



**CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: A CASE
STUDY ON SELECTED GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN KWAZULU-NATAL,
SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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- Both the departments of Water and Sanitation and Health

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis titled challenges faced by women in leadership positions: a case study of selected government departments in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa is my own work. All the sources used or quoted have been identified and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this thesis has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other University.

I certify that the above statement is correct.

M.S.NYEMBE_____

Date_11/08/2024

DEDICATION

This triumph is dedicated to:

- God Almighty and my Ancestors
- My special mother Lindiwe Mkhize.
- My daughter and son Noluthando Nyembe and Zinothando Nyembe

Thank you so much with love.

ABSTRACT

Women in the workplace are hindered by a patriarchal system that has been transferred from domestic society to the working environment. This patriarchal system has not yet accepted leadership by women, consequently there is a diminished percentage of women in executive positions. Therefore, fundamental attitudinal transformation is required in the workplace to dislodge the patriarchal system that currently prevails. The government has already created the required legislative framework of rules and regulations. This framework now needs to be implemented in a practical, visible and tangible manner.

The aim of this study is to examine the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions within selected government departments in Kwazulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. To minimize the challenges faced by women leaders the policies of the government must be firmly, and consistently, applied in the workplace environment. This will result in fair and equitable treatment for all, thus levelling the playing fields for women.

The research employed a qualitative research approach for the study. The research design allowed the respondents of the study to furnish in-depth, and fact-based, experiences. Questions were posed to individual respondents regarding the challenges faced by women in leadership positions within the selected government departments. The data was analysed to extract specific findings. Data analysis was done by means of thematic analysis methods. Themes and sub-themes emerging from the study were classified to understand the data.

The research found that, despite the government's legislative interventions to address inequality, and other challenges encountered by women leadership, there is still evidence of discriminatory practices being visited upon women in the workplace. Based upon the conclusions and findings that emerged from the research, the study made recommendations to address the challenges that were identified as impediments facing women holding leadership positions within selected government departments in KZN, South Africa.

Keywords: Leadership, women leadership, inequality, discrimination, patriarchy, glass ceiling.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Despite the worldwide golden age of women ushered in by the 1995 Berlin Conference Maseko (2013: 1) women continue to be disadvantaged when it comes to participation in both the private and public sectors of the society. Women remain discriminated against in terms of accessing top management and leadership positions in the workplace (Shongwe 2019: 14). Although more women are getting educated and the population of employed females is increasing, and research shows an increased presence of women in workplaces, yet leadership in the workplace continues to be dominated by men as there are few women in leadership positions (Schwanke 2013: 1). Gender stereotypes are commonly observed in the professional sphere, with women frequently facing barriers to advancement in predominantly male workplaces largely because of perceptions that they are not suited for senior management or leadership roles (Galsanjigmed and Sekuguchi 2023: 367).

This research study is an inquiry into the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the South African workplace, and the effectiveness of current interventions in addressing such challenges. The subject matter was explored in two organizations in the public sector, specifically two government departments in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province – Department of Health (DoHKZN) and Department of Water and Sanitation (DoWSKZN). In addition, the study proposed solutions to the persistent challenges encountered by women in leadership in male-dominated work environments and social systems as seen in the selected government departments. This introductory chapter outlines what the study is about, presenting a context to the study and detailing the research problem. The research aim and objectives are enumerated as well as the research questions which guided the inquiry. A brief overview of the research methodology employed, definition of key concepts of the study and a description of the layout of the dissertation are presented in this chapter.

1.2 Background of the study

Globally, the business environment is constantly changing, and executives, men and women alike, in the 21st century need to be equipped to effectively lead organisations Fotso (2021: 566). At a Management development programme facilitated by experts at the University of Cape Town to Commerce and Industry leaders revealed that women occupy most junior and middle managerial positions, and are not duly promoted in many organisations. Imran *et al.* (2021: 6) argued that some of the reasons proffered for this observation include, among others, continued marginalization of women in the workplace, underestimation of women's leadership capabilities, women's perceived reluctance to apply for senior positions when they arise at their workplaces. Brock (2018: 1) found that although women are increasingly accessing leadership opportunities where they are required to steer organisations through extraordinary times, yet there are unsurmountable obstacles to be overcome.

Einarsdottir, Christiansen and Kristjansdottir (2018: 1) attempted to break down the nature of challenges faced by women at different levels of management in the workplace. The authors opined that at middle management level women face challenges related to job insecurity linked to ability to deliver on output required. They argued that a perceived inability of women to deliver is due to diverse commitments towards family and society. At higher management levels, there are greater responsibilities towards the organisation, and the main issue that often arises is questions around the capabilities of women to hold such responsibilities which include steering the organization into the future. At lower levels of management, it is more about accomplishing assigned tasks. In all the three management levels, there are few systems in place to resolve challenges faced by women, and strengthen their ability to navigate environmental factors influencing workplace dynamics. Magwalisa (2019: 34) highlighted how limiting socio-cultural beliefs have made their way into the workplace and are affecting women in leadership. Marginalization stemming from gender-biases readily occurring in society leading to disparities in remuneration where women continue to earn less than their male counterparts, exclusion from promotion opportunities into leadership positions (Smith and Sinkford 2022: 1146).

In the South African public sector, in a bid to understand the slow pace of transformation in the workplace and noted disproportionate numbers of women (compared to males) promoted up the ranks, a series of national and provincial hearings were conducted by the offices of director-generals of government departments, chief executive officers and municipal managers (Ritchie and You 2021: 3). The Department of Labour (2015-2016: 1) found that both the public and private sectors were performing very poorly in issues surrounding transformations. Moodley (2018: 50, 51) argued that affirmative action measures, though designed to address past discrimination against certain population groups and promote employment equity in the workplace, may result in creating employment barriers which impede the progress of some designated groups. The affirmative action consequences may generate discrimination which can result in qualified candidates who meet the requirements of a job position being disregarded in the workplace in favour of less qualified candidates. This study puts forward that sometimes women may be at the receiving end of such practices. According to Foltz (2021: 1) a litmus test of equality is whether men can be subjected to similar tests as their female counter parts; if the answer is negative, then it is a sexist practice. The necessity remains to examine challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the world of work because existing cultures within many organizations tend to reflect social constructions of gender, race, ethnicity, religious norms among others as is obtainable in society (Chin 2011: 1)

1.3 The Statement of the Research Problem

Women in leadership positions in South Africa are facing numerous challenges in the workplace. The challenges faced by women in leadership positions include but are not limited to gender inequality and patriarchy which are the major influences on the problem. These challenges lead to a variety of negative impacts such as poor work performance leading to less productivity, elevated stress/depression, resignations, increased absenteeism etc. Tshipani (2021: 28) Although, there are some women who can withstand the challenges and persist in holding their positions. This can in the long run cause tension in their workplaces, anger and frustration that may subsequently lead back to poor work performance, thus emphasizing the need to resolve these challenges (Gama and Patel 2020: 347).

Multiple studies have reported there being an imbalance in the number of women to men in top management positions in a lot of organizations in South Africa (Rivera-Romano *et al.* 2020; Musetsho, Isac and Dobrin 2021).

This was validated by the 20th Commission for Employment Equity South African annual report investigated by the Department of Labour for the years 2017 – 2019. Where, the percentage of women who held top management positions in 2017, 2018 and 2019 was 22.9%, 23.5%, and 24.4%, respectively, and that of men was 71.1%, 76.5% and 76.6% respectively (Department of Labour 2019-2020: 16)

The research's primary objective is to examine challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Additionally, the investigation assesses the perception of the effectiveness of existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions. The overarching goal is to ascertain whether these measures are effectively put into practice to encounter the adverse repercussions stemming from these challenges, which ultimately impacts the organization's productivity.

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to explore the challenges faced by women leadership in the workplace using two government departments in KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa as case studies.

1.5 Objectives of the study

1. To examine challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
2. To examine the factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
3. To assess the perception of the effectiveness of existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions.

4. To propose potential strategies that can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

1.6 Research questions

1. What are the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected governments in KZN, South Africa?
2. What are the factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?
3. How effective are the existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership roles?
4. What strategies can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?

1.7 Significance of the study

The significance of the study is in relation to the practical use of its findings. The findings of the study potentially provide a basis to address and remedy persistent challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the workplace despite existing interventions in place to address such challenges. The study's recommendations can be implemented as part of the strategic leadership planning efforts in the selected government departments. The findings of the study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of how current departmental policies may appear to fall short with regards to their materiality and implementation in addressing challenges experienced by women generally in the workplace and particularly in leadership positions in the selected government departments.

1.8 Scope of the research

This inquiry into challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the workplace is confined to two selected government departments in KZN province of South Africa- Department of Health (DoHKZN) and Department of Water and Sanitation (DoWSKZN). Therefore, the findings of the study are specific to only these two institutions and no other government department.

1.9 Overview of Research Methodology

The study used a qualitative research methodology to interrogate the research problem. The research design was a case study design using Department of Health (DoHKZN) and Department of Water and Sanitation (DoWSKZN) as the case studies for the research. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select the two case studies as well as respondents from whom data was collected. The researcher had access to these two departments hence primary data for the study was to be obtained through guided face-to-face interviews. Thematic analysis of collected data was done to understand and interpret the meanings in the data. Further details of the research methodology pursued in the study are presented in Chapter 3 of the thesis.

1.10 Definition of key concepts

i. Government departments: This refers to any government or state or any political division; anybody or agency or organ or department with decision-making, legislative, judicial, regulatory or administrative functions in the systems of the government, including any government agency.

ii. Department of Health: The Department of Health is the executive department of the national government that is assigned to oversee healthcare in South Africa.

iii. Department of Water and Sanitation: The Department of Water and Sanitation is the executive department that is set out in the National Water Act of 1998 and Water

Services Act of 1997, to safeguard South Africa's water resources, and maintain the effective delivery of high-quality water and sanitation to South African citizens.

iv. Leadership: This refers to an aptitude to motivate other people to identify with and follow one's vision then corporately safeguard their steady cooperation in order to make the vision succeed. Leadership is a position of influence and authority bestowed on a person or individuals at a specific time by institutions and governments. This study adopted (Ward 2023) definition of leadership as "influencing other to achieve the organization's goals by inspiring them and directing their actions towards reaching the goals of the organization".

1.11 Layout of dissertation

Chapter One introduces the study, and covers the background of the study, the problem statement, and motivation of the study, the research problem, hypotheses, research objectives and research methodology.

Chapter two is a review of literature relating to challenges faced by women in leadership positions. The chapter also discusses the theories underpinning the research study.

Chapter three of the dissertation presents the research methodology adopted for the study.

Chapter four is a presentation of data and analysis of results of the study.

Chapter five is a summary of the study and outlines the conclusions drawn, recommendations for practice and suggestions for further research.

1.12 Chapter conclusion

This chapter was an introduction to the study examining the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in two government departments in KZN, South Africa. The research problem was introduced. The aim and objectives of the study as well as

key research questions were presented among others. The next chapter is a literature review of relevant extant knowledge around the research problem.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Gender diversity or representation in organizational leadership has attracted a wide scope of interest among policymakers, as well as researchers in business and academia. Although the management of gender parity in the workplace is not a new research area, it remains topical due to the challenges associated with achieving its ideal in a global society where male-domination remains deeply entrenched.

This chapter provides an examination of existing literature concerning women's leadership within work environments and the difficulties associated with it. The review of literature also encompasses the current interventions implemented within a South African context to tackle the obstacles encountered by women in organizational leadership roles. The research study is founded on the theoretical and conceptual framework of the Nego feminist theory and the glass ceiling effect, which are discussed to illustrate how they shape the investigation into the research problem.

2.2 Global perspective of women leadership in the workplace

World population projections indicate that that 50.3% and 49.7% of the global population are males and females respectively (Statistics Times 2022: 1). These figures show that there are almost an equal number of males and females in the world. In addition, the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 5 to advance gender equality and women's empowerment emphasizes the important role of women, and the need to ensure their full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in different spheres of society (United Nations 2023: 22). Studies have shown that on a global scale, an increasing number of women are attaining higher levels of education, as highlighted by (Dosunmu and Dichaba 2019: 183; Klassen 2019: 162). Additionally, there is a growing trend of more women securing formal employment and actively engaging in the labour market, as indicated by (Fruttero *et al.* 2020: 6,7)

Research also indicates that in many countries, both developed and developing regions alike, there is a growing participation and representation of women in workplace leadership. Evidence from the likes of the World Economic Forum (WEF) World Economic Forum (2022: 7,36) and Thornton (2021: 1) attested to the global rise of women into leadership in terms of political representation, and managerial positions, top executive positions in the workplace as well as boards of companies. For example, according to Grant Thornton International's women in business report 2021 (Thornton 2021: 1), the number of women holding senior leadership positions in mid-market businesses globally has risen to 31%.

In spite of the positive trends and improvements aforementioned, the proportion of women in workplace leadership positions continues to lag behind in comparison to their male counterparts. Leadership roles are still disproportionately held by men. The assertion of Hoobler *et al.* (2018: 3) is that just one in four (24%) senior management roles globally are occupied by women. Not differing by a wide margin from Hoobler's finding, the World Economic Forum (2021: 5) reported that women only represent 27% of all managerial positions globally. A study of 45 countries by Griffin, Li and Xu (2021: 3) highlighted the fact that female directors on corporate boards was only 8.5%. Catalyst (2023: 1) reported that of 500 large companies listed on stock exchanges in the USA tracked by the Standard & Poor stock market index, only 41 or 8.2% of those companies are led by women. In Asia where strong traditional cultural values are deeply embedded in organizational cultures, countries such as Japan continues to experience persistent underrepresentation of women in managerial positions, women occupy less than 10% of managerial positions and 1% of executive or board director positions (Mun and Jung 2018; Saitova and Mauro 2020). In Africa, data from Nigeria reveals same narrative in both the public and private sectors in which women hold less than 14% of management positions (Ganiyu *et al.* 2018: 140).

The imbalance in the proportion of women who hold leadership positions has made interventions necessary. While some countries have intervened through means such as legislation, policy and gender quotas in attempts to achieve balance, the overall effectiveness of such interventions remains unclear Comi *et al.* (2020: 769-770), (Post and Byron 2015: 1546) , (Halliday, Postian-underdahl and Fainshmidt 2020: 173).

Hence, one of the objectives of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of mechanisms put in place to address some of the challenges.

2.3 South African perspective of women leadership in the workplace

South Africa has experienced political transformation over almost three decades which has brought about efforts to achieve greater social justice, equity and advancement in remedying long term gross discrimination and disadvantages in the workplace suffered by South Africans of African, Coloured and Indian descent under apartheid (Jaga *et al.* 2018: 430), (Mazibuko and Govender 2017: 2). Radical shifts were necessary to introduce changes to predominantly white- and male-dominated pre-1994 workplaces. Policy and legislative interventions by the African National Congress-led constitutional democratic government led to a growth in the participation of women in the labour market (Yakubu 2010: 87). Some of such legislations are discussed in latter parts of this chapter. The goal of gender equity in the workplace is yet to be achieved fully although progress is being made, albeit slowly and unevenly. It is important to highlight Statistics South Africa's observation (Statistics South Africa 2022: 1) that the South African labour market remains more favourable to men than it is to women in terms of proportion in employment and remuneration. For example, the labour force participation rate for women in the 2nd quarter of 2022 was 53% as compared to 64,4% for men (Statistics South Africa 2022: 1).

With respect to workplace leadership, South African women continue to make in-roads as managers at different levels of management in both private and public sectors leading to a rise in women representation (Khwela 2019: iv). But the author notes the persistent wide gap in representation of the genders in these positions with women being on the lower end. Using Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed companies as the context of the private sector, according to Khwela, Derera and Kubheka (2020 :370) women occupy around 10% of directorship positions in these organizations. This is the situation although research shows that the education and skills of women have been improving especially since the dawn of democracy. In South Africa's post-1994 public sector, there has been a conscientious appointment of women into prominent public-sector roles, particularly in government departments, national assembly and executive cabinet positions. This has been as a result of the democratic government's

commitment to bridging the gender gap gender at the top of organizations (Khwela 2019) . According to the Business Women’s Association of South Africa Business Women South Africa (2021: 7), women make up 43,5% and 40.4% of leadership in national government departments and state-owned enterprises respectively. Generally, although there has been growth in women leadership in the workplace, the evidence continues to demonstrate that women occupy top positions much less than men. This is evidenced by Business Women’s Association of South Africa (Business Women South Africa 2021) figures which reveal that while women accounted for 43,4% of total employment in the second quarter of 2021, of those in managerial positions, 66,9% were men compared to 33,1% which were women.

2.4 Challenges of women leadership in organizations in South Africa

Ngalo and Mtshweni (2024:2186) contended that women leaders are scarce in organizations as they are reluctant to face challenges in leadership roles. Research reveals various challenges confronting women in leadership in organisations in both private and public sectors. Some of the identified challenges discussed in the sections below are also seen as factors impeding the advancement of women into leadership positions.

2.4.1 Under-representation of women in leadership

The under-representation of women in leadership echelons in an organization in itself poses a challenge to the women occupying such leadership positions. The disadvantage of being under-represented or outnumbered may mean that “boys club” tendencies will prevail especially in decision making. Being outnumbered makes it difficult for women leaders’ voices and opinions to be heard or considered regardless of how valid those opinions may be or the value they contribute to the discourse. Konrad, Kramer and Erkut (2008: 145) acquiesced that numbers make a difference, arguing that women being in a numerical minority in leadership reduces the ability to introduce change in a male-dominated dynamic in an organization, and neither will influence, and conformity experienced in male-dominated groups be successfully challenged.

2.4.2 Work life balance

Work-life balance is a term used to describe workplace practices that “acknowledge and aim to support the needs of employees in achieving a balance between the demands of their family (life) and work lives” (Jyothi and Jyothi 2012: 35). The inability to achieve a healthy and functional balance work life may lead to job dissatisfaction, burnout and poor performance amongst other effects (Boamah *et al.* 2022: 809). While seeking a work life balance is an issue affecting all employees regardless of gender, it cannot be ignored that the burden of caring for the family, household responsibilities and domestic chores most often falls to women thereby making it more challenging to achieve a work life balance Gupta and Mittal (2022: 43), (Roebuck and Smith 2013: 53). Family responsibilities caring for the home and children falls on women to a far greater extent than men. According to (Kassa 2015: 5) and Latchanah and Singh (2016: 47) women spend more time on family responsibilities such as pregnancy, childbirth and infant care can be challenging for them to navigate alongside work responsibilities, and may affect decisions to access opportunities for promotion.

2.4.3 Pay disparity

Gender pay disparity in the workplace is aptly described in Adelekan and Bussin (2018: 3) as when the wages of one gender remains less than that of the other gender, even when the one gender has same level of education or performs work of the same value as the other gender. In Kalogeraki and Georgakakis (2022: 1) it is asserted that there is a substantial pay disparity between the genders at top management levels with women executives being paid between 5% to 45% less than their male counterparts. Some of the reasons responsible for such wage gaps include traditional views and ideological dispositions of the authority figures within organizations who are responsible for determining executive remuneration. Chen, Torsin and Tsang (2022: 520) found South Africa to be one of the countries with the highest CEO gender pay gap where male CEOs receive a minimum of twice the total compensation of their female counterparts. According , Adelekan and Bussin (2018: 8) discrimination, inequality, the glass ceiling effect and differences in negotiation skills play a key role in driving continued gender pay disparities in South African organizations.

2.4.4 Traditional socio-cultural beliefs and values

Deep-rooted traditional socio-cultural systems such as patriarchy is one of the challenges encountered by women in leadership in the workplace. Patriarchy is a social system where men exert power over women and children, and women are not accorded equal treatment as men (Jayieola and Isaac 2020: 3). These social systems are often transferred into the workplace and hinder women from leadership positions because men are preferred for those positions due to women being regarded as unequal to men. Hierarchical systems that put women beneath men ensure that gender stereotypes are upheld in the workplace thereby working against women (Sikweyiya *et al.* 2020: 1). Women are considered to be subordinate to men and second-class citizens in family structures and in the society especially in rural areas. Societal and cultural expectations are that leaders and the attendant leadership qualities are male (Alqahtani 2019: 37). Even when women do attain leadership positions, patriarchal dispositions by their male colleagues may cause women managers and executives to be undermined due to beliefs and perceptions that women are low-grade to men, weak and unable to handle challenges of senior management (Brink 2017: 9). In fact, patriarchy believes that women are to be led but not to lead. Such patriarchy-fueled stereotyped notions about women constitute major barriers and contribute to incorrect assumptions about the leadership ability of women, and their lack of assertiveness which present as barriers to participation of women in management and politics.

Furthermore, a strong traditional patriarchal value system favours segregated roles for the genders, and 'traditional cultural values' militate against the visibility, advancement, and participation of women in any leadership position (Kassa 2015: 3). Rowe (2022: 1) highlighted traditional views which continue to restrict women's roles to being mothers and housewives. When such societal norms about gender roles find expression in an organization, it will resist gender equality and women's advancement. The ideology of 'a woman's place' that believes women should only opt for 'pink collar' jobs in administration and support functions in the organisation Khwela (2019: 26), continue to perpetuate the view that women are not able to handle the caliber of jobs that men do. Thus, women are perceived to be weak to handle challenges of senior management whereas men are able to. This would possibly contribute to lower

remuneration experienced by women. Theories of socialisation have long emphasized the enduring division of sex roles within a society especially the existence of egalitarian or traditional attitudes towards women in the private and public spheres (Kassa 2015: 2) . Patriarchy impacts the workplace as men are perceived and treated as superior to women despite the fact that women are in leadership roles (Msibi 2020: 20).

2.4.5 Discrimination and bias

Women face discrimination in the workplace, whether blatant or understated. All of the issues identified and discussed above provide indications of discrimination and bias faced by women in general and in leadership in the workplace which create the conditions of inequality experienced by many. Women are discriminated against for being pregnant whereas they do qualify for senior positions (pregnancy discrimination). Jobs may be offered to a less qualified male applicant just because he is male. Women are more likely to be judged by their looks and how they dress than their male counterparts. On a note of irregularity, women are not only discriminated against for being "pretty" or "provocative" they are also discriminated against for being not pretty enough, too old, or, in some positions for not being sexy enough (Porter and Todorov 2020: 324). Latchanah and Singh (2016: 44) noted that sometimes there is a reluctance to challenge the power relations and structures that construct the different dimensions of inequality experienced by marginalized and excluded employees. Such apathetic attitudes – acceptance or resignation to the status quo - contribute to the continued existence of the culture of inequality which denies eligible people opportunities in the workplace.

2.4.6 Lack of mentors

Due to the obstacles encountered by women in the work place, mentoring is highlighted as a pivotal mechanism for advancing the careers of female employees (Khwela 2019: 28). Mentorship, encompasses training, career advice, exposure to challenging work assignments, networking, and sponsorship. Mentoring can also serves to enrich an individual's career progression (Khwela 2019: 28). According to French and Eskridge (2020: 706), mentoring offers a means for women to nurture their skills and showcase their managerial capabilities. This is achieved by concentrating on opportunities for professional growth and development with the goal of dismantling

existing barriers. These efforts aim to empower women who display leadership potential and aspire to advance their careers to actively pursue higher-level positions within their organizations. Some of the factors attributed to lack of mentoring opportunities for women include the ubiquitous fact that there are fewer number of women in top management positions (Netnou and Strydom 2020: 25), women are said to have less influential social networks (Ansari 2016: 538), and a lack of role models who can champion mentorship programs within the organization (Bodalina and Mestry 2022: 454).

2.5 Interventions to address challenges of women in leadership positions

The post-apartheid democratic South African government introduced several labour-related legislations, regulations, and policies to address the discrimination and disadvantages experienced in the past. The interventions which are discussed below were intended by the African National Government (ANC) to ensure unbiased and non-discriminatory practices and achieve equity and equality in the workplace. Although these legislative interventions were not meant for women only however, the inclusion of the term 'gender' as a recognised basis of discrimination allowed these legislative interventions to also apply to women more specifically (Anwana 2020; Matotoka 2021). Furthermore, Matenge, Sutarsa and Lancsar (2022:482) confirmed that interventions to address challenges in the workplace environment enhanced performance and climate to support women's participation in decision making.

2.5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enacted in 1996, stands as the supreme law of the country, affording South African citizens a comprehensive array of guaranteed rights (Republic of South Africa 1996: 1). In its foundational principles, the Constitution underscores that human dignity, equality, non-racialism, and non-sexism are intrinsic rights of all citizens, as these principles form the bedrock upon which the democratic state is built (Republic of South Africa 1996: 1; Parliament of South Africa 2021: 1) Moreover, the Bill of Rights enshrines the rights of all individuals in the nation, upholding the democratic values of human dignity, equality, prevention of unfair

discrimination, freedom, and equitable labour practices, which are entitlements for all South African and all who live in it. Notably, the Constitution extensively ensures that women have equal access to employment opportunities (Republic of South Africa 1996; Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad 2020).

2.5.2 Employment Equity Act No.55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) No.55 of 1998 (Department of Labour 1998: 2) was enacted to primarily promote the right of equality in the workplace, eliminate and prohibit unfair discriminatory practices in employment, ensure the implementation of employment equity to redress the effects of past discrimination experienced by designated population groups, and achieve a diverse workforce that broadly represents South African citizens. The systematic marginalization of women, especially Black African women, in labour practices during the apartheid era made certain that they had extremely limited access to leadership positions in the workplace (Nzima and Duma 2014: 578) . Therefore, a legislative intervention such as the EEA was sanctioned to ensure labour practices that enhance gender equity and fairness in employment and importantly, that suitably qualified persons from designated groups are not discriminated against for any reasons but are able to access and occupy all categories and levels of job opportunities in the workplace (Matotoka and Odeku 2021: 49).

2.5.3 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Amendment Act, 2013

Structural mechanism in the South African economy to address persistent economic inequalities faced by the black population group (Francis and Valodia 2022: 1). Although B-BBEE is not specifically a labour market intervention, it was conceptualized to apply broadly to every category of economic participation. More specifically, B-BBEE is a legislative and policy framework that was designed to address the historical injustices and inequalities in the nation by actively pursuing a set of socio-economic goals that prioritize the predominantly black population participation in the nation's economy (Shai, Molefinyana and Quinot 2019: 7164). One of the objectives of B-BBEE is to substantially transform the racial composition of ownership and management structures in the skilled occupations of existing and new enterprises from being exclusively White dominated to including the participation of the Black majority

population of South Africa in the nation's economy (Shai, Molefinyana and Quinot 2019: 7167). (Mbandlwa and Anwana 2020)

In gauging the effectiveness of the interventions in place to address the focus of this research inquiry, although the above post-apartheid government legislations have benefitted the designated groups to some extent but the outcome has been unequal. (World Economic Forum 2022: 6). According to Shiwundlana (2021: iv) the success of these interventions in organizations is largely dependent on organizational commitment to the advancement of women leaders within the organizational hierarchy.

The next section discusses the theoretical underpinning of the study. The study selects two feminist theories, the glass ceiling theory and the African based nego-feminist theory.

2.6 Theoretical framework

As noted above the key theories framing this research study are the glass ceiling theory and Nego-feminist theory. The application of the theories to the focus of the study is discussed below.

2.6.1 Glass ceiling theory

The concept of the glass ceiling theory, as outlined in Love (2017: 3), refers to an imperceptible yet impenetrable obstacle that hinders the progress of minorities and women as they strive to ascend the corporate hierarchy, regardless of their qualifications or accomplishments. This metaphorical idea of a "glass ceiling" characterizes the persistent challenges women encounter in their professional environments, obstructing their advancement to higher positions or decision-making roles within organizations. This phenomenon of the glass ceiling is fundamentally discriminatory, as it restricts women solely based on their gender, with the intention of impeding their ascent to top management levels (Babic and Hansez 2021: 2).

Many of the hurdles women face in leadership positions within organizations are intrinsically linked to their gender. Consequently, there exists differential treatment of women in the workplace due to the presence of the glass ceiling concept (Babic and Hansez 2021: 2). The elusive nature of the glass ceiling, characterized by the absence

of clear, openly observable criteria, makes it challenging to definitively confirm its existence within an organization. This inherent subtlety contributes to the glass ceiling's persistence (Babic and Hansez 2021: 2). Some studies propose that the intangibility of the glass ceiling may be rooted in socio-cultural stereotypes (Ganiyu *et al.* 2018: 138-139), organizational culture (Khwela 2019), psychological factors, and various complex forms of gender discrimination (Khwela, Derera and Kubheka 2020 370), manifesting in both overt and concealed ways to hinder women's upward mobility. Additionally, the glass ceiling is compounded for African women in South Africa due to the combined influence of sexism and racism in the workplace, as argued by (Ndinda and Okeke-Uzodike 2012: 137).

In the context of this study, the application of the glass ceiling theory involves identifying obstacles that women in leadership roles encounter in the workplace, which may be attributed to the presence of the glass ceiling phenomenon. Understanding these challenges, as revealed by the data, is essential for assessing the effectiveness of interventions designed to address leadership challenges related to the glass ceiling.

2.6.2 Nego feminist theory

Nnaemeka (2004: 360) defines Nego feminism as a form of African feminism that differs from confrontational approaches and instead utilizes shared values from African culture to strategically negotiate and deconstruct patriarchy for the benefit of women Klaas-makolomakwe (2019: 14). Nego feminism is characterized by principles such as negotiation, compromise, achieving balance, and reaching agreements through cooperation. Vanderveer (2019: 30) analysis highlights the inclusive nature of Nego feminism, focusing on the collective needs of women within the broader human experience while not excluding or negating the male gender. It prioritizes the well-being of all for the sake of equity.

Furthermore, Nego feminism places a strong emphasis on negotiation. In situations where women in leadership roles must navigate challenges and biases within male-dominated environments, the flexibility of Nego feminism allows them to address these issues effectively while maintaining functionality (Vanderveer 2019: 30,32). Therefore, applying Nego feminism to this study enables an examination of the challenges faced

by women in organizational leadership, considering aspects such as representation, gender bias, inclusion, exclusion, and patriarchy.

Nego feminism fosters opportunities for collaboration between men and women to eliminate workplace discrimination, and hostility towards women leaders (Brink 2017: 17). By working together and reaching agreements, organizations can enhance their functionality and demonstrate visible development.

2.7 Chapter conclusion

The chapter presented the literature in respect of challenges of women in leadership positions in the workplace. The review of literature extended to evaluating what the effectiveness of current interventions in addressing the challenges of women in leadership in the workplace in South Africa. The chapter noted that although legislation has assisted to prevent discriminatory practices and improve women representation in leadership position, particularly in the public sector, however little has been done in regard to women in leadership positions in the private sector. The chapter discussed the concept and theoretical viewpoint that underpins the study. The glass ceiling theory debated the impediments that hamper women's development irrespective of experience and qualifications. The Nego-feminist theory was applied to examine the feminist African viewpoint on the fact that women leaders are not abandoning their African way of life and are willing to negotiate, agree and work harmoniously with their male counterparts as equals in the workplace. The next chapter is a discussion of the research methodology adopted for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology of the study. A qualitative study was undertaken. A case study research design approach was adopted. Within this methodological design, interviews were chosen as the primary mode of data collection. The interviews in this context allow the researcher to explore individual experiences, perspectives, and contextual factors related to the research topic in addressing the challenges of women leadership in the workplace, which aligns with the qualitative nature of a case study. The population of the study, sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability of data are explained and discussed. The study focused on the challenges of women in leadership positions in the workplace in the two selected government departments of Water and Sanitation and Health in KZN, South Africa.

This chapter presents the method and procedures deployed to conduct the research at the two selected government departments in KZN, South Africa.

3.2 Inductive research approach

In Trochim (2006:1) two broad methods of reasoning are presented to be inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive research approach is described as moving from the specific to the general using arguments based on experience or observation. The deductive approach starts with the general and ends with the specific, and the author posited that it is deductive arguments are based on laws, rules, or other widely accepted principles. Furthermore, inductive research approach is a technique of developing theories or generalization based on identifiable observations. Qualitative research, which was utilised in this study, uses inductive research to identify patterns, themes, and hypotheses. The researcher used inductive analyses to generate four key themes from the qualitative data obtained. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:270) qualitative researchers gather information from individuals to identify themes which allow them to develop insight inductively.

3.3 Research design

Heale and Twycross (2018: 7) emphasised that a case study is a rigorous, systematic investigation of a solitary individual, group, or community in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to numerous variables. The study is qualitative in nature; thus, an interpretive strategy was adopted to assist in understanding the meaning of the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the workplace. The study employs the qualitative research method in an attempt to obtain people's insights and describe a position on the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the workplace. The study was conducted using an in depth semi structured interview approach whereby the researcher developed an interview schedule which was used to guide the interview process. The questions were organised according to the research objective and questions that the research seeks to answer.

3.4 Research methodology

Aspers and Corte (2021: 599) elucidated that a qualitative method is a form of research that discovers the deeper understanding into actual world-problems. Arlucia (2021: 51) explained that a qualitative study is constructed on expounding the connotation of words and concepts, and manoeuvring correlation theories. The study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, within the two selected government departments of Water and Sanitation and Health. The criterion of choosing the qualitative method was to allow for an in-depth investigation into the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the workplace. This research approach assisted to explore and identify the nature of challenges that female leaders within the two departments faced. This enabled the researcher to draw the conclusions that are presented in this research. Mashele and Alagidede (2022: 498) admitted that a qualitative research technique is supportive when discerning a case and understanding individual's leadership experiences.

3.5 Physical location Case Study

The study was confined to the department of Water and Sanitation and the department of Health both in KZN, South Africa. The Department of Water and Sanitation DoWSKZN is located in Durban Central whilst the Department of Health DoWSKZN is

located in Durban South, both in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. The reason for selecting these two departments as the case study for this research was to compare, the perceptions of women in leadership roles and to examine the challenges that they face in their workplaces. The researcher selected the two departments to highlight the specific nature of the challenges faced by women occupying diverse positions and meeting diverse job descriptions in different units within the two departments. The research also aimed to compare the effectiveness of existing interventions in addressing the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in government establishments in KZN.

3.6 Population

Ravikiran (2023) described population as a group of people who possess the precise attributes the researcher desires to study. The author further contends that population is considered as a group of people who meet certain criteria that would be embraced in the research study. In this study the population consist of all women in leadership positions in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health and Department of Water and Sanitation. The researcher approached the Human Resource Division of both Departments of Water and Sanitation and Health to determine the number of women in leadership that are employed. The Department of Water and Sanitation employed 77 women in leadership positions in different units. The Department of Health employed 187 women in leadership positions in different units. Resulting in a total population of 264 permanent female staff in leadership positions in both Department of Water and Sanitation and Department of Health. The researcher selected participants who had knowledge and expertise to contribute to the accomplishment of the study. Furthermore, the researcher was convinced that participants have valuable information as per their experience and expertise in leadership roles.

3.7 Target population

According to Willie (2023: 1) target population is a lesser group of respondents selected from the appropriate population to participate in a study. Maseko (2013: 15) stated that the term target population refers to similar population covered by the study in a specific geographic area such as country, region, and town in terms of the age group and gender. For this study the research targeted 10 respondents in top

management positions from each of the departments for a total number of 20 respondents to participate in the in-depth semi - structured interviews.

3.8 Sampling procedure

Sampling procedure is a technique used to pick the respondents of the study (Awung 2019: 97). A purposive sampling method was used to determine the required sample size (Denieffe 2020: 663). Purposive sampling was utilised to provide rich data and on the researcher's selection of the respondents from the population. The researcher used the purposive sampling method based on the primary assumption that respondents provide perceptive contributions. According to Campbell *et al.* (2020: 654) the purposive sampling method involves the handpick respondents that are able to produce suitable and expedient information. The purposive sampling method was used based on its alignment with the specific goals of the study, allowing the researcher to target individuals whose experiences directly contribute to a deeper understanding of the research topic, Furthermore, purposive sampling is efficient for studies with a specific focus. Therefore, Respondents were selected based on their expertise and experiences in leadership roles within the specified government departments. This ensures that the study captures insights from individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the challenges faced by women in these positions. To ensure proportional representation, 10 respondents as illustrated in Table 3.1 were selected from the Department of Health, and 10 from the Department of Water and Sanitation.

3.9 Sample size

Sample size refers to a quantity of respondents chosen from a large population. According to Aspers and Corte (2021: 599) the sample size in a qualitative study is influenced by the concept of saturation. Saturation occurs when collecting additional data would no longer uncover new information essential for comprehending and analysing the phenomenon. The researcher believes that no further information would be collected after interviewing the 20 selected respondents. Table 3.1 below illustrates the sample distribution of the respondents, that is, women in top management positions from the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Health.

Table 3.1. Sample distribution of women in top management positions from the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Health.

Department of Water and Sanitation units and positions	Number of women leaders	Staff level	Department of Health units and positions	Number of women leaders	Staff level
Provincial head Deputy Director	01	12 (top management)	Corporate services Unit Chief executive officer Nursing ward Unit Manager operational Deputy nursing manager	01 01 01	12 (top management) 11 11
Corporate Services Unit Director Human Resources Manager Deputy director Labour Relations Unit Deputy Director Revenue Management Unit Deputy Director	01 01 01 01	13 (top management) 11 11 11	Clinical ward Unit Manager operational Outpatient department Manager operational Causality ward Unit Manager operational Intensive care unit	01 01 01 01	11 11 11 11

Information Communication &Technology Unit Deputy Director	01	11	Manager operational	01	11
Water use regulation unit Deputy Director	01	11	Theatre ward Manager operational	01	11
Water use authorisation unit Water waste Deputy Director	01	11	Administration unit Manager administration	01	11
	02	11	Human Resources & Development unit Manager Human Resources and development	01	11
Total	10	1 Level 12 1 Level 13 8 Level 11		10	1 Level 12 9 Level 11

Source: Author's own compilation

3.10 Data collection procedure

Only women employees in top leadership positions, in the two government Departments (Water and Sanitation and Health) were selected to participate in the research. Throughout the selection process the researcher nominated respondents using her judgement and based on the positions that the respondents occupied within the two selected departments. The researcher believes that these positions qualified the respondents to provide in-depth information on the subject matter of the research study.

Data collection is a methodical gathering of data from diverse sources for an explicit aim, including questionnaires, interviews, observations, existing records, and electronic devices (Ndika, 2015: 21). This study used the semi-structured interview method to obtain the data that was used in the analyses. The interview schedule was vetted by the Human Relations (HR) representatives from both Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Health. This method of data collection was chosen by the HR representatives as the respondents indicated their preference to using an online interview option due to health concerns as the country was just lifting the Covid-19 restrictions. The interview schedule consisted of ten (10) open ended questions. A total number of 20 women in top leadership positions from the two departments participated in the interviews.

3.11 Pretesting/ pilot study

A pilot study is an initial small-scale study carried out by the researchers to determine how best to conduct a large-scale project. In concurrence (In 2017: 601). Enago Academy (2022: 1) affirmed that a pilot study, assisted to test the validity of the research instrument to improve aspects of the final study and it provides an opportunity to mimic the genuine data collection process. Pre-testing a research instrument required a precarious evaluation as understood by a Respondent, of the interpretation of each question and its significance. Three respondents that were not part of the study were selected from the target population to participate in the pilot study and provide inputs on the common problem they experienced in responding to the questions. The questions were sent via email to the selected respondents to isolate problems about accurateness of information. The objective was not to collect data however to diagnose the problems that prospective respondents might have in either understanding or interpreting a question. A pilot study was conducted in order to authenticate the validity and reliability of the research instrument. The pilot study assisted to ensure that the questions were clear and answered consistently and objectively by the respondents in the selected sample. No measure shortcomings were recognised.

3.12 Data analysis procedure

According to Maseko (2013: 82) data analysis refers to a search for a pattern in data recurrent behaviour, objects or body of knowledge. Kelly (2022: 1) explained that data analysis is an exchange of raw data into operational information in order to diminish it into a manageable size, and to review its patterns to numerical methods, and it imposes order and meaning data. In this study, the researcher employed a thematic data analysis method. It is a qualitative method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data and interpreting various facets of the research title. Themes were used to capture key aspects of data in relations to the research questions. Thematic analysis was utilised during the empirical data analysis stage. The process was discussed with the Human Resource officials. Findings were presented in line with the research aim, objectives, and the research questions.

3.13 Approaches to trustworthiness

Connelly (2016: 435) avowed that trustworthiness is a point of sureness in data and elucidation and technique to safeguard the eminence of study. A researcher should inaugurate the rules and procedure essential for the study to be considered worthy by the reader. There are criteria considered by various researchers as follows:

3.13.1 Credibility

(Korstjens and Moser 2018: 120) stated that credibility refers to the extent to which respondents perceive the research findings as a genuine reflection of their individual contributions. In the context of credibility, triangulation emerges as a valuable approach, applicable across various data categories, diverse data systems, analytical categories, and multiple theoretical frameworks (Korstjens and Moser 2018: 120). The researcher established credibility through the following methods:

Member check: The researcher made initial contact with the respondents to undertake a validation of data collected in the information process. The investigator connected the findings of the research study with the purpose to validate the accurateness of the findings of the research study.

3.13.2 Dependability

Korstjens and Moser (2018: 120) illuminated that the concept denotes the reliability and legitimacy of data collected. It affords adequate proof of research which should also produce valid feedback.

Korstjens and Moser (2018: 120) proposed as well that a researcher should provide various details of methodology including main themes and sub-themes which should be clearly portrayed and inferred. The actuality of deviations between feedbacks from respondents were verified to ensure uniformity of the findings. To accomplish dependability, the researcher designated the research methodology.

3.13.3 Transferability

This concept pronounces the degree of results that can be generalised or transferred from the qualitative research to other contexts (Korstjens and Moser 2018: 120) . In this study, the researcher used the semi-structured interview method as well as emails to request the respondents to comply with the vision of the research. The purposive method was used in selecting the research respondents . The transferability is an undistinguishable feature from external validity in an extent to which findings can be generalised. The researcher's transferability was assured by aligning the study with its defined objectives. To enhance transferability, the researcher collected data from two specific government departments namely Water and Sanitation, and Health. This deliberate focus on these departments ensures that the study's findings can be applicable and relevant to similar contexts or settings beyond the immediate scope, contributing to the broader transferability of the research.

3.13.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is a concert that recognizes the methods employed to ensure the accuracy of data obtained from respondents. Confirmability is when findings are evaluated and approved by others. The confirmation process enables one's endorsement of the findings. It was also called respondents validation (Mamba 2019: 71) . The investigator regularly verified the data to ensure that the interpretations and

findings derived from the feedback were not biased but truly reflected the opinions of the contributors.

3.14 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations in research involve a set of principles and guidance that ensure the well-being, rights, and confidentiality of respondents while maintaining the integrity of the research process. According to Chetty (2016: 1) it is the researcher's obligation to observe procedures, and a DoHKZNere to institutional and regulatory guidelines. Ethical principles taken into consideration all facet of the research process which includes respects for the respondents , their protection, individual forms of justice maintaining confidentiality, to guarantee integrity, and responsible conduct of research. It was taken into consideration that all facet of ethical rules, respects for the respondents , their protection, individual forms of justice together with the level of scientific integrity.

3.14.1 Ethical clearance

The researcher obtained necessary ethical clearance for the study from DUT, which includes the different levels of ethical clearance as follows:

3.14.2 Gatekeeper clearance

The researcher obtained gatekeeper clearance from Water and Sanitation as well as Health Departments which entailed permission to invite respondents to the study and collect needed data from the sample drawn.

3.14.3 Letter of information

The researcher distributed a letter of information to potential respondents, the letter contained relevant information about the research study so that respondents are informed about the nature of their involvement in the research. A letter of consent was also given to the respondents to sign as a formal indication of their informed consent and voluntary participation in the study.

3.14.4 Anonymity

The researcher promised that no information that would betray the identity of the respondents would be disclosed to the public. During the research process, all the information collected, and the respondents names were treated in confidentiality, the field notes, as well as categories of information were locked away. The researcher was the only one that had access to information. Furthermore, the researcher considered to protect the respondents from discomfort and emotional, economic, social and physical harm Ngcobo (2016: 77) noted that a researcher ensured that accidental data was not disclosed, and is obligated to make declaration to respondents that security measures were taken to guarantee confidentiality.

3.14.5 Limitations

The study is confined to the Departments of Water and Sanitation and Health KZN, South Africa. The research design is specifically limited to the population of women in leadership positions.

This is a case study conducted in specific Public Sector organisations, which limits the tendency to generalise the findings to other settings.

Akanle, Odemuson and Shittu (2020: 111) described limitations as restrictions that could negatively influence the research including inadequate resources, time, and finance and access to information.

This study was confined to women in leadership positions in two selected governments agencies of Water and Sanitation as well as Health Departments in KwaZulu- Natal. It did not consider other provinces in South Africa because the scope would be wide to cover, the fund and administer the research within the time available for this work and also constituted a limiting factor.

3.15 Chapter conclusion

This chapter provided details of the methods adopted in the collection and analysis of the research data. It also presented a detailed description of the research case design and scientific method applied to attain the final results. Theories and concepts relative

to the systems chosen were discussed. The research utilised case study model with a focus of women in leadership positions within the two selected government Departments. (Water and Sanitation and Health Departments). This study made use of qualitative case research design. The research instrument used consisted an in depth semi structured interview approach which was sent via emails to the Water and Sanitation and Health Departments. (Human Resources Division), and necessary approval was obtained to conduct the study. This chapter covered the research methodology, including the population, sample selection, data collection instrument, as well as strategies used to ensure the ethical standards, reliability and validity of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data obtained in the study and its analysis to show how it attempts to provide answers to the research questions. The overall aim of this research was to examine the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in the selected government department in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa- Department of Health (DOHKZN) and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DOWSKZN). Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the empirical findings derived from the semi-structured interviews. The key themes from the data are presented and discussed. The sub-themes that emerged from each theme are presented in Table 4. 1. In the following subsections, the researcher presents the findings from the study in regards to the challenges faced by women in leadership positions. The findings are analysed within the framework of the study's objectives to assess their alignment with existing literature and their ability to address the research questions.

Table 4.1 below outlines the themes and subthemes derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with women in leadership roles within the two designated departments in KwaZulu-Natal. The presentations and discussions are structured in accordance with the study objectives outlined in Chapter 1, along with the research questions, reiterated here for clarity:

1. RQ1: What are the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KZN, South Africa?
2. RQ2: What are the factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?
3. RQ3: How effective are the existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions?
4. RQ4: What strategies can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?

Table 4.1 Themes and subthemes derived from the semi-structured interviews

Objectives	Main Themes	Sub Themes
<p>1. To examine the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KZN, South Africa.</p>	<p>Theme-1: Challenges of women in leadership positions in government departments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality • Patriarchy • Glass ceiling
<p>2. To examine the factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.</p>	<p>Theme-2: Factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within government departments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of respect • Hostile work environment • Cultural beliefs and practices • Lack of managerial support in the workplace • Lack of mentorship • Negative Perceptions towards work
<p>3. To assess the perception of the effectiveness of existing measures aimed</p>	<p>Theme – 3: The perception of the effectiveness of existing measures to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daycare • Recognition of women • Communication

<p>at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions.</p>	<p>mitigate challenges for women in leadership positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Selection process
<p>4. To propose potential strategies that can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.</p>	<p>Theme-4: Potential strategies that can be employed for women in leadership positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching and mentoring • Workplace forums • Strengthening workplace equality • Empowerment campaigns

4.2 Theme 1: Challenges faced by women in leaderships positions in the selected government departments

The aim of this theme was to identify the challenges encountered by women occupying leadership roles within the selected government departments, specifically the Department of Water and Sanitation (DOWSKZN) and the Department of Health (DOHKZN) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Recognising these challenges is essential for enhancing the efficacy of women's leadership and promoting empowerment in the workplace. The subthemes that surfaced include inequality, patriarchy, and the glass ceiling. These subthemes are detailed below:

4.2.1 Subtheme 1: Inequality

Inequality is the state of not having equal opportunities within a group. According to Ajemba (2023: 79) gender inequality is stated as legal, social and traditional conditions

where gender regulates various rights and benefits for men and women in society. The author further contends that all persons, including women should have opportunities to participate in society, and no one should be treated unfairly. Most of the respondents' responses revealed that there is no equality between men and women in leadership positions in the workplace, even though they are both governed by the same national Constitution and the same workplace policies and regulations. The comments from the respondents regarding this subtheme are presented below:

Respondent DOHKZN1

"Equality is a South African right for both men and women. While equality and women empowerment are fundamental cornerstones for achieving developmental results, dealing with inequality in the workplace by women is an integral part of addressing job challenges in the workplace. There is an underrepresentation of women in top management positions in South Africa this on its own is an inequality."

Respondent DOWSKZN 2

"Wage disparities in the workplace is a form of inequality. Commonly wages for female staff lower than that of their male counterpart. Also, women take longer than men to move up into higher paid positions."

Respondent DOWSKZN9

"All employees need to undergo gender inequality sensitivity training, because it seems like many male employees are not sensitive to the inequalities that women in leadership positions experience in the workplace."

Respondent DOWSKZN3

"Gender inequality results from gender bias, men and women leaders are treated differently within the working environment, for example when it comes to promotions, men are often considered first before women."

Discussion of sub-theme 1

Addressing gender inequality in the workplace is crucial and should begin with fostering gender equality both at home and in the professional sphere (Cerrato and Cifre 2018: 3). The respondents in this study with regards to this subtheme, observed that women:

- Women are underrepresented in top leadership positions in the selected government departments;
- Wage disparity amongst men and women in the workplace;
- Non sensitivity to existing inequalities in the workplace; and
- Men are promoted before women.

These findings are in agreement with current literature on challenges in regards to inequalities between men and women in the workplace. According, to Tabassum and Nayak (2021: 197) despite that fact that women have a right to equality in the workplace however, they are still underrepresented in leadership roles. The authors observed that career progressions of women in management were being hindered by feminine stereotypes and gender bias. The authors further contend that, inequality also manifests in the disparity in earnings between men and women who undertake the same tasks but are paid different wages. According to them women are usually adversely affected by the unequal pay.

On the issue of gender insensitivity, Mauchi (2021: 237) states that attitudes of men towards women in leadership has a negative impact on their performance. Men tend to show more respect to other men in leadership positions as against their attitudes towards women in the same or higher leadership positions.

The results indicated that gender inequality is a reality that impede women in leadership positions. The respondents stressed that despite the gradual improvement in gender parity, inequality still remains in the workplace and is the major reason why women in leadership positions are not overcoming the challenges (Einarsdottir, Christiansen and Kristjansdottir 2018: 13). According to Rongala (2021: 1) gender bias can affect an organisations growth in the long term. Therefore as stated by one

of the respondents all employees should be provided with gender sensitivity training to understand the need for equality in the workplace.

4.2.2 Subtheme 2: patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system or ideology that perpetuates gender inequality between men and women. According to Adisa and Cooke (2020: 147), it involves the perception of men as being superior to women. In patriarchal societies, power structures tend to disproportionately favour men, resulting in significant disadvantages for women. On the issue of patriarchy the respondents were of the view that patriarchal influences in society and culture had transitioned into the workplace.

The comments from the respondents regarding this subtheme are as presented below:

Respondent DOHKZN10

“Social structures, such as patriarchy, and certain traditions, have not fully embraced women in leadership roles, leading to limited representation of women in executive positions within the workplace”.

Respondent DOHKZN 6

“The influence of cultural norms rooted in patriarchal societies impacts women in leadership positions”.

Respondent DOWSKZN9

“Women often encounter challenges stemming from patriarchal attitudes, where their colleagues may not take them as seriously as male leaders. In some instances, women in leadership roles are criticized for overcompensating and are unfairly perceived as aggressive, particularly in meetings where their opinions may be disregarded.”

The commonality observed across both departments is that the experiences shared by female respondents suggest their marginalization, a characteristic of patriarchal systems. Interestingly, certain aspects of tradition permeate from the micro level to the broader workplace environment, exerting a detrimental effect on women in leadership

roles. Furthermore, due to prevailing patriarchal attitudes, female leaders may not receive the same level of respect and consideration as their male counterparts.

According to Guy-Evans (2022: 1), patriarchy entails the trend where power is traditionally held by and passed down through older males, with men assuming leadership roles in families and enjoying greater privileges. In the context of Feminist theory, patriarchy is viewed as a system that discriminates against women. Similarly, Zuma (2018: 7) defines patriarchy as a social system rooted in male dominance, which confers privileges upon men over women. The respondents' comments align with the perspectives of both Guy-Evans (2022: 1) and Zuma (2018: 7), highlighting how women are indeed impacted by patriarchal attitudes, which adversely affect their leadership roles.

4.2.3 Subtheme 3: glass ceiling

The glass ceiling is a discriminatory barrier that impedes women from ascending to leadership positions. As clarified by Vetter (2021: 41), it represents a unique form of bias that prevents women from advancing to higher roles in predominantly male-dominated corporate structures, regardless of their education, qualifications, and competencies. The respondents' comments on this subtheme are detailed below:

Respondent DOHKZN4

“The presence of a glass ceiling for women in leadership roles primarily arises from the perception that men are inherently more suitable and qualified for such positions. This restriction significantly hinders women's vertical advancement within organizations. For instance, it may take a woman longer to attain a managerial position compared to a man”.

Respondent DOWSKZN7

“Women's domestic obligations often hinder them from pursuing available opportunities to advance into leadership positions. For instance, as primary caregivers in many households, women may feel hesitant to assume leadership roles in the workplace.”

Statements from respondents in both departments clearly indicate that the concept of the glass ceiling is a significant barrier to women's advancement in the workplace. Women in prominent positions often encounter frequent instances of chauvinistic behaviour from male counterparts, which is deemed illegal in various countries' work environments Van der Gaag (2020: 1). These Respondent statements align with Van der Gaag's assertion (2020: 1) that the glass ceiling for women in leadership roles primarily stems from the perception that men are inherently more suitable and qualified for such positions.

4.3 Theme 2: Factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The aim of this theme was to identify various factors contributing to disparities that hinder women from effectively performing in leadership roles within the workplace.

4.3.1 Subtheme: 1 Lack of respect

The lack of respect in the workplace is a notable factor contributing to female employees leaving, resigning, or opting for early retirement, which ultimately results in fewer competent and experienced women available to assume leadership positions. As emphasized by Lim (2019), respect is a fundamental value that every workplace culture should prioritize. The absence of acknowledgment and appreciation in the workplace can signify disrespect. Below are the comments from the respondents regarding this subtheme:

Respondent DOHKZN 5

“ In the workplace, leadership roles are predominantly occupied by men, making it challenging for women to advance up the corporate hierarchy. Women often experience disrespect from their male colleagues, with their mistakes met with comments like "we thought as much," whereas similar errors made by men are overlooked. Additionally, there's a pervasive lack of trust in women's ability to perform tasks traditionally associated with men in the corporate environment.”

Respondent DOWSKZN 6

“Female supervisors often exhibit a high level of severity when managing other women, sometimes to the extent that their behavior appears overly harsh or even ruthless towards their female subordinates.”

Respondent DOWSKZN 7

“In my experience, male colleagues often resist or fail to adhere to instructions given by female leaders.”

Respondents from both departments noted that women are consistently disrespected by their male counterparts, with those from DOWSKZN specifically highlighting men's reluctance to follow instructions from female leaders. These statements corroborate the views of Einarsdottir, Christiansen and Kristjansdottir (2018: 13) that women in leadership roles encounter disrespect from their male colleagues. Hence making them feel disrespected often resulting in a hostile work environment.

4.3.2 Subtheme 2: Hostile work environment

The second subtheme arising from this theme was that of a hostile work environment which negatively impacts on women leadership in the workplace. A hostile environment in the workplace is characterized by colleagues feeling intimidated, uncomfortable, and distressed due to unethical or irritating behaviour. This may include verbally abusive language and mocking remarks. According to Naeem (2022), a hostile environment can profoundly impede a colleague's work performance by causing extreme discomfort. Below is a summary of the respondents' perspectives on this subtheme.

Respondent DOHKZN 3

“Hostile workplace environments present considerable obstacles for women in leadership roles, underscoring the urgent necessity to implement measures that address and penalise such behaviour as misconduct.”

Respondent DOWSKZN10

“ There have been instances where I have encountered a hostile environment in the workplace despite my efforts to address these issues with my employers, I have not received any support.”

Respondents from both departments suggested that the department should enhance the enforcement of special regulations aimed at addressing hostile behaviours. There is a need for more education among employees regarding behaviours and practices that are hostile towards women. Additionally, the departments should prioritise educating the employees to foster understanding of gender equality and the inherent differences between the sexes.

The notion of hostile environment should be dealt with to put on check those employees who form part of it. Enforcement requires to be strengthened to apply disciplinary measures on those who do not comply with the policy. The statements made by the respondents underscores the detrimental impact of a hostile environment on colleagues. When instances of hostility arise in the workplace, it is imperative for the employer to address them promptly. According to Heathfield (2021: 1), if an employee has experienced a hostile work environment and has unsuccessfully attempted to rectify the situation, it is the responsibility of the employer to investigate the complaint and take steps to eliminate the hostile conduct (Mbandlwa and Anwana 2020). (Mistry 2018) also emphasizes the importance of providing the employer with an opportunity to investigate the complaint and eradicate any behavior contributing to a hostile working environment

The respondents' statements highlight the negative effects of a hostile environment on women in leadership positions. When hostility occurs in the workplace, it's crucial for employers to address it promptly. Heathfield (2021: 1) emphasizes that if an employee has faced a hostile work environment without success in resolving it, it becomes the employer's responsibility to investigate the complaint and take action to eliminate the hostile behaviour. Similarly, (Mistry 2018) stresses the importance of giving the employer the chance to investigate and address any behaviour's

contributing to a hostile workplace environment. Strengthening enforcement measures is essential to apply disciplinary actions to those who fail to comply with policies.

4.3.3 Subtheme 4: Lack of managerial support in the workplace

Lack of managerial support in the workplace refers to situations where employees do not receive sufficient assistance or backing from management or colleagues. This can manifest in various ways, such as inadequate access to training opportunities or necessary resources for completing tasks. In the context of women in leadership roles, the absence of support from management may lead to their male counterparts and other colleagues undermining or disregarding their leadership positions within the workplace.

Responses from respondents in regard to this subtheme are summarised below:

Respondent DOHKZN 6

“Women in leadership positions sometimes find it difficult to be accepted by many of those they lead due to the management not providing adequate support to them in the leadership positions”.

Respondent DOWSKZN5

“Organisational support and recognition of the positive contributions of women leaders in the organisation will help to change the mindset that women are not effective leaders. Where there is perceived to be lack of management support the woman in the leadership role will be undermined by her male colleagues as well as female colleagues.

Respondent DOWSKZN1

“Support from organisation management is essential to firstly empower the women leader and secondly force the male colleagues to recognise her leadership.”

Respondent DOWSKZN7

“Women leaders often do not receive adequate support from management e.g. one finds that where a woman is in a leadership position the budget of that department or unit would be smaller than that which was allocated when it was a man in the position.

Sometimes when women are appointed as head of the unit, the role is made smaller than when it was a man in the same position.”

Statements by the respondents from both departments were similar. The respondents were of the view that women in leadership positions who do not receive adequate support from their management, would most likely lead to disregard from their subordinates. This view is also supported in literature. For example the (Oruh *et al.* 2021) contends that poor support of employees in the workplace can cause strain and send conflicting messages to other employees. This is even more exaggerated with women who occupy leadership positions in the workplace.

4.3.4 Subtheme 5: Lack of mentorship

In the workplace, mentorship plays a vital role in establishing achievable goals, setting necessary boundaries, and instilling the right disciplines. According to the European Union (2020: 2) mentoring provides new employees with an opportunity to acquire expertise in the work environment, while also aiding both employees and managers in supporting their career advancement. Mentorship for female leaders is of utmost importance in the workplace. Women leaders need someone who understand their additional challenges which could stem from the home environment. Male employees are often not saddled with the same challenges faced by women domestically. Below are the comments from the respondents regarding this subtheme:

Respondent DOHKZN 1

“The absence of mentors or sponsors has been a persistent issue, particularly in fields where senior figures are predominantly male. Individuals often gravitate towards mentoring younger colleagues of the same gender, resulting in more support, encouragement, and assistance given to young men compared to women. Additionally, due to regulations governing appropriate workplace behaviour, men may hesitate to initiate mentoring relationships with women for fear of potential negative consequences”.

Respondent DOHKZN 10

“Female mentors who have gone through the same situation that present female leaders find themselves could assist to support women in leadership positions. Many women in leadership positions are faced with added responsibilities on the domestic front and they find it difficult to balance work and home”.

Respondent DOWSKZN 4

“ Fewer women are reaching the top of their organisation’s leadership positions, and a major reason is that women are not getting institutional support. For example, government departments should be intentional about ensuring that women when appointed into leadership positions are supported to succeed on the job. Mentorship programmes by fellow women leaders could play a vital role in ensuring that this support is given”.

Respondent DOWSKZN 6

“Ensuring that women get the support they need to move up and succeed in leadership roles has proved elusive for most government departments. Many support and mentoring programmes have been halted due to budgetary issues”.

From the responses above it is evident that all of the respondents in both departments feel that mentorship would go a long way to bolster women leader confidence and assist them succeed in their leadership roles. Their positions agree with literature on the issue. As noted by Bruce and Bridgeland (2014: 4), women mentors serve as a great tool for women leaders in the work environment on emerging leadership competencies.

Respondent from the two departments emphasise the need for female mentors. They opine that mentorship programmes should be encouraged in the workplace for women employees who may need it. Ibarra (2019) states that mentorship programmes assist in confidence building for employees in a workplace and is a useful tool for employees in leadership positions. From the statements by the respondents above, it can be concluded that they all agree with Bruce and Bridgeland (2014: 4) who asserts that

under trained or ill equipped employees need sponsorships and mentors to assist them to reach their career heights and succeed in the work place.

4.3.5 Subtheme 3: Cultural beliefs and practices

Culture in the workplace refers to the theories and behaviours of a group of people, influenced by their cultural beliefs. According to Anwana and Aroba (2020). in many African societies women continue to be constrained by cultural, religious and traditional beliefs which places women as subordinates rather than leaders in their communities and family settings. Often these traditional and cultural beliefs are transcended into the workplace hence preventing women from achieving their full potential as leaders in the workplace.

Below are the respondents' comments on this subtheme:

Respondent DOHKZN 2

“As a woman in a leadership role within my organization, I am impacted by cultural beliefs stemming from the influence of a patriarchal society. This often leads to unjust questioning of my decisions and significantly undermines my self-esteem and confidence.”

Respondent DOHKZN 7

“Traditional and cultural practices and beliefs hinder women from attaining top positions within their organisation's, as they are often expected to assume subordinate roles rather than leadership positions.”

Respondent DOWSKZN 5

“In my opinion, cultural beliefs contribute to male colleagues feeling threatened by women in leadership positions within an organisation. Similarly, even female colleagues may respect the views of male their colleagues over those of women in leadership positions in their organisation”.

Respondent DOWSKZN 3

“Social and cultural biases hinder women in leadership positions, particularly by the older generation, who perceive women as inferior to men. This is evident in outdated beliefs such as “a woman’s place is in the kitchen” and the perception that women should prioritise their domestic roles over their careers or jobs”.

Respondents to this subtheme concurred that cultural beliefs and practices are carried over into the workplace from the societies and communities where employees originate. They assert that this mindset has a negative impact on women leaders. Respondents from both departments shared personal experiences of this challenge and attributed it to the patriarchal nature of the South African society. This viewpoint aligns with existing literature on the issue. According to Kassa (2015: 3), cultural beliefs and practices significantly hinder women's participation in decision-making processes and their ability to assume leadership positions for an extended period. Jayieola and Isaac (2020: 14) argued that many societies still hold the belief that women should primarily be involved in domestic work within the family. Mohr (2014: 1) highlighted that men are more inclined to apply for senior positions, even if they don't fully meet the requirements, compared to women who often wait until they meet all requirements before applying for senior positions within their organisations.

4.3.6 Subtheme 6: Negative perception of women towards work

Women are perceived as those who neglect work because of an imbalance between work and domestic duties. According to a study conducted by Chung (2018: 521) male counterparts have negative attitude towards women flexible working time. They often are of the view that, women neglect their work because they have to balance between work and personal responsibilities. When asked to comment in regard to this subtheme, respondent’s views varied. Some respondents believed that some women leaders could not find the balance in order for their jobs not to be negatively impacted, whilst others felt that management did not consider the added responsibilities that women were saddled with. The comments from the respondents regarding this subtheme are presented below.

Respondent DOHKZN5

“Women are often perceived to not be putting in their best efforts when they are in leadership positions. It is sort of like BBEE, it is felt that you are there just because they need a female person and not because you know your job. This perception is very unfortunate as we then all are painted with the same brush. Hence there is a resistance from taking instructions from women leaders”.

Respondent DOHKZN9

“If you are married or have a family you are perceived as not doing your work effectively especially if you have to attend to any domestic issues during working hours, whereas when men in leadership positions take excuses to deal with domestic issues they are applauded and seen as being very efficient and responsible.”

Respondent DOWSKZN7

“Although this perception about women neglecting work due to domestic responsibilities is not always correct and unfortunate, however I have seen women leaders who would neglect their positions to attend to family issues, without considering the impact that this will have on the job. There has to be a balance otherwise the job will suffer.”

Respondent DOWSKZN4

“This perception is often noticed from the negative attitude from male colleagues when duties are assigned to them by female leaders, although female colleagues could share the same sentiments however it seems like the women in leadership positions complain about the male attitudes more.”

From the respondent’s statements it can be concluded that they all agree that there is a negative perception about women in leadership positions when it comes to neglecting work. From the response of DOHKZN9 it is clear that some truth could be found in the perception as according to the respondent, some women leaders are not able to effectively balance work and personal responsibilities efficiently, thereby allowing the negative stereotype to persist. The respondents’ statement above agrees with the study by Chung (2018: 521) who also found that male work colleagues have

negative attitude towards women in leadership roles as they feel that women would more often than not prioritise family responsibility over work.

4.4 Theme - 3 To assess the perception of the effectiveness of existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions.

This theme attempted to assess the perception from women in leadership positions in the two government departments of the effectiveness of existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions in the workplace. Many government departments in KwaZulu-Natal had identified challenges of women employees in the workplace and set up measures to assist with these challenges. This study sought to examine if these measures were effective in mitigating the challenges experienced by women employees and those in leadership positions in the two Departments. Four subthemes emerged from this theme namely provision of day care facilities; recognition of women leaders through performance management, effective communication and improved recruitment and selection process. The respondents during the semi-structured interviews responded to question on the issues and below are selected responses from those interviewed as saturation had been reached.

4.4.1 Subtheme 1: Daycare

Providing daycare facilities in the workplace can have various welfare benefits for the department/organisation where they exist. Daycare facilities can be described as a facility to take care of children of employees whilst the parents are in the workplace. Provision of this type of facility in the workplace comes with great benefits for the employees, firstly the knowledge of their children being in close proximity to them is reassuring. Furthermore, the time wastage in city traffic to drop and pickup the children can be spent more productively in the workplace. According to Freshessays (2023) daycare centres in the workplace can generate a caring work environment for women and employees who have children. This may improve employee morale, lower employee's turnover and attract more applications from potential employees. On the

other hand, women leaders who may have more economic powers may not want to bring their children to the daycare facilities in the workplace. These types of employees would rather go to more sophisticated facilities for their children daycare; therefore, this mitigating effort may not be as effective as it was intended.

The respondent's views on this are reflected below.

Respondent DOHKZN7

“While the intention behind workplace daycare is commendable, the execution is far from ideal, the children are not adequately provided for, and many senior level parents will not enrol their children in these facilities.”

Respondent DOHKZN3

“This facility is good and commendable on the part of the Departments to assist mothers with young children; however, it is being abused as these mothers especially those in leadership will keep the children in their office rather than in the day care facilities, they sometimes will call the daycare worker to bring their children to them in their offices, hence defeating the aim of the facility.”

Respondent DOWSKZN8

“Although the intention of these facilities is meant to enhance staff performance and reduce time wastage spent on dropping and picking up children, however most times a new mother would spend a good amount of her working hour at the day care to check on their child rather than in her office. The proximity of the facility encourages the frequently trips to the facility. The department should consider restructuring the daycare facility to enhance employee performance.”

Although the respondents spoke mostly about facilities at the daycare centres not being adequate, they seem to appreciate that the facility was provided for them. They agreed that the provision of daycare facilities existing in the workplace assisted working mothers by boosting their performance and allowing for them to be less worried about their infant children while at work. They however suggested the need for improved facilities.

According to Finn (2017) daycare in the workplace is key to assist women to concentrate and be more productive on their duties. The respondents' view agrees with Finn (2017) who stated that daycare can assist women to focus on their duties and also improve their morale.

4.4.2 Subtheme 2: Recognition of women in performance management

This subtheme underscores the crucial importance of acknowledging and valuing women's contributions in the workplace. It emphasizes the need for employers to recognise and reward women's efforts and performance, not just as a matter of gender equality but also as a means to inspire productivity and foster a sense of appreciation among female employees.

Effective recognition can take various forms, such as merit-based rewards, acknowledgment of service, and achievements. However, it's essential that these initiatives go beyond token gestures and address the substantive and measurable contributions of women, particularly those in leadership roles. This means that rewards should be based on merit and performance rather than solely on gender.

In a research conducted by O'Flaherty, Sanders and Willans (2021) the authors suggest that recognising employees can boost productivity and enhance feelings of appreciation. However, unfortunately current initiatives aimed at recognising women in the workplace often fall short in adequately supporting women in leadership positions. It is therefore crucial that rewards are based on the tangible and measurable contributions of the female leaders rather than solely on gender so that other employees can appreciate their leadership role rather than only the issue of their gender.

Respondent's views on this sub-theme are reflected below.

Respondent DOHKZN 6

“While there is a commendable mention of recognising women's contributions in the workplace, the actual implementation and embrace of such recognition seem lacking.”
Proper recognition of women's contributions in the workplace is not well embraced and

such recognition can improve employees' morale. The recognitions seem to placed mostly on the gender rather than the measurable contribution of the female leader."

Respondent DOHKZN 9

"In my opinion, performance management processes should not be so insensitive as to prevent women from being recognised. Some performance management systems expect an employee to do so many things outside work e.g. be a member of a professional body, acquire further qualifications, engage in community services etc. Many women leaders do not have enough time to achieve these high expectations before their contributions are recognised."

Respondent DOWSKZN 5

"Strict requirements on achievements should be highlighted in the workplace so that women leaders do not feels like they are only being recognised based on their gender alone. The current system appears to be inadequate as to what the recognition is about."

Respondent DOWSKZN 7

"While there are measures in place for rewarding good work to enhance organisational performance, it is evident that these measures often fall short in adequately extending to recognise the contributions of women. The present performance management system does not recognise the contributions of women in their families, and communities, even in the workplace the recognition is more concentrated on the aspect of gender than their measurable contributions."

The above claim by the female respondents in both departments agrees with O'Flaherty, Sanders and Willans (2021) who asserted that recognition in the workplace can improve employees' morale. Furthermore, the views agree with the study conducted by Anwana and Kayode (2023) who contends that the failure to recognise the added work of women in their families as care, givers, providers etc, stifles their career progression.

4.4.3 Subtheme 3: Communication

This subtheme highlights the critical role of communication in the workplace, emphasising the need for it to be both effective and sufficient. Communication involves the exchange of messages and serves as a means to interact with others within the workplace. Methods such as emails, phone calls, and faxes facilitate this exchange. According to Dimpleby and Burton (2020: 23) , communication is the sharing of information and also facilitates the expression of emotions, ideas, and opinions. While communication is recognised as a component of the organisational structure, its effectiveness, particularly in reaching and benefiting women in leadership positions, is often constrained. Respondent's views on this as an existing measure and their perception of it are reflected below.

Respondent DOHKZN7

“Existing channels of communication in our government departments need significant improvement to address current ineffectiveness or shortcomings. Some employees abuse communication channels such as WhatsApp by posting irrelevant messages and emails are sent at any time with expectations that the female leader will read it even at odd hours. Communication rules/policies need to be set and adhered to, unnecessary expectations should be discouraged”.

Respondent DOWSKZN1

“The communication system within the organisation demonstrates a lack of consideration, particularly in its failure to embrace diverse views and opinions. This deficiency hinders the open exchange of ideas and perspectives instead of fostering an inclusive environment where all voices are valued. Sometimes the communication system may inadvertently prioritise certain viewpoints over others, leading to feelings of exclusion among employees with diverse perspectives. For example, I remember once when I gave my opinion in an email of which was copied to everyone, and of which we were all asked to make comments. My superior responded and copied everyone telling me that I was full of complaints with no solutions. I felt very bad, and I have since stopped making contributions using the general communication channels.”

The responses to this sub-theme highlight the dual role of communication in either empowering or disenfranchising female employees. This observation is corroborated by literature, with authors such as Brearley (2020: 1) arguing that open communication can facilitate team advancement and gauge sensitivity levels. In the context of practicing transformational leadership, it is crucial for leaders to foster ongoing relationships with managers and staff, centred around shared goals of patience, safety, and effective communication. According to Chukwuma *et al.* (2022) equitable treatment and constructive communication methods can foster the attitudes and behaviours necessary to enhance relationships and cultivate a more favourable work environment.

From the responses above, the respondents' perspectives align with Brearley (2020: 1), who suggests that effective communication is required for a conducive and progressive workplace. However, from the responses it is evident that there is a current inadequacy in achieving this goal.

4.4.4 Subtheme 4: Recruitment and Selection Process

The recruitment and selection process in the context of workplace dynamics revolves around the systematic approach organisations take to attract, assess, and choose individuals for employment. The process plays a pivotal role in shaping the composition of the workforce and influences the organisation's overall culture and effectiveness. According to Bazana and Reddy (2021: 4), the recruitment and selection process is the procedure of selecting a suitable candidate from a pool of applications for employment. Inefficiencies and biases within this process may hinder the creation of a diverse and inclusive workplace. According to data collected on the subtheme, the current system falls short in addressing the diverse needs and potential biases, particularly concerning the inclusion of women in leadership positions.

The comments from the respondents regarding this subtheme are as presented below.

Respondent DOHKZN5

“The inadequacy of the current internal onboarding programs is evident in preparing staff to accept changes in management within the workplace. For instance, when an

external female staff is appointed into a vacant position of leadership, there is a noticeable lack of support from internal staff to facilitate her effective performance of duties."

Respondent DOHKZN1

"There is this notion that a female staff member who is appointed into a leadership position did not really go through the scrutiny that men are often made to go through, it is felt that she must have known someone higher up or is related to a powerful person hence the appointment. For those of us who worked extremely hard to get appointments and promotions this can be demoralising".

Respondent DOWSKZN3

"Despite the current measures in recruitment processes across organisations for women inclusivity the general opinion of society is still strong that men work or run business while women are caregivers. This hampers the effectiveness of these measures. It will take time to change this stereotype, but the more women take up leadership roles, the more the public perception will change".

Respondent DOWSKZN9

"Though there are efforts within recruitment and selection measures to address gender stereotypes, there remains a critical inadequacy in challenging ingrained perceptions. Stereotypes must be addressed; women should be taught that they are equal to men and that leadership has nothing to do with gender. More female leaders should be appointed so it can become a norm for females to lead even in male dominated industries and government departments".

The statements by the female respondents on this subtheme, posits that addressing gender stereotypes in recruitment and selection processes, should be addressed to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, which can lead to improved performance, innovation, and employee satisfaction.

According to the statement by the respondents from both departments', programmes should be facilitated to all staff to ensure that notion of women prejudice in the

workplace is addressed. The above discourse signals a need for more effective measures to dismantle stereotypes embedded in the selection and recruitment processes. Women leaders should feel that they were appointed based on a transparent merit system and not solely because of their gender or the departments' seeking to fill their employment equity status.

4.4.5 Theme 4 Potential strategies that can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership positions.

In this theme, the researcher sought to gather from the respondents their views on the strategies that the departments could implement as an intervention to the challenges faced by women leaders in the workplace. The views are collaborated with literature on the subject matters to determine if they correspond with studies in the area. Four subthemes emerged from this theme and are presented below. Women should be trained by issuing bursaries to improve their skills and expertise in addition, those who have achieved must be granted with opportunity to be recruited (Harris, 2019). Men should not transfer the traditional attitudes to the workplace. Furthermore, this should improve the work relationship including performance.

4.4.6 Subtheme 1: Coaching and Mentoring

Respondents were asked about their views on coaching and mentoring as a strategy to assist women leaders overcome some challenges they face in their workplaces. Below are responses from the respondents interviewed.

Respondent DOHKZN 3

“Coaching and mentoring on supervisory skills are required. Most women leaders in our department are very competent administrators but lack supervisory skills. Coaches and mentors would really assist them.”

Respondent DOHKZN 4

“I believe that women in leadership positions should be given support and opportunities to grow their leadership skills. This can be effectively done through providing them with mentors and coaches.”

Respondent DOWSKZN 7

“In addressing women’s leadership challenges, the department can assist by providing women leaders with coaches and mentors to help improve their competencies and confidence.”

Respondent DOWSKZN1

“Imposter syndrome can be combated by having more support structures such as coaches and mentors to equip women to lead better, an environment that is supportive and conducive for them will build confidence in their work decisions”.

According to (Tshipani 2021) , coaching and mentoring are important tools that can empower women in leadership positions to realise their full potential in the workplace. The utilisation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) allows women to set targets and receive support and constructive feedback from a designated coach, which can empower the women to improve on the KPIs. (Heritty 2022) also suggests that coaching is a valuable tool for improving both individual and team performance, enabling employees to set and achieve their goals. Mentoring, as described by Thompson (2019: 3), serves as a means for mentees to grow and develop in the workplace, connecting them with skilled individuals who offer knowledge and expertise.

Comments from respondents regarding this subtheme echo the sentiment that effective coaching is crucial for employee success and that mentoring is essential for women's advancement in the workplace. This aligns with the assertion made by Phillip-Lye and Carruthers (2022: 1), who underscored the relevance of mentoring in helping women reach leadership positions and those in leadership role to become successful.

4.4.7 Subtheme 2: Workplace forums

For this subtheme, respondents were asked for their opinions on utilising workplace forums to support and empower women in leadership positions. Workplace forums typically consist of representatives from both employers and employees within the organisation, with the purpose of exchanging information on work-related matters and encouraging employee participation in decision-making processes.

(Greeff 2021) described workplace forums as a forum which aims to promote employee engagement in the workplace, and which can be used to facilitate discussions between employers and employees on issues such as wages and restructuring.

The comments from respondents regarding this subtheme are summarised below.

Respondent DOWSKZN 7

“Workplace forums can serve as a valuable tool for addressing the challenges experienced by female colleagues in leadership roles within the workplace. Establishing them as a regular weekly practice can ensure consistent support and attention to the needs of women in leadership positions”.

Respondent DOHKZN 2

“Workplace forums can function as advocates for employees' interests, akin to the role played by trade unions. I believe this would assist women in leader positions as this would serve as a forum for them to better articulate their plans and vision for the departments they head thereby creating a more supportive work environment as colleagues would better appreciate the leader's position.”

The statement by respondents above stressed that employees would welcome the setting up of a workplace forum in the departments. From the response of DOHKZN 2, some benefits of a workplace forum as a forum where dialogues on employees' issue can be articulated without the adversarial nature of collective bargaining is most welcome and could serve to support female leaders. This position agree with the views stated by (Greeff 2021) who explain that workplace forums are comprised of employees elected by their peers to represent all workers within a workplace. They convene regularly to engage in consultations with employers regarding various workplace matters. These forums are created with the aim of advancing the interests of all employees, irrespective of their union membership status. Additionally, they foster the cultivation of collaborative relationships between employers, employees, and their respective unions. Respondents agree that the establishment and equipping for workplace forums in the Departments would greatly assist women leader within the selected Departments.

4.4.8 Subtheme 3- Strengthening workplace equality

Workplace equality is a theme that underscores the importance of ensuring fair treatment for all employees, taking into account factors such as race, gender, and disability. It acknowledges that discrimination can exist in the workplace and emphasises the need for employees to have access to equal opportunities. According to Luassa, Ryan and Lynch (2023: 2) , establishing a legislative framework on equality covering aspects such as race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation is essential in the workplace.

The comments from respondents regarding this subtheme are summarised below.

Respondent DOWSKZN 10

“Equality in the workplace must not only be spoken about but must be in practiced. As a woman leader I see unfair treatment often. For example, there was a situation where one of my initiatives was shot down only for the male colleagues who was later asked to carry out the task came to me for advice on how to go about it. The question is why should I be an advisor when it seemed like I didn’t know what I was doing?”

Respondent DOHKZN 9

“As a female in a leadership position. I am of the opinion that organisations generally should ensure that employees understand the Constitution which entrenches the right to equality in section 9. I suggest that all employees should be made to undergo gender sensitivity training as part of training on the job. This would assist us women leaders as we can see that many our male colleagues come to the workplace with traditional and cultural stereotypes about women”.

According to the comment by the respondents in both government departments, workplace policies on what constitutes equality and equal treatment of employees should be available and understood by all employees. Respondents also called for trainings to be carried out on what constitutes workplace equality and for cultural gender stereotypes to be eliminated from the workplace.

This recommendation is in line with Rongala (2021: 1) who asserted that in the fast-paced business landscape of today, attaining gender equality is recognised as a critical element for the competitiveness and expansion of any organisation. Furthermore, to foster an inclusive and thriving economy, it is imperative to guarantee equal opportunities for success for all individuals.

4.4.9 Subtheme 4: Empowerment campaigns

Empowerment campaigns for women in leadership positions aim to provide them with the resources, support, and opportunities necessary to thrive and excel in their roles. These campaigns typically involve initiatives that promote gender equality, leadership development, mentorship, and skills training tailored specifically to the needs and challenges faced by women in leadership. By empowering women leaders, organizations can unlock their full potential, foster diversity, and inclusion, and drive positive changes within the workplace and beyond.

This subtheme reflects the respondents' perspectives on how women leaders in the two departments could be supported through the implementation of empowerment campaigns within the departments. Responses from the respondents are summarised below:

Respondent DOHKZN 10

“The Departments initiatives in planning programmes aimed to empower women in the month of August (Women month) is very encouraging and appreciated. However, over the years it has now become like a yearly ritual losing its significance. The focus now is mostly on gender-based violence. I myself I do support this however we need to empower women in leadership positions to know how to manage and provide ethical leadership to their organisations because this is lacking in many governments and even private establishments.”

Respondent DOWSKZN 3

“Empowerment campaigns must be launched to encourage females to support each other and stop viewing themselves as competitors and sometimes even enemies. Toxicity in the workplace would be discouraged, healthy competition amongst employees should be encouraged through empowerment campaigns.”

The view of the respondents in this subtheme aligns with the views of Saeed (2019: 1) who opines that, women empowerment programs invest significantly in the well-being and empowerment of women, encouraging them to challenge traditional roles and dismantle gender stereotypes. The author went further to suggest that strategies for achieving women's financial empowerment be put in place to empower women on how to secure their financial futures and deal with their finances. The authors are of the view that it is essential to break down barriers and explore programmes that advocate for equal opportunities for women and promote financial inclusivity.

Also, in this regards the views Karmysov (2023) is also relevant as the author contends that by empowering women leadership in the workplace, their strengthen and potentials can be better harnessed for the betterment of the workplace.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter presented the empirical research outcomes on the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the workplace in the two selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study has four key themes. Key theme number one depicted challenges faced by women in leadership positions which incorporates subthemes namely, inequality, patriarchy, and glass ceiling. Key theme number two factors' that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within the government departments which incorporates subthemes, Lack of respect, Hostile work environment, Cultural beliefs and practices, lack of support in the workplace, lack of mentorship and negative perception towards work. Theme number three the perception of the effectiveness of existing measures for women in leadership which incorporates subthemes daycare, recognition of women, communication, recruitment, and selection process as well as potential strategies that can be employed for women in leadership which incorporates coaching and mentoring, workplace forums, to strengthening workplace equality and embarking on empowerment campaigns.

Respondents were of the view that women in leadership positions in the selected government departments would be able to perform more optimally should these suggestions be put in place to support their leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter encapsulates the findings derived from analysing data collected from respondents regarding the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions within the selected government departments of the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This chapter subsequently reviews these findings, examines the contributions of the research, and provides recommendations while suggesting directions for future research. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the workplace, focusing on two government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The following section presents a summary of the findings in line with the research objective and research questions of the study.

Research question of the study:

The study set out to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KZN, South Africa?
2. What are the factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?
3. How effective are the existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions?
4. What strategies can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?

The research questions were derived from the research objectives which are summarised in the next section of this chapter.

5.2 Summary of findings

Findings of objective 1: Challenges encountered in the workplace by women in leadership positions in the selected government departments in KZN, South Africa.

The findings of this study revealed that women in leadership positions face challenges related to inequality, patriarchy, and the glass ceiling, which ultimately affect their performance. Despite both men and women being governed by the same constitution, most respondents indicated a lack of equality between genders.

Patriarchy was identified as another significant challenge, leading to women being overlooked compared to their male counterparts in the workplace. Additionally, the presence of the glass ceiling was highlighted as a barrier preventing women from reaching top leadership roles, fuelled by the belief that men are more capable than women.

Addressing these challenges is crucial to improving the leadership experiences of women and finding solutions to these issues. In conclusion, it is recommended that the departments implement government policies effectively and ensures that all employees understand and adhere to these policies. This will contribute to creating a more equitable and supportive work environment for women in leadership positions.

It is recommended that the departments should ensure that employees who do not comply with policies implemented must be sanctioned. Furthermore, the department must ensure that all employees have equal opportunities for growth and development within the department. Policies developed for empowering women participation in leadership and decision making should be periodically reviewed to evaluate their success and/or shortcomings. Both men and women must support each other to improve productivity.

Findings of objective 2: The factors that hinder women's engagement in leadership roles within selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The study identified several factors hindering women's engagement in leadership roles, including lack of respect and a hostile work environment, cultural beliefs and practices, lack of workplace support, absence of mentorship, and negative perceptions toward women's work ethic. Women reported feeling disrespected by their male counterparts and facing challenges related to a hostile work environment. Additionally, cultural beliefs and practices within patriarchal societies were found to affect women leaders. Lack of mentorship opportunities and support from colleagues further impeded women's leadership development. Negative perceptions regarding women's ability to balance work and personal life also had an adverse impact on their work performance.

Gender stereotypes have long been recognised as significant barriers hindering female participation in senior management positions. These stereotypes create differences in workplace behaviours and perpetuate unequal treatment. Women often face fewer opportunities for promotion and incentives at the departmental level compared to their male counterparts. According to Jansen van Rensburg (2021: 1,2), women in South Africa have less influence in securing leadership roles and even in the leadership position would typically earn less than their male counterparts. The study outcomes highlighted that respondents were acutely aware of the challenges they as women in leadership positions must overcome to advance into leadership roles.

Addressing these factors is essential to improve women's engagement in leadership roles within South African organisations. Women in leadership positions should be recognised and respected for their contributions to the workplace, and their colleagues should provide support and encouragement. Efforts should be made to enhance the morale of women in leadership positions, which would lead to increased productivity and reduced turning in the workplace into a hostile and toxic work environment for women in leadership positions.

Findings of objective 3: The perception of the effectiveness of existing measures aimed at mitigating the challenges experienced by women occupying leadership positions.

The findings of the study revealed that women in leadership positions perceived existing measures, such as daycare facilities, recognition of women's contributions, communication practices, and the recruitment and selection process, to have implications on their experiences. Daycare facilities in the workplace were identified as beneficial for working mothers, allowing them to balance their responsibilities effectively. However, the lack of daycare provision as a standard amenity was a concern for many working mothers. Furthermore, it was observed that although the provision of this facility was beneficial, however it could also be abused and often not properly funded. Additionally, the recognition of women's contributions in the workplace was seen as crucial for advancing departmental goals. Findings revealed that women leaders wanted to be recognised for their efficient and effective leadership skills and contributions to the establishment and not for their gender only. Effective communication was also highlighted as essential for women leaders to communicate with their subordinates and explain their vision and goals. The study also found that certain communication tools such as WhatsApp and emails could be abused by colleagues and suggested that communication policies be adopted and regularly updated. Lastly for this objective the recruitment and selection process were sometimes perceived as unfair to women, as most times women leaders are selected and appointed into leadership positions primarily based on gender. This gives the impression that the female leader is less qualified than her male counterparts. The study suggests that fair recruitment and selection processes suitable for both men and women who meet the job requirements be used at all times.

The study findings indicate that it is imperative to consider and implement these measures effectively to help women mitigate the challenges they face in leadership positions. Furthermore, all qualified individuals, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to apply for leadership positions without barriers. In concluding this objective, the study found that these measures can significantly enhance the productivity of women leaders in the workplace, ensuring a conducive and supportive environment for their success.

Findings of objective 4: Potential strategies that can be employed to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles within the selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The study findings uncovered potential strategies to address the challenges faced by women in leadership roles, including coaching and mentoring, workplace forums, and empowerment campaigns aimed at improving equality. Coaching and mentoring were identified as crucial for enhancing employees' skills and expertise, particularly for women leaders seeking to develop their capabilities. Workplace forums were deemed essential for representing employees and addressing the issues they encounter in leadership roles. It could also be a forum where female leaders could have a less adversarial space to communicate with their employees for a more amicable solution finding process. Moreover, it was found that promoting equality in the workplace is vital, ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and have equal opportunities for advancement is essential to create a conducive workplace. Additionally, empowerment campaigns were recognised as important tools for providing women with opportunities to pursue leadership positions as well as succeed in other aspects of their lives by finding a balance between work and their personal lives.

The study found that respondents believed that, implementing these strategies could inspire and empower women in leadership roles, allowing them to voice their opinions and contribute effectively to their organisations. Study also found that there was a need for the departments to invest in coaching and mentorship programme. From respondents responses they believed that investing in coaching and mentoring, facilitating workplace forums, promoting equality, and conducting empowerment campaigns, the selected government departments could create an environment conducive to the success and advancement of women in leadership positions.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Grant career advancement opportunities to females to enhance overall participation appropriateness.
- Implement coaching and mentoring programs for women to enhance their skills and expertise.
- Ensure workplace policies support a healthy work-life balance for all employees. Make the policies practical for every employee to feel the significance of those policies.
- Prevent the influence of patriarchal systems on workplace performance. Ensure that such influence do not transfer to the workplace as they hinder overall performance.
- Foster a gender-neutral workplace where performance is not hindered by gender related biases.
- Encourage and facilitate a positive working relationship between male and female employees to promote collaboration and achieve common organizational goals.
- Reject chauvinist attitudes against women by implementing training programs, and establishing a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory behaviour. Leadership should actively model respectful and inclusive behaviour to set a positive example for the entire organization.
- Review equal pay policies. This is essential to ensure fair compensation for all employees, irrespective of gender.
- Promote work life balance is key to supporting the well-being of employees, particularly women. Organisations can introduce flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and family-friendly policies.
- Improvement of the recruitment and selection diversity is crucial by implementing blind recruitment practices, and actively seeking diverse candidate pools strongly encouraging women applicants.

- Provide childcare centres in the workplace. This may include extending operating hours, ensuring qualified staff, and creating a more supportive environment for employees with young children.
- Develop and implement communication strategies that actively promote inclusivity and ensure that information is disseminated in a manner that reaches and resonates with all employees,
- Review recognition measures and make them more inclusive by recognizing and appreciating the contributions of women and ensuring that recognition programs are equitable and transparent.

5.4 Limitations of the study

While this study provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations:

- This study was confined to women in leadership positions in two selected governments agencies of Water and Sanitation as well as Health Departments in KwaZulu- Natal. Due to the small number of women in leadership positions, the researcher received 40 responses from the respondents . To ensure proportional representation, 20 respondents illustrated from the Department of Health, and 20 illustrated from the Department of Water and Sanitation.
- The researcher used the purposive sampling method based on the primary assumption that respondents provide perceptive contributions.
- Ten (10) open ended questions were used. A total number of 40 women participated in the interview schedule.
- The focus of the study was only based on women in leadership positions in the departments of Water and Sanitation and the Health in Kwa Zulu-Natal because of the scope it would be too wide to cover, fund and administer the research instruments within the time available for this work.
- The focus did not consider other provinces in South Africa

5.5 Future Research possibilities

The study future research possibilities are based on limitations identified in 5.4 above

Considering the limitations and findings of this study, there are potential areas for the extended research in the future.

This study can further be expanded in future by employing a quantitative research design, thereby enhancing the robustness of the research outcomes.

- It is recommended that future research delve into the daily experiences of more women in leadership roles. By obtaining a broader spectrum of perspectives, researchers can uncover additional factors that impede women's active participation in leadership.
- The study future research possibilities are based on limitations identified in 5.4 above. The study commends that the findings presented in the study can be reinforced through the use of huge population sample.
- It is recommended that if more women in leadership can share their experiences they face daily and to obtain more factors that hinder women's participation in leadership roles.
- Further studies can be considered in future to compare and contrast the experiences of women in leadership roles across different provinces in the country.

These explorations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women in leadership roles and deepen our understanding of factors that contribute to women's journey to leadership positions.

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ANNEXURE A

GUIDED FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INSTRUCTIONS

Challenges faced by women in leadership positions: a case study in selected government departments within the province of KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa

Please answer all the questions below objectively in consideration of the challenges faced by women in leadership positions. If the blank space provided is inadequate, use additional stationery and number your answers accordingly.

Guided face –to- face interviews will be conducted and the recording device will be used.

2.1 What are the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions? _____

2.2 What do you think should be done to overcome each of the identified challenges encountered by women in leadership positions?

2.3 What are the different forms of gender disparities that affect women in leadership positions at the workplace?

2.4 What do you think should be done to overcome each of the identified gender disparities identified above?

2.5 What do you think are the reason/s women are not appointed to leadership positions?

2.6 It is true that women are weak vessels who cannot perform well and are traditionally incapable of performing at leadership position.

2.7 Does child bearing affect the promotion of women to leadership positions? Justify your answer?

2.8 "There is a notation that there exist a glass ceiling in government departments which prevents women from being promoted into top hierarchical positions which is perpetuating the unequal distribution of female counterpart" Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

2.9 Motivate your answer

2.10 What mechanisms do think can be implemented to remedy the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in government departments in KZN, South Africa?

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this interview schedule



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Challenges faced by women in leadership positions: a case study of selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Principal researcher: Silindile Nyembe. Masters in Management Science (Business Administration)
Prior qualification of Principal researcher: BTech: Office Management and Technology

Supervisor/s: Prof. Emem Anwana and Dr Olajumoke Ogunsanya

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

I am Ms. Silindile Nyembe Masters in Management Science (Business Administration) student at the Durban University of Technology. Would you please agree to participate in open-ended questions. Appended are the questions. The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges faced by women in leadership positions in the two conveniently selected government departments in KZN.

Outline of the Procedures:

I will personally administer the guided face-to-face open-ended questions, which will facilitate the collection of qualitative data using a set of 10 questions. The recording device will be used.

Responsibilities of the participants, explanation of tools and time required of participants

Participants will be required to participate in interviews by the researcher. Guided face -to face interview will take place.

What is expected of participants?

- Participants are expected to answer the questions objectively and seek clarity.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

- There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to for participants if applicable to this research.

Benefits:

There are no personal benefits to participation, although one may be privileged to know and understand challenges being researched on and also get an insight into solving problems under research. You may decline to answer any questions presented during the study if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising the researcher and may do so without any penalty.

Reason/s why the Participants May be Withdrawn from the study: Non-compliance, illness, adverse reactions, etc. Need to state that there will be no adverse consequences for the participant should they choose to withdraw.

Remuneration: There will be no remuneration for participating in the guided face –to face an interview schedule as this will be voluntary.

Costs of the study:

The participants will not be expected to cover any costs for the study.

Confidentiality: All information that respondents will be considered completely confidential, Respondents names will not be included or in any other way associated, with the data collected in the study.

Research-related Injury: I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board of the Durban University of Technology, and no such things as research-related injury or adverse reaction, will be anticipated.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher Silindile Nyembe on 0720918171 or the Institutional Research Ethics administrator on 031 373 2375.

CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: Challenges faced by women in leadership positions: a case study of selected government departments in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Names of Researcher/s: Silindile Nyembe Student No. 19751123

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, M.S. NYEMBE (name of researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: 17/18 FREC,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant Thumbprint	Date	Time	Signature / Right

I, M.S. NYEMBE (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature



Zertifikat Certificado

Certificat Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

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Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Mukelisiwe Silindile Nyembe

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MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (FREC)

11 November 2019

Student Name: **Ms. M.S Nyembe**

Student No: 19751123

FREC REF: 17/18FREC

Dear Ms Nyembe

MASTERS OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

TITLE: CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN Kwa-ZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

Please be advised that the FREC Committee has reviewed your proposal and the following decision was made: **Approved – Ethics Level 2**

Date of FRC Approval: 24 April 2018

Approval has been granted for a period of two years from the above FRC date, after which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the form located at the Faculty. This form must be submitted to the FREC 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 FREC according to the FREC SOP's. Please note that ANY amendments in the approved proposal require the approval of the FREC as outlined in the FREC SOP's.

Yours sincerely

Prof JP Govender

Chairperson: Faculty Research Ethics Committee



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X313, Pretoria 0001 / Sedibeng Building, 185 Schoeman Street, Pretoria
Tel: 012 336 7500 / Fax: 012 323 4470 or 012 326 2715

Eng: Mirriam Moagi Tel: (012) 336 7447 Fax: 086650 6241 Email: jiq@dwa.gov.za

BY E-MAIL: SilindileZ@pprotect.org

Mrs S Nyembe
4 Francis Place
Woodlands
DURBAN
4004

Dear Mrs Nyembe

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR COMPLETION OF A POST-GRADUATE DEGREE

Your request to conduct research in the Department of Water and Sanitation dated 12 May 2016 refers.

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) supports and approves your request for conducting the research in the DWS. You are, however, requested that upon completion of the research, you provide DWS with a copy of the outcomes of your research to the Department's Knowledge Management component for possible use by the Department.

I wish you all the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely

Margaret-Ann Diedericks
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 24/6/16



health

Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

OFFICE OF THE HOSPITAL CEO
KING EDWARD VIII HOSPITAL

Private Bag X02, CONGELLA, 4013
Corner of Rick Turner (Francois Road) & Sydney Road
Tel: 031-3603853, Fax: 031-2061457, Email: zidipa.khuzwayo@kznhealth.gov.za
www.kznhealth.gov.za

Ref.: KE 2/7/1/(38/2018
Enq.: Mrs. R. Sibiya

5 July 2018

Ms. S. Nyembe
Faculty of Management Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Dear Ms. Nyembe

Protocol: "Challenges faced by women in leadership positions: A case study of selected government departments n KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa"

Permission to conduct research at King Edward VIII Hospital is provisionally granted, pending approval by the Provincial Health Research Committee, KZN Department of Health.

Kindly note the following:-

- The research will only commence once confirmation from the Provincial Health Research Committee in the KZN Department of Health has been received.
- Signing of an indemnity form at Room 8, CEO Complex before commencement with your study.
- King Edward VIII Hospital received full acknowledgment in the study on all Publications and reports and also kindly present a copy of the publication or report on completion.

The Management of King Edward VIII Hospital reserves the right to terminate the permission for the study should circumstances so dictate.

Yours faithfully

SUPPORTED / NOT SUPPORTED

DR. SA MOODLEY
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Ini I. Uko, B.A. (Hons), M.A. English (Cal), Ph.D (P.H.)
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Vice Chancellor: Professor Nyauko Ndaeyo; B.Sc.(Unicross);M.Sc.,Ph.D.(UI)

September 12, 2023

M.S. Nyembe
Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

I write to certify that I undertook the editing of the thesis of **M.S. Nyembe**. The work was titled “**Challenges Faced by Women in Leadership Positions: A Case Study of Selected Government Departments in Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN), South Africa**”, and was to meet the requirements for the degree of Masters in Business Administration in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology.

The thesis examined the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KZN, South Africa. It appraised the effectiveness of existing interventions in addressing the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KZN, South Africa, and then Nyembe proposed a framework to appraise the effectiveness of existing interventions in addressing the challenges facing women in leadership positions in selected government departments in KZN, South Africa

The volume of the work was 97 pages. The editing was completed on February 1, 2023.

I found the thesis to be of satisfactory quality.

Thank you.

Professor Ini Uko