earlier in the study that I wanted to exclude race issues in this study. However, during the interviews, most of the respondents insisted that it formed a big part in their development as leaders. According to the respondents, there was no way of separating gender from race as these two identities intersected. I then pursued to search strategies future leaders might use to address leadership development and career predominance for all females who aspire to leadership roles.

For the females in this study, almost all of them felt the effect of both race and gender discrimination in their occupations. The blend of race and gender for these females still obstructs the prospects for their rise to senior positions in UoTs. Those already in such positions also lamented about race and gender as an obstruction in their growth as leaders.

THEME 2 PATRIARCHY

Research Question 2: What are the barriers and challenges faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs (at institutional level) Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

'I would say most of the females in senior positions got into the culture of working 24/7. There is this very strong culture that the more hours you put in, the more appreciated and valued you should be to the institution rather than the quality of the work, and those in senior positions work crazy hours. The devotion to being available 24/7, to working on the weekends, to be on their iPhone answering it while on vacation, this whole culture of your work has to be ever-present in your life 365 days a year, which is without question not present in traditional universities which dominantly have white staff, which is much more lucid in the direction of work-life balance. Even the very senior leadership people, I mean, my boss is in Canada and he is control all of the whole Faculty but when he is on vacation he is on vacation, he just makes sure that there are people in charge of things, and if there is a crisis, he does not respond to his email or call immediately, because most of the time his phone is off. My other boss here in the Finance department of the Faculty goes on a vacation twice a year and if I call him he says, "I am looking at the ocean as I am talking to you". Both these bosses are white and they have no worries about work-home balance. I, however, worked 24/7 when I started in this position

because I had a lot to prove but now, I always go on holidays, be with my family on weekends and have learnt to switch off my computer and my phone when I am at home or on holiday. I have learnt the game and I am enjoying the ride”.

PARTICIPANT 2

“Females have not experienced much leadership encouragement from men. My institution is working hard to promote gender equality here, but it is hard because of male supremacy and oppression of females. I was faced with difficulties when suddenly I became more senior than the colleagues with whom I has had recently been working with on an equal basis. When I stepped up to my current senior role, it was difficult at first. I felt very isolated, deserted and lonely as I suddenly had a role that detached me from colleagues that I had up to that time worked with directly. I appreciated the promotion but I didn’t want to be higher than my colleagues and to put my whole heart into this role, and so I really had complications in distinguishing this role from me as a person ... it took a long time for me to get used to it. But once I got the grip of the role and responsibility, I started enjoying my job”.

PARTICIPANT 3

‘Well, the timing was such, it was so unexpected that there was no choice but to step up and that was it. There was no time to pace around and sleep on the idea because my Executive Dean expected results and not whether I was ready or not for the role. I had to be there being the Research Co-ordinator of the whole Faculty and I think there is an fascinating thing about how some individuals get on with roles and to some degree if people treat you as their senior you can be the senior and clearly I have had a lot of that because lots of colleagues and people I did not know from the university started saying great things about me, “You are doing a really good job” and so on. I got numerous emails congratulating me on the position and on the changes and improvement that I was doing in the Faculty. The thing is, somebody had to be a Research Co-ordinator and surprisingly to me, I was the person who had to be it and the way I just pushed myself to quickly learn and within a three months started getting more students coming into the Faculty to register for postgraduate qualifications. A lot of my success is conferred upon you by other colleagues saying, “That role is just you.” There have been some fantastic things about my position and most of it has been brilliant. I have had some days where I am like, “OMG, I am responsible for all of this” kind of thing.

PARTICIPANT 4

"This was not a permanent position for me as the residence manager suddenly passed away. The perception in the institution was that the residence job was in safe of hands. I suddenly found herself in a role that I was not entirely expecting, which was stressful for me, although in fact I was entirely capable and up for the challenge. "Masculinity and whiteness are advantaged identities that are facilitated and supported by this institution. This institution function as power-governors as they regulate access to privilege while instantaneously legitimizing the status quo. Unsettling such systems are discussions centered on examining leadership through the lens of social justice, equity and diversity. Such an attention has developed through meaningful conversations on the ability and capacity of executive leaders to address the needs of the female population due to growing educational equity gaps".

PARTICIPANT 5

'I have found myself in situations where I just had to hoof through the job because there is no one to report to. But this time in this particular job I do find that a lot of people and even externally, rely on my service and in running my department. That is something I hadn't expected when I applied to work in the faculty – I find myself pretty much running the faculty and that wasn't quite the job description I signed in my contract of employment. I am a Deputy Director here, and these extra responsibilities have weighed very heavily on me to be honest. I am still studying towards my PhD and these roles have taken up a lot of my time time, keep me awake at night because I'm actually thinking of the whole faculty, the strategy for the whole faculty, while I believed I was applying for a Deputy Director's job it's quite scary really and the responsibilities of it are massive. It's not because I'm really anxious about it or not happy, it's because I'm still thinking about it, working it through and trying to absorption everything. I don't know whether it's just me not getting the hack of it very well. But I am taking my job very seriously as well.

PARTICIPANT 6

"Sometimes I work until 4am, get home, bath and get back to the office. This is not because I am over-worked, but it is because I am perfectionist and want to make sure that everything is correct. I don't want to be embarrassed in a meeting full of other senior

managers by a mistake in my presentations because the male colleagues are always looking for us to fail. I need to ensure that all the facts are correct. This impacts badly on my family as there have been utterances that my work was my first love and they followed after. I think some men in this institution are reluctant to put in the extra hours but feel that leadership is for them. There is also a lot of discussion here in this university about females at senior level often put in those positions, whether it is on purpose or not, put in roles without the right development and not maybe so much concern of whether they can be successful or not, and what it takes to be successful, so it is kind of that scapegoat concept.

PARTICIPANT 7

“There were talks in a boy’s club that my appointment as a Dean of Student Affairs was a way to put me in the line of fire. I got the position when the university’s students were rioting because of issues like NESFAS, poor accommodation and poor catering company not delivering to the expectations of students. The men in executive positions decided and said “let’s put her in the role”. ‘This was after I had delivered a paper on Gender issues at the university. My paper was published in an international journal. I did not mention my university, but after the publication of the paper, there was hostility around me and that’s when I was informed that there will be post of Dean of Student Affairs and I should apply. I saw this as a dare and I applied. I got the job and without any training or development, I was expected to deliver. It was very hard. Some students were used by men in the institution to make my job difficult. After a year, I wanted to resign, but decided against it after attending conference on women and leadership that I paid for myself to attend. During the conference, I shared my story with the group of females there and the support I got was amazing. I came back with a strategy and a thick skin. Those that awaited my resignation are still waiting even today hahahahaha!”

PARTICIPANT 8

“Females in South Africa have been voting for more than 20 years, but have they achieved actual political equality with men in higher education? No. They go through the gesture of going to the polls but it is generally a gesture without real power. When

meetings are to be held at which significant and meaningful matters are to be decided, I am often are not asked. When I am informed of official meetings where essential matters are to be discussed, I generally find all these things have been planned and prepared in secret meetings of the men earlier, without consultation with me. It is unfortunate that most of the female leaders who carried the early fight to success have dropped out of academia, among them were females with gifts of real leadership. This has been in many ways unfortunate and discouraging”.

PARTICIPANT 9

“When I entered into the positions of leadership, I experienced a deep-rooted difficulty of anticipations where I was chosen to display communal traits as a member of the female gender but at the same time to display agentic traits as a member of leadership. This is a difficult balancing act where females are criticized both for being masculine and being feminine. This created stress and frustration for me as a females in senior position who, despite my efforts, often experienced attitudinal consequences by acquaintances and subordinates for not being compliant to the apparent role. These punishments often included poor appraisals, condemnation, and social rejection. In addition, most leadership positions are defined using agentic terms, so men are considered more fitting for those roles, whether the position is in a field that is seen as traditionally male- or female-oriented (i.e. education). Men will consequently hasten their climb up the institutional ladder, leaving females to slowly ride the glass staircase and to work through external discernments.

PARTICIPANT 10

“Females at this institution have experienced male sovereignty, disempowerment, and lack of respect for females. Men on the other hand have this notion that some females want easy way out yet, we as females work hard but we are hardly recognized. “One female once told me she was afraid of losing her job because daily, she faces disrespect from males. Although I work hard, this is not taken seriously and I am often asked all the time when I am spending time with my children because men in this institution believe that we belong at home and not here, I feel that I still need to do my duties as a wife and mother. This is tiring but fulfilling for me. I tend to ignore patriarchy but it is really hard to be in such an environment”.

According to the responses from the female leaders, it is clear that masculinity and whiteness are advantaged identities that are enabled and supported by organizations such as the educational system. Such organizations regulate access to privilege while concurrently legitimizing the status quo. Disturbing such systems are discussions centered on examining leadership through the lens of social justice, equity and diversity. Such an interest has extended through expressive conversations on the ability and capacity of leaders to address the needs of a diverse staff population due to growing government equity policies. Although the UoTs are in a diverse system of inclusion the results of this study, found that diversity and inclusion are not equal. As a result, stifled opportunities are provided to those who have not historically held positions of power, including those who identify as men.

THEME 3 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE LEADERS

Research Question 1: What are the barriers and challenges faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

"I personally feel that there are no barriers. If I want, I can become the Executive leader of this university. However, I don't really want to. I personally see females as leaders. I am pleased, proud, but I personally am not interested in becoming one of the Executive leaders here, because for me everyone has their personal interests. ... My children need a lot of my time and attention, and I prefer research more than sitting behind a desk. I don't think there are any key or significant challenges for females to become leaders. The most important thing is in the female herself, whether she is ready or not, whether she faces difficulties that arise, whether or not she works professionally, and whether or not she works with men professionally".

PARTICIPANT 2

"I have a children who are still small and need a lot of attention, while the leader must have 24 hours to think about the institution; I don't have time to do that."

PARTICIPANT 3

There are numerous factors that prevent females from reaching the top leadership, the first is our cultural factor, [our] patriarchal culture, which means that the public considers men as more dominant leaders... . This means that with the mistrust of females about being at the top of leadership it is ... still very rare for a female to become a Chancellor. Secondly, there is also competition in career progression in this institution. You can lose your life whilst trying to climb the corporate ladder. I don't want to be in that situation. It is not worth it".

PARTICIPANT 4

There are many barriers for female leaders here in this institution. The first is that there are many misgivings from the community or a group of people that [a] female can become a leader, the second is that due to the absence of females who want to take up leadership positions, the steps to the upper level are not quick and flexible like [they are for] men. There is a cynicism of gender, which means placing boxes between men and females who think that females are unable or [who] discriminate. It means they have never seen that a female is capable and worthy of being a leader in a university. If there is no support from people around, then females will always be disadvantaged".

PARTICIPANT 5

A patriarchal culture [and] absence of trust in females. Females must outperform men to become leaders; females must also take care of their families and university administrative requirements".

PARTICIPANT 6

"Don't ever see barriers to step on, I think when females have the capacity and inclination to be visionaries, then they can".

PARTICIPANT 7

"Returning to the position of females who have various roles, they must take care of the family, [they face a] lack of opportunities ... [the] assumption that men are more proficient

than females, and the conditions that must be met. There is just no space for females to progress into leadership. Even when you are in leadership like myself, some men make it difficult for you to lead and you feel like quitting”.

PARTICIPANT 8

“More to the challenges in yourself, there are many challenges in being a leader and prioritizing family. Despite huge gains made over the years concerning access and representation of females in higher education, the percentage of females in leadership and decision-making positions continues to be small. This is due to positions of power in an overpowering majority of universities are occupied by men”.

PARTICIPANT 9

“Climbing up the academic ladder, females are overloaded by family responsibilities. Hence, it is important that policies and actions are sensitive to their odd situation. Females are still doing most of the caring, educating, cooking and cleaning in homes, although gender gaps have lessened”.

PARTICIPANT 10

“There are obstacles that have contributed to the existing scarcity of female leaders in higher education include, among others, issues related to funding. No doubt, funding is a common challenge for higher education in overall. In the case of females trying to access funding for PhD studies, for instance, the ground seems not to be level and this is not the case for men. Female-friendly scholarships need to be enforced in universities. There is a need for development partners and funding organisations to offer scholarships that consider the uncharacteristic issues of females. These may include prolonging the cut-off age limit and offering scholarships that allow females to travel with their children to study in a different location, for example”.

PARTICIPANT 10

Female leaders also need to step up and support other females. Females who find themselves in positions of power should be encouraged to create room for other young academics to shine and to climb to the top. All too often, we females are said to be our own ‘enemies’, with those at the top making it hard for others to progress. Introducing a policy of mentoring can also assist in grooming young females into leadership posts”.

The results of the interviews show that some female leaders in UoTs have different sentiments about the barriers and challenges faced by females in achieving senior leadership positions. While the experiences of these females differ in many ways, there are certainly similarities in the challenges and difficulties that they have faced, and their insights of what has allowed them to experience success in their leadership roles. Answers ranged from females being less interested in top leadership positions to a patriarchal cultural and a lack of trust in female leaders to a lack of support and family responsibility. However, some of these assertions are more dominant because of the patriarchal culture. Females encounter a lack of support and assume that their role in the family is more important than senior leadership positions.

SUB-THEME 1 BARRIERS AT PERSONAL LEVEL

Research Question 3: What are the barriers and challenges faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

"There are numerous opportunities now for females to occupy senior leadership positions in universities, whether it is at the faculty, postgraduate, or institute level. It is important that females have the skills, are professional, and have good-quality work".

PARTICIPANTS 2

"Leadership development programs for us female leaders continue to be a critical element in teaching and supporting females in higher education to prepare for, attain, and maintain positions of influence within this institution. The bottom line is that we need to develop skills and competencies, obtain mentors and coaches for more females for leadership in higher education. We also have to build resilience so that we do not prove to our critics that we cannot do our jobs".

PARTICIPANTS 3

"Enabling structures that include career development support; coaching; training; advice and support; professional development; organisational change such as equity policies; encouragement and mentorships are some of the things we need as female leaders. We also need organisational leadership development programmes in order to build the

capacity and capabilities of females in leadership and those that aspire to be future leaders to gain leadership skills and problem .While such programmes or structures improve the leadership development of both genders, many organisations like the one I am currently in do promote female leadership programmes. The development is not as fast as we would like it to be, but its happening slowly”.

PARTICIPANTS 4

“Universities, like all other education systems, have the prospect to make a major difference to the effectiveness of female leaders through the development of resources and programmes that openly support current leaders and those aspiring to take on a leadership role. We as female leaders need to be strong and drive these programmes and not allow any obstacles to stand in our ways”.

PARTICIPANTS 5

“I attended an academic high school where the head of school was an early feminist of sorts who encouraged me to enroll in university. I was the first in my family to go to university. My mother did not have the skills to help me but I was destined for greater things. I never allowed my circumstances to hinder my progress, when I fell, I got up quickly because I knew I was doing this not only for myself but for my mother and siblings as well. My community members kept suggesting that ‘university was a waste of time for a girl’, but that did not deter me from pushing even harder. I had to make my own decisions about education. My early approach to life was influenced by spending school holidays in my books. University in the 1960s was a motivating place to be. After completing a bachelor's degree, I was offered a Masters scholarship, but instead I became a lecturer as soon as I graduated. I then worked in one institution of higher education for many years, but it took me years to move to senior lecturer position. I did not depend on any one but myself. I was very ambitious for an interesting. Eventually, I got a PhD and that opened doors for me to be in a leadership position. I started to win university teaching awards, which meant that subsequent promotion to senior leader relatively quick. I then moved to this university to secure senior leadership positions and professorial roles. No one did it for me, but I did it myself”.

PARTICIPANTS 6

“My parents had no academic qualifications. However, they were supportive of my journey. I wanted to strive and be better than my parents. I have two younger brothers, and was the first in the family to go to university. During my career, I had been in leadership positions at my first job. From childhood, I was quite often out front, never afraid to speak out or give my opinion. I was quite direct. I valued hard work and effort by regularly working a seven-day week, which had led to me to my current leadership position. I spent a lifetime crawling up through the layers of life. I also had a good self-awareness. I am a high performer; so if I do something, I do it well and over. As a female, I have to prove myself to many people”.

PARTICIPANTS 7

“I am in a senior position today because of the personal drive I have. I see myself in an executive position in the future. This does not mean that there are no obstacles in my way, but I get kicked off and get up quickly. No one is going to stop me. I like working with people and believes that people can lead from wherever they are in the institutional structure. I also feel strongly that people should not be made to feel insufficient if they cannot get a senior management position. I believe that my virtuousness, my diplomacy, and my ability to negotiate have been the skills and attributes that have helped me to rise through the ranks to senior leadership”.

PARTICIPANTS 8

With the support of my husband and extended family, I was able to persevere, and eventually land the senior leadership positions to which I currently occupy. It was not easy at all. I hardly slept and pushed myself daily to achieve something”.

PARTICIPANTS 9

“Earlier studies that I engaged in lead into a permanent position here in this institution. In a crazy move, I pushed myself even though I had children and financially supporting my family. At one point, I felt that it was not possible for me to be a mother and to work, but realised even then the irony of that decision, given that I was working in the area of access and equity. In spite of the demands of my young children and ageing parents, I completed my PhD and considered my career path a series of misguided career choices. I looked

for information everywhere and was not shy to ask for help. Although, I could not get help from other females, I got help from a Professor who taught me to be resilient and push hard for achieving what I wanted”.

PARTICIPANTS 10

“Resilience has been observed as an important characteristic and a common feature for me as a female leader. I was influential in the creation of the university, when the treatment I received during that experience possibly best demonstrates resilience. Everyone kept asking me what I was trying to prove. Even my mother said ‘it would suit me better, to look after the family business and my children and to get this ‘silly nonsense out of your head’. Notwithstanding these personal affronts and possible knockbacks, she persevered to gain local financial support and approval, leading to eventual support from the Prime Minister to establish the university.

The female leaders on this theme explained the importance of having strong characteristics or personal qualities when in these senior positions. They had strong characters and described themselves as assertive people who liked working hard to be where they are. They were also very educated individuals, as demonstrated by their achievement of PhD higher degree qualifications. The females in this study were determined in their approach to work, and resilient in the face of disappointing outcomes and substandard behaviours of others. They had values such as kindness, equity, and an ability to empower others in addition to a very strong work ethic. These qualities are essential to recognise in oneself and in others because leadership came out of females who recognized certain attributes in themselves.

SUB-THEME 2 BARRIER AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Research Question 3 : What are the barriers and challenges faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants’ answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

“The gender gap is the difference in any area between females and men in terms of their levels of participation, access to resources, rights, power and influence, remuneration

and benefits. Where is “gender leadership gap,” describing the difference between men and females in terms of leadership position and power. I had to be careful in choosing an institution with values that fit mine. Although there were many financially attractive opportunities to choose from, I did not wish to pursue such opportunities because those institutions did not fit with my own value. There was one university that was going to accelerate my career to new heights, but the racism in that institution did not sit well with me. People always asked me why I decided to work in the township and my answer is always the same: it’s the organisational structure. I believe that this university is situated in this township and it is the role of all staff in this institution to assist the community either with skills or just to open up the Main Hall on weekends for community funerals and wedding. Such gives me joy. I enjoy going to community markets and speaking to the female entrepreneurs and find out how the university can assist her”.

PARTICIPANT 2

A career in higher education can provide a fulfilling experience whether you focus on administration or academia. If you plan to pursue this career path, it is important to work on developing your leadership qualities and skills. Being an effective leader plays a vital role in having a successful career at post-secondary educational institutions. Learn more about why leadership skills are so important, and what kinds of qualities an educational leader should have. It is however disheartening that even though I have the right qualities to be in this position; I am still seen unfit to occupy this post because I am a female”.

PARTICIPANT 3

“I have dealt with some people not liking me because of the fact that I was the first female in my department to get a PhD. The institution then said all lecturers should study towards a PhD. Some people were lecturers with diploma qualifications and Btech qualifications. I was made a research co-ordinator and this angered both male and female. But the culture of the university was changing and there was a need for people to pull up their socks. Some resigned and some reluctantly registered and are thanking me today. Having leadership qualities is helpful in many fields, but it’s crucial in higher education. When you work in this field, you might be responsible for managing employees and staff. No matter what your particular duties and responsibilities are, you’ll need to put leadership qualities into practice in order to be effective. Most female leaders in this

institution are good leaders; they can help you when it comes to making serious decisions on how to progress in your leadership journey. However, it is the educational institution that determining who gets those posts. Promotional policies are not in favour of females. Those who are successful, like myself when I encounter challenges in this type of job, having the leadership qualities that I have sometimes makes it easier for me to continue doing my job well”.

PARTICIPANT 4

“Knowing which traits are part of being an effective leader can help ensure that you focus on developing them. You might possess some of these qualities already, but keep in mind that there’s always room to grow and improve. The qualities of a successful educational leader include being passionate about your work, leading by example, being a good planner, driven to help others and building strong connections. These qualities can actually take you far in leadership promotion. Men in this institution are ruthless when it comes to power. It is so sad that even now in the 21st century, men have time to ensure that a female does not become a senior leader. I have had my computer hacked and untraceable threatening emails but I have not been moved at all. My department has turned a blind eye and I have had to have my own camera installed in my office because I felt an intrusion of my space. I have been using my personal laptop for more than 5 years. This is a culture designed to get rid of females in leadership, especially black females”.

PARTICIPANT 5

“One of the most effective quality that female leaders need to have is to develop strong networks with others, including students or lower level staff that they lead or manage, as well as colleagues. Such leaders have the qualities and skills needed to build and inspire connections among students or employees, such as interpersonal skills and communication skills. I have been able to form these connections and it helps me to accomplish my goals when teamwork or collaboration is needed. Such connections can also boost the attitudes of students and staff by helping them feel like they are an important part of your team”.

PARTICIPANT 6

“You might think that virtuous female leaders tend to be more on the cautious side and evade taking risks as much as possible. Yet, we as female leaders are ones who are not scared to take risks when needed, such as when coming up with a long-term objective or brainstorming ways to accomplish smaller goals. As a female leader, I am willing to think outside the box in order to come up with new or unfamiliar ways to tackle problems. I also inspire others females to take risks in order to accomplish goals or improve their performance in higher education. Without these skills, you are nothing and men can walk all over you, even if they did not have the qualities that you have”.

PARTICIPANT 7

“When working in higher education as a female leader, you can expect to spend time appraising data for projects or to develop planning objectives and goals. This is why it is essential for female leaders in higher education to be contented taking on a data-driven approach. Focusing on data can give female leaders understandings into problems or issues that a certain class or department—or even the university in general is facing. For example, I t analyse data in order to help staff improve academic performance and improve their teaching methods if grades have been going down”.

PARTICIPANT 8

“Being a female leader in this university often means having to make tough decisions. In some cases, I might not have all of the facts needed in order to make these decisions with ease. However, as a good leader, I am able to tolerate some greyness and handle decision-making better. If new information is brought to my attention I make sure that I implement what has been brought to my attention and show that I don’t work alone but depend on my team for success. This kind of flexibility is an important part of leading others positively in an educational setting that is marred by a lot of challenges for a female”.

PARTICIPANT 9

“The best thing I do as a leader in this university is not to be greedy when it comes to having power or authority. In fact, I am willing to empower my colleagues, since they understand that this can help the entire department. Finding ways to empower my colleagues ensures that the department achieves long-term objectives functions better overall. As I moved into senior position, I noticed that females at senior levels in this

institution were appointed but they did not stay long in those positions. I have also noticed the difference myself. Now and again, I am being reported to executive management because my own personal style is a more direct, emphatic style. I have always been a good child growing up I never got into any trouble and when I grew up I became a good citizen abiding by the rules of the country. So, growing up, I assumed that everybody is motivated into doing the right thing and when I came into this senior position, I assumed that my colleagues are motivated by doing the right thing, yet the culture here was the "What's in it for me?" attitude. I had to close all those loopholes and stepped on a lot of people's toes. I became the enemy. But there was nothing they could do to me because I was their senior and I kept on instilling a different culture".

PARTICIPANT 10

"There are different situations and challenges in this university that require me to use different leadership styles. While I might spend most of my time on the job using one style, you will find that knowing about the other styles of leadership can help adjust my approach, whenever needed. For example, I might run into a difficult issue that involves me to adopt a different leadership style than I normally use. Being able to alternate between styles when needed is part of being an effective and successful leader. Although there are numerous leadership styles in higher education, some are more common than others".

Working in higher education is a career that can be incredibly fulfilling and rewarding. However, many females still struggle to get into leadership irrespective of the fact that they have the right qualities and characteristics for senior. The female leaders in this study pursued careers that challenged them were able to keep their minds sharper for longer and also improved their qualifications, as all of them had PhD degrees.

SUB THEME 3 BARRIERS AT SOCIETAL LEVEL

Research Question 3: What are the barriers and challenges faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

“Lack of encouragement and support to us females by our societies has a negative impact on our ambition to become leaders. In the same way, the patriarchal oppression, and the recruitment of bias effectively silences females' demands to leadership. In addition, endocentric patriarchal philosophy denies the female leaders and neglects their placement in senior leadership ranking positions”.

PARTICIPANT 2

“The patriarchal cruelty and the mobilization of bias effectively silences females' demands to leadership in this institution. In addition, endocentric patriarchal belief denies the female leaders and neglects their placement in senior positions. The patriarchy kind of leadership has been practiced for years due to the cultural historical background that male do make good leaders. However, gender-stereotyping ideal have produced a negative impact in society towards gender and leadership resulting in us females being denied for leadership positions in higher education. Family responsibilities, especially those involving marriage, childcare and domestic activities have affected many of females' career progressions. In this university, also an issue of sex role stereotyping and socialization has stalled females' access to leadership positions. There is the presence of stubborn sex role stereotyping as a major barrier to females aspiring to leadership positions. There is also informal exclusion, depression, and sidelining which have excluded females from the academic and administrative leadership initiative”

PARTICIPANT 3

“Higher education lack strong networks for females to be linked and develop leadership skills. Actually, the networks that have been set by my institutions do not represent a number of people in such organization rather, a certain group has been acknowledged to benefit from the given network.

PARTICIPANT 4

‘ My institution advocated for a big number of females to be represented in the management of higher education, whereas, the social construction of gender and the assignment of particular roles, duties and expectations for females and men. However, gender-stereotyping ideal have produced a negative impact in society towards gender

and leadership resulting in females denial into leadership positions. Here in this university, it was regularly observed that general family responsibilities, especially those involving marriage, affected female's career progressions.

PARTICIPANT 5

"The status of the gender gap in higher education senior leadership positions that, the masculine system controls this institution. Normally, numerous factors causing females under-representation in senior positions of the university management where as individual factors, administrative and societal was detected as the leading barriers towards gender inequality"

The findings from this theme show the important relationship between individual, administrative and societal factors that block females to reach senior leadership position in universities. Besides, this study has revealed the gender mainstreaming as the system which can be connected to adjust the hierarchical institutions, methods and culture and bring the positive condition which will improve gender equality. Meanwhile, the findings of this study observed various societal barriers contributing to the gender leadership gap in higher education UoTs. As the results in this study show that, structures and practices which have been applied in the society supports male supremacy and the bias which was established in the society certainly silence women's ambitions towards leadership.

Although less extensive than societal issues, issues associated to corporate structures significantly affect females' in senior leadership positions in a more direct way. Organizational structures can inhibit female's positive experience in leadership positions. There are structures that include male dominated "old boys networks," which increases opaqueness and glass cliffs. Current networks in higher education institutions can often be homogenous. They often make it difficult for females to break into as females are often uncomfortable with networking in the social setting of these locales and are also incapable of committing the extra time outside of work hours due to their home obligations. Most of the time, the men also usually have little interest in welcoming female members. Because of these factors, the support network around females at senior levels of leadership is narrow and unhelpful.

The responses of the participants in this study revealed the importance of organisational culture in modelling approaches towards females. The females who were interviewed for

this study frequently felt that the institution and the environment in which they worked was supportive to females and had helped them before and during their current leadership position. Some felt that their institution mirrored their values, and that this was essential in their leadership experience.

THEME 4 MENTORING

Research Question 5: How does mentorship and sponsorship assist female leaders in transitioning in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

"Mentoring is critical to how we can sustain and escalate the number of females in senior positions in higher education. As a black female in senior leadership, I speak on behalf of black females. Colour is definitely an issue here and one has to uplift one of her own. These females should not be only at historically black Institutions either. This is a case here in this institution. It is in the township and it is assumed to be ghetto and a black institution. Black females need to be at the largely white and traditional institutions, at the White house, or all segments of society and not be pigeon holed to working in one specific environment. "People believe that when you are up there, you do not need mentoring. I am in an Executive position in this institution and believe it or not, I still talk to my mentor, who is a retired professor now and again. There is never a time when I say, "I am ok now, and I do not need her". This is like therapy. It's an ongoing process that empowers you but sometimes you fall off and need someone to help you pick yourself up and get on with it". It is worthwhile to have an independent voice to talk to and through these years, I have learnt and have found that very helpful".

PARTICIPANT 2

'I am a mentor to two ladies, one has just lost her husband and thinks her world has ended. The other one is struggling financially and is on anti-depressants. As a mentor to these two females, I have possibly learnt more out of the mentoring myself, than what I have given to them. To me these females talk about their problems, their issues, their concerns etc., and you have to think about how you would deal with those situations, you answer in a way that intelligently is the right answer. But then you stop and think, OMG, I do not know if I would apply the advice I am giving to them myself. I constantly ask myself what I would do differently. Or what should I have done myself? Even though I mentor them, I always want them to know that I do have flaws myself and I sometimes say "I don't know whether I want to be in this university anymore".

PARTICIPANT 3

"People have come to my office and if I happen to be at the front desk, they would ask for the Director (assuming that he was a man and then later realized their mistake). One day a female staff member came to my office to lodge a complaint. She was referred to me and she refused to speak to me and insisted that she wanted to speak to the Senior Director. I told her I was the Senior Director and she burst out laughing, went back to the front desk officer, and said she was looking for the Senior Director. She was again showed into my office and this time, she put her hands on her mouth and said "woops" in a surprised tone. What worried me was a question I have been asking myself since I took up this position: what really goes on when we assume that those in senior leadership positions are men? I then saw the need to introduce mentorship in my department as part of the job description. Once I had done that, in a few months, I could see that there were improvement in my staff and also the students that we deal with everyday"

PARTICIPANT 4

"Time and time again, female leaders are blamed for being too bossy, bitchy, cold, or aggressive: features that are at odds with habitually "feminine" traits like empathy, friendliness, and obedience. This inequity is particularly apparent in in this academic territory, where females in senior leadership positions are continuously attacked for being perceived as hard-hearted or antagonistic. I have been labelled by my junior staff as too pushy or ambitious". Mentorship has long been essential to the personal and professional development of my students, faculty, researchers, and staff in my department. When I saw that I was seen as bossy, I decided to start mentoring my staff members. This gesture

increased my likelihood of career success. From my perspective as a leader, mentoring can be a more essential part of larger leadership development plan, whether in support of transitioning into administrative roles, deputy deans, or deans-or career administrators moving into higher levels of responsibility. Even the most senior leaders in this institution (including the Vice Chancellor) can benefit from mentoring”.

PARTICIPANT 5

“I do understand that history plays an influential role in helping to create our plans, or mental agendas that we use to help us unify and understand the world. And historically, senior leadership positions have not been nearly as easily reached by females, especially black females, as they have been to men”. Mentorship can be particularly beneficial to those administrators underrepresented by, for example, gender or race, and many universities offer mentorship programs as part of wider leadership diversity programs. I have benefited a lot from my mentor and I still use her even now. The kind of information I get from her is priceless”.

PARTICIPANT 6

“One bias that I have experienced in a meeting because I was the only female, was asked to take notes. Somehow, there is this thing that men cannot take notes and females are the good ones in doing that. This always comes to me like, to them that is the only thing I am capable of doing. Those little subtle things tick me off. Most of the time it is done on purpose. Even if I am the senior leader in the room and happen to be a female, it is amazing how this type of thing continues to happen. This happened in a disciplinary platform once. Moreover, for me, my gender has been the critical portion in my career. It has caused me to think that I am not just a black female but I am a black female serving in a certain position in a University. Your responsibility changes because it is not just about me. It is also ensuring that they see other females like me who can do the work and to better, advance, and be a leader in all of that. You try to fight the struggle for other females as well. That is when mentoring comes into effect. I am even mentoring male colleagues who once thought that I did not belong in leadership. Today, they see me in a new way and respect me and other females in the department”.

PARTICIPANT 7

“To me this is the same old game being played. As a black female in a leadership position in this institution, I need to recognize that there is a game. There is the same old game being played, just not with the same pieces. I am a victim of the race card. Just like we have benefited from legislation and BEE, we are also victims of it. It is like okay, we are tired of y’all. We are going to empower a different group of people and this is going to be detrimental to you. The healthy mentoring relationship I have with my staff and students result in many career assistances for the mentee as well as enhanced satisfaction, increases in salary, promotion, and extended opportunities for learning and growth. It is vital to remember that it is not just the mentee who benefits from the bond. I, as a mentor experience the satisfaction that comes from supporting and helping junior colleagues, and often improve their own skills through the relationship. Contact with a younger mentee can be an opportunity for growth through exposure to fresh and different ideas, new inventive energy, and new ways of thinking about or doing things”.

PARTICIPANT 8

“The person who actually assisted me in developing my leadership skills was a black colleague. As an Indian man, I did not expect any assistance from an Indian. The issue of race and gender was and is still rife in this university. The Indian man was not from my department but every day, he would come over for tea in my office. First, I thought he was there to gossip, but later on realized that the only thing this man ever talked about was career development. He already had his PhD and was always writing journal articles. He always wanted to see how far I was with my research and assisted me in the collection of my data. Mentorship programs in this institution continue to grow and change to meet the cumulative challenges faced by new administrators and lecturers. Whether it is a specialized group, colleague or friend, a trusted and committed mentor should be an essential part of the personal and professional development for future leaders in higher education. I was mentored and I believe that, it is through that mentorship, that I am where I am today, so why not continue the trend especially mentoring of young females is essential”.

PARTICIPANT 9

“As I am a female in a highly visible position I am often stereotyped into “role traps,” which include the mom, the seductress, the pet and, for those whose leadership

methodologies are more instructive than collaborative, the 'iron maiden'. Due to their lack of female colleagues in leadership positions in my department, I feel so isolated and are often subconsciously viewed by others in the department as representative gesture of the University's goodwill efforts to promote equality. Higher education, a setting devoted to the enhancement of learning, inquiry, and development, continues to lack effective development for faculty. Mentoring relationships seek to provide improvement, yet few mentoring programs exist in this university. I have introduced mentoring to all my staff and I am seeing drastic changes. Some are now furthering their studies and other are starting to look at equality as a possibility".

PARTICIPANT 10

"I understood that mentoring was very underdeveloped in the setting in this university. Our system of higher education, though formally committed to fostering intellectual and personal advancement of students, provides mentoring that is generally limited in quantity and poor in quality. In a background where individuals often work alone and many major resources are shared, such as secretaries and ample space, there is a constant battle for individuals to adapt themselves to within the culture of higher education. As a leader in my department, I constantly questions the 'do your own thing' concept, because I felt that this often causes those in academe to struggle with their own needs and demands of their career, which leaves less time available to assist others".

PARTICIPANT 3

"I grew up hating white people because of apartheid. I never expected any assistance from a white person because I grew up being told that they hate us. When I got promoted to a position of a Director, I discovered that I had to face my resentments and not blame other people for things they did not do. The Senior Director in my department was an old white man. When I started my job, I found no files of information to assist me in the role and I knew I couldn't go to my senior for assistance. One day, after a department meeting, my senior asked to see me in his office and gave me an invitation to go and represent the department in Brazil in two months. To me this was a way for him to prove that I did not know what I was doing. I accepted the invitation and the next day, I received a file that came from him. The file was filled with information about what I was going to present in Brazil. My senior had downloaded files for me and even sent through a memory stick with more information. There was also a note to say that if I needed help, his door was

always open. Every day I would engage with him on email and the day before I left, he organised a little tea party for me. When I came back from Brazil, he called a meeting of all staff in the department and explained what a remarkable job I was doing. He then called me to his office and told me that he was leaving the university as he was offered another job somewhere. He told me that he was leaving the department in my capable hands and hoped that I will continue being an inspiration to many. When he left, I applied for his job and got it and from that day onwards, I stopped thinking of the worst in people. I judged people on their character and was always willing to assist other colleagues. When recognizing benefits of mentoring as they apply within higher education, again the skilled and career development, networking, and personal identity characteristics appear. Mentors' academic and scholarly thinking is revitalized or daringly stimulated. Academic knowledge and experiences are passed on, which may involve research and teaching skills and information".

PARTICIPANT 5

"One must question why more mentoring programs are not available in this institution. If mentoring can provide such great benefits, there must be some lingering doubts among higher education institutions inhibiting far-reaching implementation of mentoring programs. The most recognized barrier I have identified is that mentoring is only available to a 'select few' individuals—those who are on the 'fast track' for advancement. Allowing voluntary participation in formal programs can alleviate the isolation of some potential protégés. Another drawback that I have noted is the overwhelming number of potential mentors/protégés is the time and energy that such relationships involve. Again, the benefits often offset the costs in terms of time and energy because of what can actually be achieved".

Mentorship according to this study's findings is perhaps one of the most important factors in shaping female leadership in higher education. Participants in this study voiced that fellow females do not regularly mentor other females as often as men do. However, all the females interviewed were able to identify male guidance in their early and current lives that served as sources of formal and informal mentorship. Fascinatingly, when the participants were further queried about their mentors, there was a struggle in identifying actual pathways of mentorship received. In some cases, the female leaders revealed that men who mentored them often supported them towards their leadership positions. This

study also found that the dynamics that exist between females are much more complex, oftentimes not including sabotage or toxicity. In this study, two of the female leaders revealed that the work environment is typically political and toxic. This was described as stemming from men's expectations of what female should be in leadership, which displays how females should behave towards each other. Due to this nature of interface, in some instances, some of the female leaders preferred male mentors.

Mentoring is a well-known model of employee development and an understood practice within the realm of most UoTs. While mentoring has been ignored for a number of decades, there is a lack of application of mentoring demonstrated by the few programs available or presented within higher education. This obvious challenge can be inspected in many sides. According to the female leaders interviewed in this study, current formal mentoring programs within UoTs need to be provided. As has been realized through these responses, the lack of mentoring programs existing in UoTs demonstrates the need to develop a better understanding in terms of the application of these mentoring programs.

Most of the participants acknowledged that the support they got from mentors, sometimes from within the university significantly contributed to their career climb to leadership. Mentors connected them to career prospects, made them noticeable to other leaders within the university and provided a shoulder to cry on when they encountered distress. Mentors do not just open one door; they don't rest with one promotion, "they will see you to the threshold of power" (Hewlett, 2013). Something emerged during this theme: the support and sponsorship they received came from white men. "White males are often mentors for black females by virtue of their predominance and access to senior level positions" (Davis & Maldonado 2015: 58). Since white and Indian males occupy the majority of leadership positions in UoTs, they are in the right position to have the decision-making authority to provide opportunities for these females. The noteworthy significance underlying this relationship is that since white men occupy the seats of power in these universities, the participants found themselves developing strategic tools to navigate career progression. Giscombe, (2007) noted that having a white male as a mentor has an clear benefit since white men have countless access to networks of power. Some of the females received mentorship from black males who had a direct connection to white male superiors or had the power to advance their careers. In reflecting upon their career

experiences, the participants described how relationships with mentors influenced their career and how most of the mentors were willing to open door that they themselves had not entered.

THEME 5 LEADERSHIP STYLE

Research Question 2: What qualities or characteristics are required to transition into senior level leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

"There are some dissimilarities where females are more likely to be more spontaneous and sometimes that's just not accepted at all. If a female brings emotion, not necessarily weeping hysterically, emotional or family stuff in it it's not nearly as acceptable as a man's. I work under a boss who sometimes brings his kids into the office when his wife is someplace else and he doesn't have a babysitting arrangement. He holds a senior position in the Vice Chancellor's office and everybody thought that was sweet. I once did the same thing when my nanny did not come back to work after the holidays and there were emails going around that my son was noisy and I was considered as someone who was unorganised and breaking the rules. This tome was is double standard".

PARTICIPANT 2

"My friend is from the rural areas. She does not wear any make-up, does not use lipstick, and does not wear any jewellery and she keeps her hair short all the time. When I met her, she did not own even one pair of jeans because she grew up wearing skirts and dresses. She then met a white guy who was from France on a construction contract of five years in the country. To my surprise, she dated the guy and the guy was so inlove with her that he took her to his family in France to be introduced to them. The family did not accept her and when she came back they got married and had twins. After the kids were born she started wearing pants and lots of makeup and wore a long weave. The husband complained to me and asked me if I could speak to my friend to stop all the makeup, short skirts, red lips and weaves. I spoke to her and she didn't listen and told people that I was jealous of her. During the end of his contract the man left her and among other things he said she was not the woman he fell inlove with and married"

PARTICIPANT 3

“When you are in senior leadership role as a female you have a stereotypically masculine leadership style – directive, confident, so on and so forth – because you have to be able to realize that level of accomplishment, physically run an institution. That then counts against you, because men are looking for stereotypically feminine females and when you’re functioning in a style that they don’t feel comfortable with then that’s an additional point against you. Females have all these variables working against them and that makes it very difficult for them to succeed at senior levels in institutions.”

PARTICIPANT 4

“I find I need comforting or support and I have seen other females do that as well, we are not as confident as we are thought to be and to some extent it is a quality that we see two sides of the coin, the other angle and we balance views more. But at the same time I think the reverse of this is we have a tendency to doubt ourselves more and to take a decision but then torture yourself over what the effect our decision is on people, whether that was that the right decision, did I think it through long enough?” “My mentor gave me so much advice and talked to me about some issues and walked me through somethings I did not even know existed. His main role was not to get me a position or opportunity but to assist me in understanding the organisational culture of the university and what I needed to know and possess in order to survive, but if a leadership position sufficed, he advocated for my promotion and create a position for me. My mentor was both a mentor and a sponsor. My white mentor started creating opportunities for me when he heard that I was suffering from depression because I had lost a child. In the end, this mentorship and sponsorship impacted me indirectly and directly in a positive manner because there were other people at the university who were trying to block my advancement. Mentoring and sponsorship by males in my university was prominent in my experiences as a black female leaders. With the history of apartheid in South Africa, it was weird to receive assistance from a white person but finally I acknowledged that sponsorship was vital to my career advancement and provided support in my professional growth and development. My sponsors often provided guidance, professional mentoring and upward career mobility. Sponsorship from unexpected folks was heralded as a key element of the success that I attained as a black female”.

PARTICIPANT 5

“Females are more organised and structured, they have approaches and techniques, they can plan, and they can multi-task. I believe that females have a more human and more emotional and more balanced way to judge and take decisions than the men. I don’t know if you share the same view, but I think sometimes females are more proficient. What I know for sure is that females have a very high I.Q. emotional intelligence than men. Men are good at supporting the ideas that have been brought about by females. I don’t know whether you have come across a Facebook quote that says ‘children inherit their intelligence from their mother, not their father hahahahahahaha!!!”.

PARTICIPANT 6

“To me, I think females and males are different and I think ... you need both male and female elements in the boardroom to ensure that you have a diverse and all-inclusive view and solution. I believe in an equal social order at the end of the day and I think that this can only bring positivity for the university, staff and students. “To be honest, I don’t essentially think females could bring something more to a board-level job. But I think they can bring something diverse based on their experiences, what they have done, what they have seen, where they have been. Again, I don’t think it’s about females. In my department, I have people from a diverse background, female, male, Indian, black, white, Chinese, lesbian, gay, married, divorced, widowed, single, Christian, Moslem, Hindu etc. All these people bring in different perspectives that benefit the team at the end of the day. Diverse cultures. Diverse religions. Diverse educational backgrounds”.

PARTICIPANT 7

“I think as a female. I perform, act and lead in a different way now that I am in senior position and I do this as a defence mechanism because otherwise I would not survive. That is why when you see females in senior leadership positions they actually behave like men. I know that for many females this is a reason not to accept positions like this because they know they need to change their behaviour in order to be accepted and able to keep the position or to be appreciated in that position”.

PARTICIPANT 8

“A lot of females in senior level change their behaviour and lead like men, because they feel indebted to the institution for having allowed them this opportunity, and as a result be willing to do whatever seems necessary in order to keep themselves in the institution’s favour”.

PARTICIPANT 9

'I always cast-off any suggestion that my leadership style is a predominantly female style. It's just made up of things that I have learnt along the way on how to deal with situations. The situation brings about the leadership style in me. Sometimes I am calm and sometimes emotional'.

PARTICIPANT 10

"In traditional male-structured institutions, power struggles are part and parcel of daily life. My approach as a leader is to solve problems and achieve goals. Power struggles often deter this process. Of course, there are circumstances where I need to exercise control, and I do. Nonetheless, over-all, I believe that it is much more fruitful to work collaboratively to solve problems and to accomplish goals. For me, that's the most major difference – men think in terms of structures, whereas females are more concerned with processes".

PARTICIPANTS 3

'My management style is to make sure that I have my team on board and that is not to say that I use the laisses-faire management style, but I think that my management style is not aggressive nor provocative. All I want is for collaborative work and collaborative work colleagues. One of the things that we have recently done as a team in to create a blueprint for our department which is actually about saying we don't want a very ranked way of operating, we don't want everything to have to go up through the chain to our most senior person and then across and down again, we in fact do want everybody at poles apart be able to work together. This includes senior management, staff and students'.

THEME 6 INTERSECTIONALITY

Research Question 3: What are the barriers and challenges faced by females serving in leadership positions in UoTs? Participants' answers to this research question are outlined below:

PARTICIPANT 1

"I think, you know, when it comes to females in higher education, um, it's hard to get us at the table and to share our experiences. Especially when you see those words diversity and inclusion. Diversity and presence are subjects of conversation at most UoTs. So are accounts of frustrations of many students, faculty members and others who feel universities are still designed for people of privilege; generally those who are white and are middle or upper class. In addition, so are stories of frustrations that many e leaders have a hard time understanding that issues are not just about black people or females or gay people, but that issues relate to many people in various groups and with multiple identities and needs".

PARTICIPANT 2

"I'm being prepared for a world that is not yet to come, but I'm living here, and I'm...pulling my hair out, saying, 'are we not trying to strive towards that'? ...especially in a University setting... We are in a University setting, where you taught me this, and we can't live it out, we can't even live it out here?

PARTICIPANT 3

I could please a person for the minute but if that's not in alignment with my morals...then that's not success to me....I don't want to be anybody's dummy, you know? Anybody's doormat... Because I've foregone too much, gone without too much, you know what I mean? To let people... I'm not doing that. ...you don't know what I had to go through to be where I am today".

PARTICIPANT 4

At least let me shape the discussion but I don't want to 'do the work'. Therefore, I think sometimes when you see that as a Black female, you're like, 'I don't want to teach anybody, anything. I don't want to be the speaker for that. I don't want to be in that discussion. Because you get drained...and then sometimes you feel like the people who

are having that discussion, they don't care. They just want to say they've had the discussion. So, it gets really fatiguing".

PARTICIPANT 5

"As a white female who works vigorously to be an ally in racial justice work, I was so upset by the lack of engagement around intersecting identities, and how those intersections both inform social constructions of leadership and effect our own leadership practice. How can we be effective leaders in creating change if we cannot show up as our whole selves and see others as their whole selves, operating within difficult systems? We've got to work towards a more nuanced acceptance of leadership than simply 'add females and stir' if we're interested in creating transformative change. That's the only kind of change I'm interested in."

Within the response on this theme, intersectionality did not always come through as clearly as it should. Intersectionality can be described as the "lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it connects and transects." In other words, it is a way of looking at a variety of intersecting social classes such as age, race, class, and gender which may create hindrance or lead to discrimination of an individual or a group. For instance, when considering the experience of the female leaders in this study, an intersectional approach dictated that these female leaders are subject to the interplay of sexism and racism conceptualised as the 'double bind.' In other words, in a field that is traditionally dominated by white males, some of the female leaders in this study felt that they were doubly disadvantaged in their leadership careers due to their gender and their race.

Put simply, intersectionality is the notion that all oppression is linked. More explicitly, the Oxford Dictionary defines intersectionality as "the interconnected nature of social groups such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage". Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and harassment and we must consider everything and anything that can relegate people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc. First coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw back in 1989, intersectionality was added to the Oxford Dictionary in 2015 with its meaning increasingly being accepted in the world of females' rights.

Participants in this study spoke about their experiences as females from different cultural background in higher education leadership. The theme, balancing race, gender, and responsibility, arose as some participants talked about their unique and intersecting lives as Black females in senior leadership. In addition, they spoke of the achievements and obstacles they came across and continue to encounter as female leaders.

For the black female in this study, almost all of the black participants felt the bearing of both race and gender discrimination in their careers. The blend of race and gender for black females still hampers the probable for moving up to senior positions. Race and gender are intertwined and are not separate entities. Through the lenses of this study participants experienced their race and gender jointly. Feelings of racial and gender bias reverberated with all of the black participants. For these females, race did not outplay their gender nor did gender outplay their race. In their development as leaders, they confronted a double bind in spite of their leadership abilities. This was unavoidable in this study, although I did state earlier in the study that I wanted to exclude race issues in this study. However, during the interviews, most of the respondents insisted that it formed a big part in their development as leaders. According to the respondents, there was no way of separating gender from race as these two identities intersected. I then pursued to search strategies future leaders might use to address leadership development and career predominance for all females who aspire to leadership roles.