



Career development for female academics in Australian and South African universities: An integrative review



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ABSTRACT

South African and Australian higher education sector is facing challenges of fewer females in leadership positions despite policies in place in both countries. The main purpose of this integrative literature was to analyse and compare journal articles related to career development for female academics in South African and Australian higher education institutions to ascertain the challenges faced by women in both countries. South Africa and Australia was chosen for this study due to the differences in cultural background and legislation. Females are still underrepresented in the leadership positions both in Australia and South Africa, hence this study investigated the reasons and provided recommendations to improve female academics representation in higher education institutions. A literature review of 15 research papers and journals articles published from 2010-2020 was conducted. The key words "career development for female academics" were searched in three databases namely, Google Scholar, Ebsco-host and Emerald. The results from the literature showed that female career development in Australia is moving at a faster pace than in South Africa. The results also show that in both countries glass ceiling and limited female representation in leadership positions is rife in both countries. Female only career development programmes are essential to promote female development in higher education. As this study is focusing on two different countries in different continents, both countries have a lot to learn from each other in terms of policy implementations to enhance female career development. This article provides an analysis of the trends of female career development in South Africa and Australia. Therefore, from the existing literature for a period of 10 years, a conceptual career development model was developed.

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Introduction

Despite a growing body of literature on female academics' career development, only a handful of studies have empirically investigated career development for female academics in Australia and South Africa comparatively. Studies by various scholars such as (Hannum, Muhly, Shockler-Zalabak & White, 2015; Banker & Baker, 2017; Asimaki, Zenzefilis; Koustourakis, 2016; Engen, Bleijenbergh & Paauwe, 2011) have shown that there is a high enrolment of females in higher education institutions but the number of females in university top leadership position remains low, internationally. Marchant & Wallace (2013) show that the Australian higher education is still dominated by males even though the female numbers are slowly increasing. Strachan, Broadbent, Whitehouse, Peetz, & Janis (2011) report that for Australian female academics, the percentage rose from 37.7 in 1999 to 44.5 in 2009. In the South African context females remain under-represented in the higher education leadership, despite legislation promoting gender equity (Mall, 2015).

Understanding gender in South African higher education institutions requires an investigating the complexities generated by its socio-historical legacy (Mayer, Oosthuizen & Surtee, 2017). Thusi (2014), in a study conducted in South African organisations, reported that most women do not make it to senior leadership positions in various institutions. Understanding the factors responsible for the

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perceived lack of female academics' development into senior management therefore becomes critical. Using Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, this paper aims to analyse and compare journal articles related to career development for female academics in South African and Australian higher education institutions to ascertain the challenges faced by women in both countries. South Africa and Australia was chosen for this study due to the differences in cultural background and legislation. Females are still underrepresented in the leadership positions both in Australia and South Africa, hence this study investigated the reasons and provided recommendations to improve female academics representation in higher education institutions. A literature review of 15 research papers and journals articles published from 2010-2020 was conducted. The key words "career development for female academics" were searched in three databases namely, Google Scholar, Ebsco-host and Emerald.

Literature Review

Comparison between career development in Australia and South Africa

The principal aim of the content analysis is to investigate career development for female academics in Australian and South African Universities. Furthermore, this study aims to highlight the measures taken by higher education institutions in Australia and South Africa to promote female academics from their commencement in institutions. A comparison between Australia and South Africa will provide an insight on how the two countries' higher education institutions encourage female career development and what measures are taken to address the challenge of the low number of female professors and few women in top leadership positions. Consequently, this study aims to address the challenges faced by female academics in leadership in a South African and Australian University and offer alternative solutions to the problems encountered.

This study contributes to the career development of female academics' literature in the following ways. Firstly, this study examines in depth the career development of female academics in Australia and South Africa. Career development will be discussed broadly in this study considering leadership development for female academics in the higher education sector. Key studies on career development of female academics were conducted by scholars such as (Waed, Hadeel & Radwin, 2017; Fritsch, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2013; Evetts, 2014) respectively. These studies discussed career trajectories and barriers facing women in higher education in advancing their careers. However, there is still a gap in addressing the challenges faced by women in developing their careers to reach top leadership positions in higher education institutions. Secondly, the current research will broaden the scope of studies of career development of female academics by conducting the study in two different continents. Australia is a developed country while South Africa is still a developing country, hence this study will provide two different insights to the topic and this will assist the higher education landscape in both countries. Goodspeed, Martinez-Vazquez & Zhang (2010) define a developed country as a nation whose economy has highly progressed and possesses great technological infrastructure, as compared to other nations. On the other hand, a developing country has a low industrial base and dependent mostly on developed countries. It is crucial to study these two countries because women are still under-represented in academic leadership and due to the difference in labour laws and policies. It is imperative to note that both countries have a lot to learn from each other on what is working and not working in both countries. Furthermore, due to the social and cultural differences in both countries this might impact on women's opportunities.

Theoretical framework

Bandura's Social cognitive theory is adopted to understand the influences of females in academia's behaviour. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the developments they go through in order to reach top leadership positions in higher education. According to Nabavi (2012), the father of the social cognitive theory is Albert Bandura who proposed this theory in 1957. Bandura (1989) argues that people undergo numerous developmental changes over the course of their lives. Therefore, various theories have been proposed by numerous scholars to explain this development. Harinie, Sudiro, Rahaya, & Fatchan (2017) attest that Bandura's theory of social cognitive emphasises the importance of environmental, individual (cognitive) and behavioural factors in the learning process. The learning process of female academics is faced by numerous hurdles hence the relevance of this theory on this study.

Harinie et al., (2017) note that there is an ongoing reciprocal interaction between the factors in Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura further highlights that individual learning is whereby employees learn is through the observation process and not solely by their own experience. Lent & Hackett (1994, p. 77) also reveal that it is imperative for individuals to attain the beliefs, strategies and the skills. Through the social cognitive theory, Bandura proposed three assumptions. The first assumption is whereby learning is conducted by individuals through imitating what is in their environment. Mostly, this is reflected by them imitating the behaviours displayed by models. For female academics it can be noted female role models play a pivotal role in encouraging other females to excel hence the importance of imitation as proposed by Bandura. The second assumption is that there is a close relationship between the environment and the individual. Therefore, there is a close link between an individual's behaviour and the environment. Studies have shown that higher education institutional environments are mostly dominated by males hence this makes it difficult for females to succeed in a male dominated environment. The third assumption is that in everyday behaviour the outcome of learning behaviour code is verbally and visually manifested. This is visually observed by the underrepresentation of female academics in leadership positions in higher education both in Australia and South Africa. Pajares (2002, p. 2) argues that in social cognitive theory individuals are viewed as agents who can make things happen by their actions. Pajares (2002, p. 2) further contends that the social cognitive theory is rooted in the view of human agency where individuals are proactively engaged in their own development. The concept of human agency was expanded by Bandura (1986, p. 25) to collective agency. In the latter concept people work together and they have

common aspirations to better their lives and they have shared beliefs. Bandura (1986, p. 21) also note that individuals have self-regulatory mechanisms. Consequently, these mechanisms offer self-directed changes in an individual’s behaviour. The persuasive reason for adopting this theory is that it considers the social influence on an individual behaviour. The performance and behaviour of women in academia is influenced by the society hence the need to consider the role played by the social structures and culture values to shape a woman’s behaviour.

Case Study Background: Scenarios in the South African and Australian Higher education

A study by Morle & Crossouard (2015) found that many female academics are reluctant to aim for senior leadership and perceive it as an unattractive career option. Read & Kehm (2016) argue that while men’s career paths are often linear and uninterrupted, women’s career paths are often interrupted because of, for example, caring for children, leading them to reach to leadership positions much later in life. A study by Kele & Pieterse (2015) highlighted that both in traditional Universities and Universities of Technology in South Africa, males are dominating the leadership positions and their career progresses faster than their female counterparts. Morley, Gunawardena, Kwesiga, Lihamba, Odejide, Shackleton, & Sorhaindo (2006) argue that the University of Cape Town in South Africa in conjunction with Higher Education Resource Services South Africa (HERS-SA) conducted a staff career development programme designed for women in middle management. The majority of the participants indicated that there are less career development and succession planning interventions for female academics in South Africa due to extreme gender imbalance in the South African higher education staffing ratios. Moodly & Toni (2015) postulate that of the 26 current vice-chancellors in South Africa, five are women, a total percentage of 19. Moodly & Toni (2015, p. 47) argue that although the number of universities had increased from 23 to 26, the number of female vice-chancellors remained at four (in 2014 & 2016 respectively). The number increased to five in 2021. According to Subbaye (2017) in South Africa, almost half of the professoriate and 20 per cent of the current higher education workforce will be retiring over the next ten years. Therefore, there is a national concern that as the over 50 largely white and male cohort moves closer to retirement there is little evidence of a commensurate female cohort in the pipeline ready to take up the leadership positions (Subbaye, 2017).

In a study conducted by Khan & Siriwardhane (2021) in Australian Universities, the results revealed that women are not only underrepresented in the professoriate, but also in progression into the professoriate. This indicates that both in South Africa and Australia, female career development is still an issue that is highlighted in policy documents but not fully operationalized in practice. Lyons & Hill (2018) note that in Australia, twenty-five percent of the vice-chancellors are female which shows a high level of underrepresentation at the top university post. O’keeffe (2017) revealed that in Australia women make up 44 per cent of the academic workforce but account for only 25 per of professor and 36 per cent of associate professor positions. A study conducted by Read & Kehm (2016) revealed that more career development programmes are needed to prepare women for future higher leadership positions in higher education. Tessens, White & Web (2011) confirm that in Australia insufficient support for professional effectiveness; career progression; and institutional cultures that favour men over women are the major reasons for few women in top leadership positions in higher education. Washington (2016) postulates that due to the low numbers of women assuming leadership roles, succession planning should be considered to help increase the number of minorities in leadership. Washington (2016) further notes that succession planning can assist higher education institutions realize current employees who not only have talent, but potential to move into leadership roles. Gonzalez (2011) notes that women in higher education institutions suffer from a pernicious kind of invisibility that makes them go unnoticed. Thus, to find women with leadership abilities, institutions must actively look for talent. Succession planning focusses on making the invisible visible at all levels in the higher education institution. Bataille (2013) notes that women in higher education should be considered in the succession planning of an institution to ensure that they can take up leadership positions. Cook (2012) postulates that several institutions are introducing talent management programmes to attract and retain the best academics. Morley & Crossouard (2015) on a study conducted on women in higher education leadership revealed that there is less investment in women as there is an absence of structured interventions in higher education to develop women’s career. The study further revealed that successful senior women reported that they had to learn on the job or seek out their own development from overseas countries. Table 1 below illustrates that females are still under-represented in top positions in higher learning institutions, both in South Africa and Australia. The figures were revealed in studies by the following authors (O’Keefe, 2017; White, 2017; Moodly & Toni, 2015).

Table 1: Percentages of the female workforce in South African and Australian Higher education

	Australia	South Africa
Female academic workforce	44.5%	43%
Female Associate professors	36%	29.8%
Female professors	25%	18.5%
Female Vice-Chancellors	25%	19%

Source: Adapted by O’keeffe (2017), White (2017), Moodly & Toni (2015).

Barriers to hindering females’ progression in higher education

According to Morley (2013) there are numerous barriers faced by women in higher education leadership. These barriers hinder female career development in higher learning institutions. These barriers include the following:

Socio-cultural barrier

Lunyolo, Ayodo, Tikoko & Simatwa (2014) posit that culturally, there is a belief that women are supposed to be led but not to lead. A study conducted by Alsubaie and Jones (2017) revealed that there are fewer women in leadership positions because historically, women have been prevented from occupying leadership positions due to strict cultural and legislative restrictions. Lunyolo et al., (2014) affirm that the socio-cultural barriers which hinder women from attaining leadership positions are stereotype, home-based, religion and government policies. Burkinshaw & White (2017) revealed that women find it difficult to exert authority over males since society still suffers from the myth that women are too emotional and weak for top leadership positions. Culturally women who get into leadership are seen as troublemakers, especially strong and assertive women (Lunyolo et al., 2014).

Lack of investment in women

The nonexistence of interventions which are structured to cultivate female academics' leadership skills is widely reported to be a huge hinderance to women's leadership (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). This sentiment is echoed by Morley and Crossourd (2015) who have observed that most of the senior and successful senior women in leadership positions seek out their own development opportunities without anyone's assistance. In addition, there are very few development programs, no formal mentoring arrangements, and no structured capacity-building to develop female leaders. Conversely, in the South African context, Moodie (2010) posits that HERS-SA is tackling the issue of lack of investment in women by presenting programs and support to female academics to prepare them for leadership positions. Their skills and confidence were developed to necessitate the advancement to higher levels of the organisation and this was done through the annual flagship project held in Cape town.

Organizational culture

Longman, Daniels, Bray & Liddell (2018) state that organizational cultural practices related to gender equity were found to be the most significant predictor of the percentage of women in leadership positions. Morley (2013) explains that studies of academic cultures and reports in the interviews point to the patriarchal nature of higher education institutions. The culture in academia is frequently represented as unfriendly and unaccommodating to women. According to Leathood and Read (2009), organizational cultures which are masculinized bind men together into a hierarchy in which they can flourish at the expense of their female counterparts. Morley (2013) argues that patriarchal cultures that privilege masculine leadership traits often lie beneath the misrecognition of women's leadership capabilities and low perceptions of their capabilities as leaders. Consequently, females are marginalised and discriminated during the recruitment and selection process.

Gender discrimination

In the South African context, gender discrimination is a significant obstacle facing women in leadership. Distinctive hinderances affecting women's capability to shatter the glass ceiling include career beliefs by management about women in general. Kiamba (2008) further reveals that women are viewed as people who lack the self-confidence essential for the job not aggressive enough. Women are also viewed as not serious with their career thus lacking the zeal to climb the corporate ladder. Consequently, gender stereotypes and prejudices persist in various organisations as males are allowed to protect their privileged status (Nomadolo, 2017). According to Broadbridge and Weyer (2007), the concept of "glass ceiling" came into wide use as a concept that demonstrates the restricted movement of women into important positions of leadership in organisations. Bombuwela and Chamaru (2013) concur that the term "glass ceiling" is commonly used to describe the indiscernible barrier that impedes women's chances of further development in organizations. The concept of glass ceiling is not a barrier to women individually, but it also applicable to most women at large (Zamfirache, 2010). A study conducted by Moody and Toni (2017) revealed that women in the South African higher education are failing to break the glass ceiling due to the institutional cultures and limited supported structures specifically for women. In trying to address this problem Moody and Toni (2017) developed a framework which focuses on policy implementation which is aimed at nurturing, encouraging and supporting female academics into leadership positions.

Research and Methodology

This study adopted an integrative literature review process to appraise, examine and identify literature on career development of female academics in Australia and south Africa. Whittemore & Knafl (2005) argue that an integrative review facilitates a systematic exploration of experiment and non-experiment studies in order to describe the overall sate of evidence. This method is also relevant for this study as it enhances rigour when reviewing a combination of primary studies with numerous methodologies. The search area for the study incorporated peer-reviewed research on female career development in Australia and South Africa. Research articles which focused on Australian and South African female academics were included. Articles published prior to 2010 were excluded due to the significant changes in female career development occurring in Higher education. Theses, reviews, editorials and conferences proceedings were excluded as they were studies involving students and included males.

Data collection

Data was generated through the google scholar, Ebsco-host and Emerald searches. Haddaway, Collins, Coughlin & Kirk (2015) reveal that the google scholar is an academic web-based search engine which catalogues between 2 and 100 millions of academic and grey literature. The google scholar coverage is wide-ranging. These three resources were used because they cover a wide range

of sources, and their scope is within the subject matter A search on female career development in Australia and South Africa was conducted and yielded 18 300 results. The authors screened the abstracts and titles of prospective articles against the inclusion criteria and 20 studies were identified after removing the duplicates as well. A further 5 studies were removed as they did not focus on female academics leaving the study with 15 articles on review.

Data synthesis and extraction

Data extracted from the included studies are summarised and illustrated in Table 2. The information highlighted include the year of publication, author(s) names, title of the study, objectives, sample size and the findings. Regardless of the level of evidence, results were synthesised to keep up with the integrative review process which captures the breadth of available evidence (Whittemore & Knaff, 2005). The findings were categorised and thematically analysed to identify recurring relations. A conceptual model on career development of female academics was therefore developed.

Analysis and Findings

The study characteristics analysis is presented in Table 2 which reviewed 15 journal articles. The articles focused on studies from Australian and South African higher education with the main focus on female academics. The studies reviewed collectively drew on data from 1549 female academics from Australia and South Africa. Five studies focused on Australia, nine from South Africa and one study focused on both countries.

Key themes

There are three key themes emanating from the studies and these include female under-representation in leadership positions, glass ceiling and career development programs importance.

Female under-representation in leadership positions

The majority of the studies revealed that both in Australia and South Africa, female academics are still under-represented in leadership positions (White & Ozkanli, (2011; Rabe & Rugunanan, 2012). A study by Obers (2014) indicated that since 1994, the number of female academics has increased in South Africa but there is still under-representation in the senior positions. Obers (2014) further attests that gender negatively impacts on women's professional identities and academic due to lack of opportunities to develop academic capital. In Australia, Parker et al (2018) also revealed that the pipeline of women's progression into senior organisational positions in the higher education sector is leaky due to culture that rewards male practices and uncondusive patterns of interactions. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women in both countries' higher education management begins at the level of senior lecturer (level C in the Australian context) and at professorial level.

Glass ceiling

Steven & Kumar (2018) define glass ceiling as the barriers that prevent women from ascending to senior leadership positions in organisations. A study by Chitsamatanga, Rembe, & Shumba, (2018) revealed that there are numerous barriers which hinder women to progress in academia. Awang-Hashim, Noman & Kaur (2016) also note that the number of women who are exceeding in higher education has increased but most of the women are unable to break the glass ceiling to top leadership positions. It is crucial to note that the higher education structures, cultures and family responsibility are making it hard for women to get to top leadership positions. One respondent from Obers' (2014) study revealed that

“Being a parent of two small children, with a husband who has only just finished his PhD means that I have tried to allow him to succeed more, attend more, have more time for research, while I have had to work with the children, and all free time is for running the house”.

The above statement reflects the family responsibility faced by the participant; in the statement it is shown that the husband had time to develop himself academically whilst she was looking after a family. When opportunities arise for promotion, it means more males will be qualified than females hence hindering females from attaining management positions. It is crucial to note that in order to address glass ceiling both the Australian and South African governments have put in legislations to promote women. A study by White & Ozkanli (2011) state that in Australia the government introduced the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999)* which requires large employers of more than 100 employees to establish a workplace programme to remove the barriers to women entering and advancing in the organisation. In South Africa through the affirmative action and BEE (Black economic empowerment), the wrongs of the past were redressed which also meant giving opportunities to more women especially black women.

Table 2: Results from literature

Author(s) and Year	Title of the study	Objective	Sample size	Findings
Bezuidenhout, A., & Cilliers, F. (2010).	“Burnout, work engagement and sense of coherence in female academics in higher-education institutions in South Africa”.	The research explored the effect of the individual academic’s sense of coherence on her experience of burnout and work engagement.	187 female academics from 2 South African Universities	The study found that assistance from colleagues and a supportive departmental climate, together with practical assistance, reduces exhaustion in academics. Practical assistance in the form of flexitime is specifically successful for female academics. Avoiding such assistance is thus not a useful or desirable strategy.
Wallace, M & Marchant, T. (2010)	“Developing female middle-managers in Australian Universities”.	To investigate the learning and development of women managers timely	342 females from various Australian Universities	Experience which is unstructured and informal constituted the main preparation for the current role
Pienaar, C & Bester, C. (2010)	“Addressing career obstacles within a changing higher education work environment: Perspectives of academics”	To determine the role played HEIs to address challenges on career obstacles which impact negatively in job satisfaction and productivity	93 Academics from a single South African University	Financial remuneration is critical for female career development
Tessens, L., White, K., & Web, C. (2011)	“Senior women in higher education institutions: perceived development needs and support”.	To analyse the survey of Leadership development needs and current challenges of senior women at 2 Australian Universities	134 female academics at 2 Australian Universities.	Most women had not participated in the leadership for women program due to lack of time, schedule clashes and disinterest in women only activities.
Riodan, S. & Potgieter, J. (2011)	“Career Success of women academics in South Africa”.	To investigate the factors contributing to career success of females in academia	372 women academics in public universities	Mid-career women are challenged by the career issues of staying abreast of career developments in their field, re-evaluating career chances and nurturing others.
White, K & Ozkanli, O. (2011).	“A comparative study of perceptions of gender and leadership in Australian and Turkish Universities”.	To analyse the differences in perceptions of leadership and gender in Australian and Turkish Universities	45 senior managers in Australian and Turkish Universities	The Australian participants indicated that Vice-Chancellors have an important role to play to ensure gender balance in senior management. This can be done by ensuring that there is an active search for women to be on interview shortlists.
White, K., Bagilhole, B., & Riordan, S. (2012)	“The gendered shaping of University leadership in Australia, South Africa and United Kingdom”.	To analyse career trajectories into university management in Australia, South Africa and United Kingdom	56 male and female senior managers	Career path was modelled on male academic careers
Rabe, M & Rugunanan, P. (2012)	“Exploring gender and race amongst female sociologists exiting academia in South Africa”.	To explore the issue of race and gender in the academic careers of sociologists in South Africa.	11 female academics who exited higher education.	Gender discrimination is mostly experienced once women reach more senior academic positions.

Table Cont'd				
McMahon, M., Watson, M., & Brimose, J. (2012).	“Career adaptability: A qualitative understanding from stories of older women”.	To explore how older female academics adapted and coped to changes and transitions to career.	36 older female academics from England, Australia and South Africa	Career transition and adaptability are embedded at many levels and recursive interplay of women, their socio-political system and their social networks.
Obers, N.(2014).	“Career success for women academics in higher education: choices and challenges”.	To understand how women academics experience success and how their challenges and choices influence their career advancement.	80 female academics from a South African University	The study revealed that women are disadvantaged due to transformation in the higher education sector. The new practices emphasise on research above teaching. Due to having families and other commitments, it is difficult for women to excel in research than males hence making it hard for them to be considered for promotions.
Collins, A., Lewis,I., Strake, E. & Vanderheide, R. (2014)	“Talking career disciplines: Peer group mentoring for women academics”.	To analyse the lived experiences of women academics who were members of Group Mentoring Program	8 females academics who were members of the women’s Group Mentoring Program	An experience of pressure of balancing work and life commitments and balancing academic activities of teaching and research is high in female academics
Lesenyebbo, D., Barkhuzen, N., & Schutts, N. (2018)	“Factors relating to the attraction of talented early academics in South African higher education institutions”.	To identify the factors leading to career attraction for South African. academics	23 academics from various South African Universities	Advancement and career development were the practices that appeared to be the main factor in attracting early career academics.
Chitsamatanga, B .B., Rembe, S & Shumba, J. (2018)	“Are universities serving lunch before breakfast through staff development programmes? A comparative study of the experiences of female academics in South Africa and Zimbabwean Universities”.	To examine the hurdles experienced by female academics in their career trajectories regardless of the staff development programmes	10 senior female academics in South African and Zimbabwean universities	Staff development programmes should be tailored to meet the need of the women
Parker, P., Hewitt, B., Witheriff, J & Cooper, J. (2018)	“Frank and fearless: Supporting academic progression for women in an Australian program”.	The paper was aimed at investigating the perceived benefits of women only career programs offered by an Australian University	147 women who were at Level C (Senior Lecturer) from 2010-2015	A well-designed course can empower and enable women to challenge the system while working within it.
Ramohai, J. (2019)	“Women in senior management positions at South African Universities: Their movement in, out and across universities”.	To highlight the experiences of senior women in management positions and identify the cultures and structures that hinder women from thriving in senior positions.	5 Women from different South African universities	The findings revealed that women opt to leave their positions for better salaries in private sectors and other private institutions the hostile culture in South African higher education is a contributing factor to turnover.

Career development programmes importance

Abeli (2010) attests that career development programmes are institutional strategies aimed at building capacity of university academics to cope with the constant changes in the sector. The literature revealed the benefits and importance of career development programs specifically for females. Studies by Tessens, White, & Web, 2011; Parker et al., (2018) in Australian universities indicated the importance of implementing female only career development programmes to empower and equip women with necessary skills. Tessens (2008) posits that women only developmental programmes are one strategy used by higher education institutions in Australia to address gender equity concerns over the last two decades. In the South African context, Isabirwe & Kakoe (2018) cited in Chitsamatanga et al., (2018) career development programmes in South Africa have little impact as they lack follow-up sessions. Chitsamatanga et al., (2018) further affirm that female academics are not given opportunities to share and reflect on their experiences. Studies have shown that mentoring plays an important role in the development of female academics (Collins, Lewis, Strake & Vanderheide, 2014). Collins et al., (2014) in a study conducted in Australia revealed that mentoring programmes provide not only support but also an opportunity to explore decision making by the employees in regard to their academic career pathways

Female career development Conceptual model

A conceptual model (as depicted in Figure 1 below) was developed by the researchers to identify the career development of female academics paying particular attention to Australian and South African cultures.

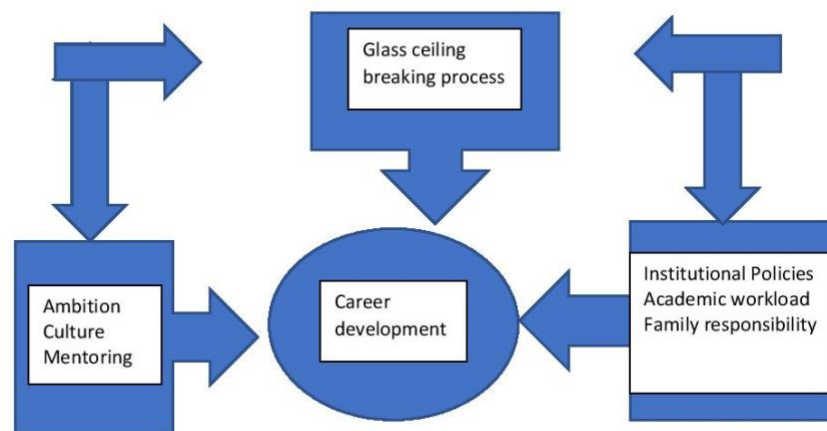


Figure 1: Career development conceptual model; *Source:* Self-generated

The model above reflects that the concept of career development in academia for females is influenced by various factors, both internally and externally. Currently in Australia and South Africa, females are still in the process of glass ceiling breaking (Figure 1) as females are still underrepresented in the higher education leadership. It is still an ongoing process as in the past ten years in both countries there has been an increase in the number of female leaders even though the percentage is still very low.

Ambition, culture, and mentoring are the most crucial factors which were identified which facilitates female career development in both countries. If an individual lacks ambition to succeed, then that impedes the career development. Culture also plays a pivotal role in ensuring that female career development is enhanced. In South Africa, the culture is not so favourable to females compared to Australia. (Pienaar, & Bester, 2010). Zacher, Rudolph, Todorovic, Ammann (2018) affirm that most females in the South African context are on contract basis and not employed on permanent basis this hinders any development that would want to take place in the higher education setting.

In Australia and in South Africa there are policies in place that ensure that there is gender equality in the higher education. For instance, the South African education white paper number three addresses the inequality in the higher education (Department of Education, 1997). In Australia, the Australian Equal Employment opportunities law (EEO) also promotes the aspect of encouraging the employment of females. Academic workload as highlighted by Collins et al., (2014) is a contributing factor for slackening female career development. Most academics are expected to teach at the same time the career progression is determined by the research and publications. This stalls the progress of the development, and it is a problem witnessed both in Australia and South Africa.

Conclusion

This paper provides a detailed outline of career development of female academics in the Australian and South African context. The findings from the study bridges the gap between African and Australian universities on issues of female academics' career development. It is revealed that in both countries the females are still struggling to break the ceiling even though policies and laws are in favour of them. From this study, it is crucial to note that both countries have a lot to learn from each other when it comes to female academics' development. More engagement from various stakeholders in the higher education will be required and having

confidence in themselves to take up higher positions in institutions is of paramount importance to female career development in higher education institutions. In addition, female academics need to build confidence and move out of the cocoon by taking up leadership and senior positions if they are to break the glass ceiling. The proposed conceptual career development model serves as a mirror or tool for managing career development for female academicians not only in South Africa and Australia, but also in other education systems which are confronted with similar challenges. Further research on the views of females who are already at par in their careers can be conducted to find out challenges and what they did to overcome the challenges in both countries.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to that the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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