Understanding the underrepresentation of women in senior management in Africa in the context of perpetual practices of exclusion

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Presented by:
Candice Watson
Student Number: HRTCAN002

AND

Professor Kurt April
Supervisor, Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town

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DECLARATION

I, Candice Watson, hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided work, both in concept and execution, apart from the normal guidance from my supervisor.

Signed

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

During the past two decades the global workforce has experienced significant challenges, specifically in relation to the commitments required to transform gender inequality (ILO, 2016). As the number of women in the labour market has increased over the past 30 years, so has research interest in understanding their underrepresentation in key managerial positions. This focus has largely been driven by scholarship in European and Western countries (Omar & Davidson, 2001), thus knowledge production on women in management has grown exponentially in those regions. This has happened to a far lesser extent in Africa (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009), which has been compounded by the complex challenges of producing management theory and knowledge on that continent (Nkomo, 2017). For these reasons, further research was required to understand the underrepresentation of women in senior management in Africa. The objectives of this research were to expand understanding of the exclusionary practices in management ranks that perpetuate such underrepresentation and using a phenomenological research method with a study sample size of 40, to address the research questions to uncover the subtle and overt practices that underlie this issue (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The traceability rigour of the chosen research methodology allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, drawing on the voices of African women and enabling context-specific theorising within the African continent.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In recent years, the global labour force has seen a gradual but steady increase in the number of women in the workplace across different industries. Despite this, women continue to be underrepresented at management levels in relation to their male counterparts, who occupy 95% of senior management roles (Ryder, 2016).

This trend is also prevalent in Africa; no more than 5% of Chief Executive Officer roles are held by women. In 2018, Maria Ramos was the only female Chief Executive on the JSE Top 40 group of companies. Even though the 18th Annual Report of the Commission for Employment Equity indicated that the representation of women in top management was at 22.9%, this is still well below the 45% level of women that are economically active in the population (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016).

In South Africa, for example, women make up half the population and 45% of the economically active population but constitute just 20.7% of non-executive directors of JSE-listed company boards (Bosch, Van Der Linde, & Barit, 2020). In Africa, the trend continues across regions; female representation on boards in 2016 were 9% in North Africa, 11% in West Africa, 16% in East Africa and 20% in Southern Africa (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016).

Although the numbers are improving, the deficit in senior management remains. Executive directors are directly involved in the running of the company, while non-executive directors are appointed by shareholders in an oversight role (Bosch, Van Der Linde, & Barit, 2020). More than 80% of women directors hold non-executive director positions, resulting in the 'golden skirts' phenomenon (Palmer & Bosch, 2017) whereby women take on various independent director roles. Only 14% of executive director roles are held by women, which indicates the short supply of women in the senior management talent pipeline (Palmer & Bosch, 2017).

Since its inception in 2001, the Commission for Employment Equity in South Africa has produced annual statistics to track progress on the implementation of the Employment Equity Act (EE Act), which was promulgated in 1998.

The EE Act is designed to eliminate unfair discrimination and enable equitable representation of all groups in the South African workplace. Most countries in Africa do not keep up-to-date statistics on their progress on employment equity legislation, however in Namibia, progress has been enforced by legislation and follow-up through various amendments and reviews (Amakali, 2020).

There is a growing sense in business and public policy that the ongoing underrepresentation of women should change (Jeong & Harrison, 2017), which is why in 2017, the Group of Thirty appointed Maria Ramos as a Co-Chair on the UN Secretary General's Task Force . This private, non-profit, international body is composed of senior executives from the private, public and academic sectors. Its aim is to deepen understanding of international economic and financial issues and appointment to this organisation is by invitation only. Of Maria Ramos' appointment, the chairperson of the G30 Board of Trustees said: 'Ramos would add diversity of perspective, and a strong and influential South African voice to the group's deliberations.' However, at the time of her appointment, Ramos was one of only two women in the group and, based on their listed biographies, the only member with current experience in Africa (Khumalo, 2017).

Within an African context notable women leaders has been rising across the continent to name a few, in Nigeria, 71-year-old Folorunsho Alakija is vice chair of Famfa Oil she is ranked as one of the billionaires in Africa, which is credited to her being awarded a company oil and prospecting license by the Nigerian government in 1993 (Profiles, 2020); In East Africa, as the CEO of Keroche Breweries, Tabitha Karanja was the first women to take on the 87-year-old monopolised liquor industry to become the first Kenyan beer and liquor manufacturer (Lionesses, 2022); and in Ethiopia, Frehiwot Tamru, CEO of Ethio Telecom, leads the countries biggest telecom company, and was named amongst the 100 most influential African women in 2021 by Advance Media (100 MIAW, 2022).However, despite the successes of these women, the results of progressing women into the senior management ranks are not encouraging, expressed by Chairperson of the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE), Ms. Tabea Kabinda remarked: 'Twenty years on and we are still nowhere near celebrating effective implementation of transformation legislation' (Kabinda, 2020).

These sentiments are echoed in literature in that the phenomenon of gendered inequity remains; almost half the world's population is excluded from participating meaningfully in its development. Despite this, little research has provided conclusive evidence of gender-related differences between the leadership styles of men and women in the management ranks (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

These stereotypical beliefs of gender-related differences impede the progression of women into leadership roles, as explained by Vinkenburg et. al., in that particular descriptive attributes of effective leadership behaviours (e.g., inspiring others, encouraging creativity, mentoring and coaching) are typically associated with women, however, the assimilation of prescriptive leadership styles (e.g. optimism, future orientation, and being goal driven) pose a double burden for women as they are expected to also be communal and competitive – a real, paradoxical dilemma for women in leadership behaviour, which men do not have to deal with in pursing promotional opportunities (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011).

Research indicate that women enter the workforce at rates similar to those of their male counterparts, as women also prepare themselves by acquiring a university education and attending professional schools that teach subjects such as accounting, business, and law (Mavin, 2001).

Despite this, recent studies prove that women still remain largely underrepresented at the highest organizational levels for a number of reasons, such as the perception of women's effectiveness in leadership roles based on stereotypical perceptions of gender- related differences relating to context and industry, worker and colleague engagement styles, communication styles, and influence tactics – in the case of women, their capabilities in these are perceived predominantly suited to middle management (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014; Merchant, 2012).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to contribute to our understanding of the progression of women through the management ranks beyond junior and middle management and into senior management, as it explored the nuances of overt and subtle exclusionary practices and the impact thereof on the lived experiences of women in an African context.

1.2 Research Context

The geographical context of this study is Africa, which is known as the poorest continent. After suffering under decades of colonial rule, Africa still has not lost the fight to thrive, as demonstrated through its population growth, mobile technology adoption and a burgeoning middle class. However, the failure of many African states has plunged their populations into economic crises (Africa rising: The hopeful continent, 2011).

In the ongoing struggle for women's rights, massive urbanization, the changing nature of work for women, the changing nature of household roles, and international efforts to reduce poverty and gender-based violence, Boserup, Kanji, Tan and Toulmin's (2013) book is insightful, particularly as it relates to women in low-to-middle income countries and contexts.

Within this context, African women are driven by strong African cultural paradigms in that they are expected, and often required, to prioritise the welfare of their children. Subsequently this has forced African women to fight for legal, political and economic change as they bear the brunt of supporting dependent children (Mikell, 1998).

Whereas Western feminism is concerned with debates on sexuality, the female body and patriarchy, the focus of African feminism is concerned with issues of economic survival in the context of African cultural models and its impact on women's occupational opportunities (Mikell, 1998).

The focus of this research was on women's occupational opportunities and career pathways within senior management, as they operated as executive managers in corporations. The study context provided richness to the study because the researcher herself was both African and experienced in senior management roles in corporations. She therefore possessed insights described in the literature as those of an insider (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

The researcher was embedded within the context of the study, and the role of insider helped her to facilitate trust and confidence from the perspective of the research respondents (Pratt, 2009). This enabled the researcher to observe and extract the relevant information during data gathering, as well as accurately interpret the phenomenon while not inferring individual perceptions or biases, to present a fair representation of the phenomenon (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

For decades, management studies have focused on knowledge production from Western groups and applied this knowledge broadly, regardless of context (Mendelek Theimann, April, & Blass, 2006). There are still complex challenges in producing management theory and knowledge for the benefit of Africa in Africa (Nkomo, 2017), as there is a significant scarcity of documentation of systems that describe management and leadership in Africa (Nkomo, 2011). Although many women have progressed through the management ranks, in South Africa, a failure to give voice to their experiences in the corporate environment perpetuates the power imbalance between the dominant white male executive group and women (April & Singh, 2018).

Conducting this study in an African context both challenged and contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon the process further afforded the researcher the opportunity to contribute to the largely invisible voice of Africans in management and leadership theories (Nkomo, 2011).

A review by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) published their review entitled, African women in leadership: Current knowledge and a framework to establish the extent of studies on women in leadership and management in Africa and found 18 studies on women in were produced in South Africa, nine studies in Nigeria, four studies in Ghana, and there were single research contributions on women in Cameroon, Mali, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009).

Conducting this study in an African context was therefore purposeful, driven by the need to make a meaningful contribution to understanding the gendered nature of African experiences within workplaces and management ranks. To achieve that goal, an interpretive research paradigm was deemed appropriate, as it seeks to understand the world as an emergent social process, which is created by individuals through its usefulness (rather than proof) and practical, social constructs (which are open to human error).

An awareness of gaps in paradigms often leads to an interrogation of the social status quo and socially constructed realities (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), leaving an individual open to potential change. In this research context, the interpretivist approach allowed for meaning making in multiple constructed realities, encompassing context, people's personal frames of reference, and the ways in which they interpret the worlds they occupy.

1.3 Research Purpose

McKinsey's 2016 *Woman Matter Africa* publication reported a gradual, steady decline of female leaders along the corporate management pipeline across 14 African countries (South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt) that represent more than 60% of the continent's GDP. It was further reported that in Africa, only 5% of CEOs were women, a statistic which is on a par with their international peers (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016).

The International Labour Organisation reported in *Women in Work Trends* that women head up only 5% of the Fortune 500 companies, although this is up from 0% in 1995 (ILO, 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the phenomenon.

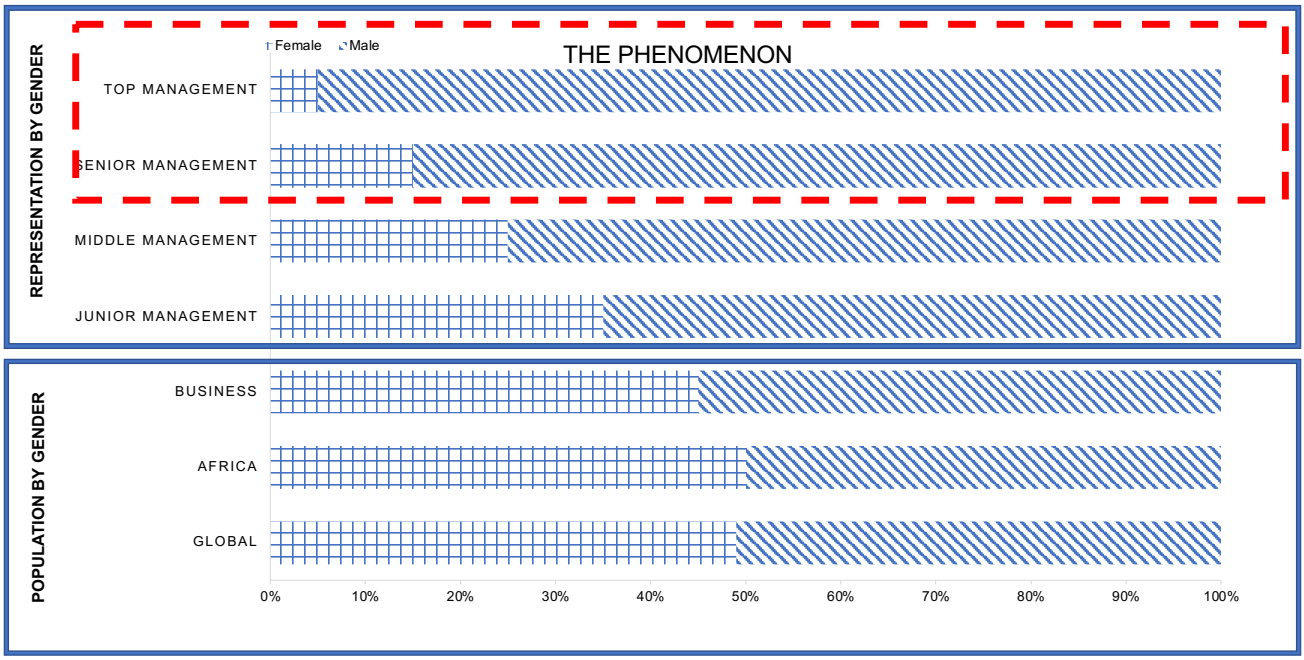


Figure 1: Population by gender and representation in management

The purpose of this research was to expand the understanding of the underrepresentation of women in senior management; the intention was to uncover exclusionary practices in management ranks by interpreting the career journeys and experiences of women in senior management roles.

Career journeys refer to the lived experiences of women as they navigate their careers through to senior management, as well as the events, people and situations that impact those experiences (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015).

Exclusionary practices uncovered in raising awareness of the subtle, often unconscious, practices that can be context dependent, it is acknowledged that these exclusionary practices are multi-faceted and uncovered through sub-questions within explored practices (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016).

1.4 Research Question

What are the practices of exclusion in management ranks that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in senior management roles?

1.5 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was best suited to answer the research question. This approach allowed the researcher to understand the lived experiences of the research respondents and examine data gathered that turn words, talk and text into an articulated process that generates meaningful representations of the phenomenon under study. Its strength wherein the creative nature of bringing the concepts to life (Pratt, 2009).

1.6 Research Plan

The research plan was dependent on collaboration with various stakeholders, but could be adjusted as the research progressed (Bhattacherjee, 2012), specific to this study the following applied:

- Submission and presentation of research proposal for review.
- Feedback from Review Committee incorporated into proposal.
- Proposal submitted to Commerce Faculty Higher Degree Committee.
- Pilot study to test research instrument and inform research design.
- Main study data collection from sampled population using a qualitative interview protocol
- Qualitative data analysis to draw insights and conclusions as it relates to the research question.
- Presentation of dissertation that outline in detail the research process and outcome.

1.7 Significance of this Study

The significance of this study is that it will add to the few African management and leadership studies that have been documented and systemised. For generations of Africans, the cultural practice has been to share wisdom and knowledge through oral traditions. The challenge for modern scholarship is to produce decolonised, context-relevant management theory for the African continent through the lenses of the African person (Nkomo, 2017).

The time has come for African scholars to bring the voices of African women into the production of management theory; “Until the muted voices join the conversation about management, it remains incomplete knowledge” (Nkomo, 2015, p. 255). The researcher’s purpose was thus to generate knowledge that adds to the incomplete extant literature, as well as provide practical insights and future direction on women in management.

1.8 Respondent Selection and Assumptions

Respondent selection was based on the lived experiences of women in management and at Board level across industries, sectors, nationalities, ethnicities and racial classifications.

The minimum senior management experience for respondents was five years, with the exception of one respondent who was deemed contextually relevant for the study. A secondary factor was that international respondents had to have either worked in Africa or be of African descent.

The following assumptions were made:

- All respondents’ qualifications are valid as confirmed during the interviews.
- All respondents’ roles are as confirmed during the interviews.
- All respondents voluntarily, openly and honestly participated during the interviews.
- All respondents had a clear understanding of the questions posed to them.

1.9 Limitations of this Study

The study focused on women from diverse nationalities (from South-Africa, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Lesotho, Senegal, Gabon Republic, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and the United Kingdom)who held senior management roles across industries and geographies. Most of the respondents had a minimum qualification of a university degree, except for one respondent who was in the process of obtaining her degree. Her combined years of experience in senior management and her lived experience as a woman were deemed sufficient and relevant in the context of the study.

1.10 Definition of Terms

- JSE: The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE, 2022).
- EEA: Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (Government, 1998).
- CEE: Commission for Employment Equity, 2018 (Kabinda, 2020)
- Africanism: People of African descent (Nkomo, 2011).
- ILO: International Labour Organisation. (GEDI, 2022)
- Ethnic Groupings: The attribution of ethnicity is described in terms of basic and most general identity as determined by origin and background. An ethnic grouping is a segment of a larger society whose members share common origin, common culture and participate in shared activities in which culture and origin are significant (Jones, 1997).
- South African Racial Classifications: The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 defines racial classifications as people from African, Coloured, Indian and White ethnic backgrounds (Government, 1998; Government, 1998).
- Colonisation: Colonisation is explained as the marginalisation of Africa produced by colonising structures that colonisers coercively enforced on the colonised, such as reformation of native minds and integration of local economic histories into western perspective (Nkomo, 2011).
- Imperialism: The connotation of imperialism is within the context of economic outcomes, in that the application thereof is that those representing the capital interest in the West obtain control of foreign and colonial policy with the intent of bringing the colonised into their grip for exploitation (Koebner, 1949).
- Capitalism: Capitalism is defined as the dominant mode of production, distribution and exchange globally contributing to the acceleration of living standards in the industrialised world.
- The West and Europe: This refers to the regional group of member states of the United Nations (UN Department of General Assembly and Conference, 2022).
- GDP per capita: Gross domestic product per capita is a measurement of the total economic output of a country per person adjusted for inflation. It is used to compare standards of living between countries (World Bank, 2022).
- Literacy rate: The ability to read and write is a key factor in the development of economies (World Population Review, 2022).
- CA(SA): Chartered Accountant, South Africa (SAICA, 2022).

1.11 Overview of Chapters

This study is organised as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is to contextualise the research aim, purpose and plan in order to demonstrate the significance of the study to knowledge production.

- Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the context of the research purpose, this chapter sets out the extant knowledge that is relevant to the study:

- African women in management studies
- African social context
- Socialisation
- Gender symbolism
- Practices of exclusion
- Boundary-making practices
- Men's networks
- Women's networks
- Institutionalised exclusion
- Systemic favouritism
- Attitudes towards women
- Organisational practice
- Factors impacting advancement
- Women-to-women dynamics
- Intersectional Theory
- Institutionalised processes
- Multi-layered identities
- Organisational intersectionality

- Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research approach and the purpose of the chosen research method. It expands on hermeneutic phenomenology within a theoretical framework that informed the research design and data collection process and concludes with a discussion on ethical considerations.

- Chapter 4: Findings and Results

Chapter 4 focusses on the results from the data collected during the pre-ethical clearance pilot study, which provided insights into the development of the research design and confirmed the significance of proceeding with the main study which demonstrate the link between the questions asked in the interview protocol and the findings. These are then presented as data in the body of the chapter, supported by figures and tables.

- Chapter 5: Discussion

In Chapter 5, the findings of the research are discussed through an interpretation of the results in relation to the research question. The overall themes are discussed as sub-sections.

- Chapter 6: Conclusion

The outcome of the study is discussed in this chapter, along with the key findings, contributions and limitations of the study.

- Chapter 7: Recommendations

This chapter discusses the implications of this study for the underrepresentation of women in senior management and recommends opportunities for future research.

- Appendices

The relevant documentation and data pertaining to this study are organised in this section.

1.12 Summary

The purpose of Chapter 1 was the to outline the purpose, significance and approach of this study. By setting out a definition of terms, the delimitations of the study and a clear overview of the chapters to follow, the discussion contextualised the structure of the paper.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review demonstrates the breadth and depth of the literature, which has been produced across a broad spectrum. The review was accomplished through browsing academic literature, reports and reviews across decades and disciplines.

Following this, the literature was organised into themes as follows:

- Societal factors:
    - African women in management studies
    - African social context
    - Socialisation
    - Gender symbolism
- Organisational factors:
    - Practices of exclusion
    - Boundary-making practices
    - Men's networks
    - Women's networks
    - Institutionalised exclusion
    - Systemic favouritism
    - Attitudes towards women
    - Organisational practice
    - Factors impacting advancement
    - Women-to-women dynamics
- Intersectionality:
    - Intersectional Theory
    - Institutionalised processes
    - Multi-layered identities
    - Organisational intersectionality
    - Simultaneous interactions

The salient features of the above literature will be presented in the summary section 2.16 to draw attention to the key themes and theories in current knowledge production demonstrating the gap hereof in an African context.

2.2 Societal Factors

2.2.1 African Women in Management Studies

Who is the African woman? What does she want to achieve? What do her past, present and future look like? What societal expectations is she competing with in progressing her career? This double consciousness, as described by Goredema, is the sense of looking at oneself through the eyes of biology and others looking at you through the eyes of socialisation. In the concept of double consciousness, two warring identities co-exist in one body (Goredema, 2010).

Myeza and April (2021) found that the warring of these identities for black professionals' burdens them with the self-perception of being "less than" within the context of African leadership and management (Myeza & April, 2021, p. 4). This perception of being deficient was systemically reinforced by the impact of colonisation on the continent (Nkomo, 2011)

2.2.1.1 Introduction

Research on women in management was largely produced in Europe and the West as interest grew in the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in key managerial positions, despite an increase of women in the labour market (Omar & Davidson, 2001). Studies have produced almost nine times the research output focused on understanding non-African women leaders and managers, in comparison with research outputs that focus on African women in management or leadership roles (Ngambi & Nkomo, 2009).

2.2.1.2 African Feminism

The debate on the relevance and usefulness of African feminism, as opposed to just feminism, continues in scholarly publications and at African conferences and seminars (e.g., African Feminist Forum in Ghana, Gender and Language in African Contexts Conference in London, and the international Gender, Work and Organization Conference globally, as well as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference globally) (Atanga, 2013).

Feminism in Africa has its own, diverse specificities due to the problems women face in the context of the continent, ad entails creating spaces for women to participate in the management of their societies (Atanga, 2013, p. 310).

According to Oyewumi (2005) African feminism goes beyond merely focusing on juxtaposing male dominate, activist scholar Amina Mama, in an interview with Salo (2001), encourages challenging of the status quo, and describing the ways in which contemporary patriarchies and embedded power differentials in Africa constrain women and prevent them from realising their potential beyond their traditional roles as hard-working, income-generating wives and mothers – understanding their aspirations that go beyond securing survival (Glesier, 2004).

According to Nkomo (2011), African feminism focuses on feminist epistemology and is further shaped by the political experiences on the African continent in that decades of colonisation followed by liberation struggles have left their impact on post-colonial Africa. The importance of reviewing existent literature with an African feminist lens recognises the challenges of the research context, Africa. Atanga (2013) who prefers 'Feminism(s) in Africa' as opposed to 'African feminism', encourages research from a critical African feminist perspective, with located researchers being self-reflexive about their research questions, methods of data collection, and data analysis (p. 312).

2.2.1.3 Challenging Context

Scholars in Sub-Saharan Africa face the sensitivities of complex social contexts, in which gaining an understanding into, and the promotion of, gender equality remains a gap in the literature (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). There is thus a clear need to recognise and understand the various cultures in which these multiple identities exist.

African scholars are required to explore the intersections of gender, class and race, as well as the impact of colonialism and imperialism on gendered social relations. Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim (2004) therefore called for the further expansion of literature on the intersection and effects of these factors, as well as recognition that a gap remains in the literature.

2.2.1.4 Feminism

Scrutiny of feminist epistemology needs to recognise the histories, present realities and future of African women. Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim (2004) cautioned against over-relying on studies on women and gender that are rooted in African feminism from a postmodernist paradigm.

Therefore, the feminist approach seeks to understand the lived experience of women and other marginalised groups through using qualitative methods. These have proven to be the most appropriate research methods for revealing lived experiences in society, and therefore for adequately addressing their needs and allowing for subjective knowledge of the gendered lives of both women and men (Lauwo, 2018).

2.2.1.5 Societal Expectations

African women's identities are intrinsically linked to their sexuality and reproductive role in society (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). African feminism (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010) therefore encounters the effects of multiple oppressions in determining women's access and mobility in the public sphere, as women first and foremost as humans (Goredema, 2010).

In an African context, women's economic situations are still strongly dependent on men thereby, perpetuating the societal expectations and vulnerability of women (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). Because African women have been silenced in this way, an examination of the complex intersections of gender, race, religion and culture has led to a misrepresentation of the notions of their identity formation (Holvino, 2010) .

2.2.1.6 Liberation Struggle Effect

There are discernible differences between the lived experiences of women who were colonised and those who are deemed to be the colonisers (Carrim, 2017). For this reason, the study sought to validate the experiences of African women, which gives effect to the histories, present realities and future expectations of African women. In this context, the liberation struggles were different across African countries and the experiences of feminism for African women differed depending on whether their political context was a precolonial, colonial or a post-colonial one (Goredema, 2010).

2.2.1.7 African Social Context

This section will expand on the multiplicity of cultures within the African context and the impact these have had on the identity formation of Africans within a feminist epistemology. The discussion will draw attention to the scarcity of knowledge production on the continent and call on African scholars to produce knowledge in Africa, for Africa (Nkomo, 2015).

2.2.1.8 Multiplicity of Cultures

In order to avoid being overwhelmed by the heterogenous effects and multiplicity of culture and race across the continent, we return to the fundamental interaction of these categories on the lived experience of women in Africa (Holvino, 2010). These are unquestionably different from research on feminism produced in the West. In Africa, research needs to focus on the significance of cultural traditions, socio-economic and socio-political effects, patriarchy, race and gender (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016).

2.2.1.9 Africanism on the Continent

It is important that African feminism operates within the parameters of those who identify as African women. This can be either by descent, or those who identify themselves as African by birth beyond racial classification. (Carastathis, 2014). In other words, inclusion in African feminism extends beyond black African women to white women who identify as African by virtue of multigenerational birth on the African continent. These women should also give voice to their lived experiences on the continent, but never at the expense of their authentic selves. Given the paucity of discourse on African feminism, it is important to extend the movement to women of all races who identify as African in order to ensure that the term does not stagnate in literature (Goredema, 2009).

2.2.1.10 Scarcity in Knowledge Production

The limitation of this literature review is its context – Africa – because the current realities and resources available to African social scientists are upheld by patriarchal institutional climates that impede the production of knowledge (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). The result is publication shortages. The majority of precolonial societies on the continent typically focussed on women's productive labour, although women did not command the labour of others, therefore there remains a lack of women in management studies (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004).

During the colonial period, ideological paradigms on the domesticity of women, combined with the effects of modern capitalism, resulted in the exclusion of women from the formal sector (Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014; Holvino, 2010). Centuries later, this phenomenon is perpetuated by the feminisation of work; women are represented in lower-level jobs while their male counterparts command labour and saturate the management ranks (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004).

2.2.1.11 African Scholars Challenged

The grand challenge is therefore to produce knowledge in Africa, by Africans, for Africa. In the current socio-political and economic climate in Africa, scholars working on women and gender studies need to remain sensitive to the complexities of the lived experiences of those promoting gender equity and the tenuous task of driving social change (Ampofo, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004; Nkomo, 2017; Nkomo, 2011).

2.2.2 Socialisation

2.2.2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to increase the understanding of the socialisation process from several dimensions. These include early childhood, gender-based social norms, masculine societal systems and how these impact family-work conflict in a society that is seeing a shift to female breadwinners and stay-at-home fathers (Richards Solomon, 2014).

2.2.2.2 Early Childhood

Socialisation is primarily developed during the formative years, with parents as central caregivers, and the process highlights the differences in gender identities. These gender differences are reinforced through stereotypes presented on television and media from a societal perspective (April & Sikatali, 2019). Girls are bombarded with cultural products such as Disney animations, in which the 'princess' is fragile and gentle and needs saving by the 'prince' who is valiant and resourceful. The impact of these images on young girls, and consequently on their ideas of their future working lives, is an area for conjecture (Griffin, Harding, & Learmonth, 2017).

2.2.2.3 Gender-Based Social Norms

These social stereotypes, which are primarily based on observations of behaviour of gender-typical roles, are reinforced through gender-based social norms that present the societal beliefs of behaviours expected of men and women (Weyer, 2007). From boyhood, men are socialised to be the breadwinners, while girls are socialised to choose between being homemakers and career women. The key difference here is that men can choose 'where' to work and women have to choose 'whether' to work (Kellerman, 1980).

Lauwo (2018) examined the dynamics facing women within a masculine social system, characterised by phallic masculine imagery, in the context of the world's capitalist system, in the Tanzanian mining sector, similar to other developing countries, women are perceived to be passive respondents in the economy. In that country, women shoulder domestic responsibilities while men are seen as active respondents in the larger world, involved in dangerous, dirty and irregular work at the centre of the economy. This view, however, underestimates that the constitution of power relations, social identities and class struggles are inextricably woven together. More attention should thus be paid to social and political dynamics and their effects on social identities (Lauwo, 2018).

Amos-Wilson (1999) further explored managerial attitudes in the Ghanaian economy, where structures are set up in terms of role segregation, authority and control, i.e., men's interests win. This is partially explained by the construction of socially charged social relations as individuals are interested in maintaining gender differentiation and identities embedded in the principles of a patriarchal system. Heterosexuality is a key part of patriarchal practices and shapes gender at the level of experience and accepted behaviours for both men and women. In dominant patriarchal cultures, a clear distinction is drawn between femininity and masculinity. These distinctions are rooted in patriarchal practices that promote, entrench and reinforce differences in acceptable conduct for men and women. In African society other factors contributing to this are the effects of polygamy, religious beliefs and customs and institutionally legitimised behaviours. Same-sex marriage is outlawed premised on the influence of Western culture (Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

2.2.2.4 Double-Edged Singlehood

Societal norms embedded in patriarchy also limit women who devote themselves to their careers and stigmatise them for being single. Despite this, Mathur-Helm (2006) found that single career women are perceived as hard-working and loyal as they have no major family commitments. They are consequently highly praised and valued by their managers.

Particularly in African societies, if a woman remains unmarried beyond a certain age by constraint or choice, her situation challenges the patriarchal ideology like a two-edged sword, in that the effects of patriarchy in union formation result in patriarchal ideologies that entrench marriage as the acceptable adult status one in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women this ideology shapes legislation and policymaking that impact marriage, fertility, sexuality, and wage discrimination (Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

2.2.2.5 Anticipated Work-Family Conflict

Bagraim and Harrison (2013) investigated the predictors of anticipated work-family conflict (AWFC) among business students. Their assumption was that future work demands and family responsibilities would be incompatible, resulting in work-family conflict. This was predicated on personal factors and social and demographic variables.

Their contention was that self-efficacy would be a significant factor, i.e., that the individuals would believe that their actions in the face of adversity would resolve work-family conflicts, and they would therefore experience less anxiety about future employment opportunities. Their findings concluded that the intersection of race and AWFC had no significant influence, however female students had significantly higher levels of anxiety in relation to their male counterparts (Bagraim & Harrison, 2013).

Women entering the workplace continue to grapple with following their career ambitions as these conflict with the prospects of marriage and the desire for motherhood (Kellerman, 1980). Nonconformity to these sociocultural expectations leads to incongruence and, as such, appraisal bias is experienced (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Given the gendered nature of organisations, senior levels of management are occupied by the 'valiant and resourceful prince', referred to in literature as sites of hegemonic masculinity that remain highly resistant to change (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003).

2.2.2.6 The Female Breadwinners and Stay-at-Home Fathers

Predetermined societal roles expect men to be the breadwinners and women the homemakers. This societal-set gender role differentiation is generally accepted because the norms are in alignment with the society's values (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017). Women, however, are deconstructing traditional gender roles and pursuing a new pragmatic construct of female breadwinning. This non-conformance to accepted social norms has wide consequences for attitudes to gender roles among their children, who may deem the change inappropriate, affecting their choice in family breadwinning preferences in later life (Amos-Wilson, 1999).

The female breadwinner is perceived as arrogant, disrespectful of male social roles and leading family decisions, thus contradicting the social norms that men are the heads of households. As breadwinning is constructed as the exclusive domain of men, this has consequences for the economic realities of growth in transitional economies and the evolution of mega-cities, which propel female breadwinning. (Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020).

As economies evolve and the demand for skills increases, so does the rise in female breadwinners (Davies-Netzley, 1998). Current models of fathering now require more hands-on involvement in the household, which comes with support for career wives. However, the choice to become a stay-at-home father in support of a career wife is still perceived as a deviation from the important tenet of hegemonic masculinity, where only a man is the breadwinner (Richards Solomon, 2014).

Richards Solomon's study, entitled, 'After Months of It, You Just Want to Punch Someone in the Face: Stay-at-Home Fathers and Masculine Identities', identifies the salient features of how men redefine their role in the household in relation to the norms predicated by traditional masculinity. By choosing to support their wives' careers and doing housework and childcare, socially located against a backdrop of privilege, the stay-at-home fathers did not contend with discrimination. Their status gave them access to resources that allowed them flexibility in their response to masculinity as family and friends were largely supportive of their familial arrangements.

This social support, however, does not negate the impact of masculinity and what they experience by going against social norms. Hegemonic masculinity places men in a dominant position in their families; stay-at-home fathers, however, choose to place themselves in a subordinate position, which comes with scrutiny of their 'manliness' and internalised pressure to live up to traditional masculinity (Richards Solomon, 2014).

2.2.2.7 Gender-Based Violence

Research on women's health within the context of gender-based violence and access to health care facilities has been politicised through economic, social and political processes. The result is a misrepresentation of lived experiences of physical, psychological and sexual violence, and silences the effects of the complex intersecting of gender, race, religion, sexuality and culture (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004).

Role conflict has arisen as more women are taking on the role of breadwinner (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017). In deeply entrenched patriarchal societies, this phenomenon affects the family stability and presents a spousal relational strain. This is based on the perception that the spouse of a career woman has lower self-esteem, which leads to aggravated interactions with his wife and general abusive tendencies (Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020).

Violence against women is often shaped when the dimensions of identity, race and class interlock. This intersectionality provides a framework for the various interactions of these categories in the context of gender-based violence (Crenshaw, 1993).

Male violence is exerted as a form of power designed to systemically alter women's behaviour, both at home and in the workplace. This is reinforced by patriarchal structures that subordinate women. Wives are the property of their husbands, therefore the use of violence is permitted to correct and keep her in check (Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

2.2.2.8 Social Support

As women progress through the management ranks, they become heavily reliant on home support structures (Lloyd & Mey, 2007). Here partners and husbands play a major role, as they provide acknowledgement and support to enable the women to focus on their careers.

The importance of the role of the husband to a career woman is that he can either choose to support her or become a stumbling block; the attitude of the husband can make the difference between whether it is possible for his wife to live her career ambition or not (Kellerman, 1980). Social support is therefore vital for women to progress in their careers. This support is a multi-dimensional construct involving both emotional and instrumental input as the experience of care, respect and acceptance, which tangibly provides information, knowledge, financing and advice. Combined, these factors contribute to the satisfaction women experience as they progress in their careers and is predictive of their coping effectiveness (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010).

2.2.3 Gender Symbolism

2.2.3.1 Introduction

Gender difference, as it relates to the competencies and capabilities of women, and socialisation, which articulates women's traits, behaviours and attitudes, positions women as inappropriate to occupy managerial roles. They are perceived to lack risk-taking behaviours and fear failing in their roles (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Previous literature confirmed these societal norms and took the position that career women deviated from the norm because the societal expectation at the time was that women should enjoy domestic activities instead of pursuing 'more masculine' careers (Kellerman, 1980). Gender symbolism is dependent on contextual circumstance in which sexual or racial bias impacts career advancement. Dominant males, as key decision-makers, hold on to perceptions that women are less suited for management promotional opportunities (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

2.2.3.2 Gender Bias

Even though there is no evidence that there are differences in aptitude according to biological sex, and no correlation between gender and managerial competence, gender disparity continues to mark the career development and advancement of women (Weyer, 2007). Cultural stereotypes reinforce this prejudice by judging women as being less worthy of promotional opportunities, despite their suitability for a role in terms of qualifications, age and tenure.

The resultant effect of gender bias is that women are offered lower salaries compared to their male counterparts who occupy similar roles, and women are offered less career mentoring (Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012; Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017). Women lose hope when caught up in their inability to express their career ambitions, despite having attained the necessary qualifications and experience. As a result, they leave the organisation which thus loses the benefit of their capabilities (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Moss-Racusin, 2012).

2.2.3.3 Gendered Management

Historically, management theorists developed the traditional view of management by focussing their research on the task and performance orientation. This approach is typically masculine to the exclusion of women who were already in management, and demonstrates the gender bias in management research in that "men are managers and managers are men" (Bartram, 2005, p. 108).

Research on the evolution of the role of women in management and leadership has developed from 'Think-Manager-Think-Male' to 'Think-Crisis-Think-Female'. This indicates that there is still specific gender bias in the attributes associated with leadership (Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Palmer & Bosch, 2017).

Recent research on gender difference in leadership style, however, indicates that there are more similarities than differences in effective leadership behaviours between men and women (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Davies-Netzley (1998) pointed out that women in leadership roles often confront patriarchal ideologies that are linked to womanhood and which reinforce gender stereotyping, such as marriage and family. Women are therefore marginalised from opportunities, mostly by their male peers, thus entrenching boundary-making practices (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

In researching the attributes of leadership, Richardson and Loubier (2008) indicated that leadership is constructed from both a psychological and a sociological perspective, in that leadership identity is based on psychological components and the leadership persona is based on sociological elements.

These elements of leadership identity are both at a surface level that is observable, e.g., age, gender, race and ethnicity, and at a deeper level, including education, work experience and exposure, values and culture.

Many theories have sought to explain why gender differences are exaggerated in the opportunities for management career advancement where the progression of women and minority groups is handicapped (Weyer, 2007). Among the reasons put forward is that the underrepresentation of women is a result of their treatment in management. A second view is that stereotyping reinforces biases held by those in power, resulting in slower progress for women and minorities. Finally, the systemic nature of widespread policies and practices perpetuates discrimination against women and minority groups (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

More recent studies examined the extent to which these gender stereotypes, in the context of leadership and organisational culture, influence the perception of employees' managerial and functional competencies. Stereotypically, women's characteristics are described as kind, caring, humble, community focussed, relationship-orientated, nurturing and caregiving (Brandser, 1996). In contrast, men are described as having individual power and control over their goals and destinies, therefore they are decisive, risk-taking, autonomous and assertive (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017).

However, as economies develop and societal changes take effect, women are increasingly acquiring education and participating in managerial and executive roles, while legislative requirements are compelling organisations to embrace diversity and achieve gender equality (Brandser, 1996). For these reasons, shifts in leadership are required from the historically masculine attributes to those of contemporary leadership, which seemingly incorporate more feminine attributes (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017).

2.2.3.4 Gendered Organisations

These gender symbolisms continue to play out in organisational cultures across management levels, serving as a means of closure by cutting off areas of work for women managers. Gendered organisations are reinforced by perpetual gender stereotyping, constituting a major barrier to the advancement of women across management ranks.

The paradigm 'Think-Manager-Think-Male' fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement and development opportunities (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). These stereotypes are socially constructed and reinforce gender inequality in an organisation's structural practices, e.g., career planning, role orientation and status. They promote a gendered process which implies that organisations are inherently gendered (Palmer & Bosch, 2017).

Organisationally, stereotypes concern status in the organisational hierarchy, therefore women in senior management in male-dominated management ranks are overtly visible and consequently remarked upon both positively and negatively which impacts career progression in that studies have found that gender is negatively correlated with promotional opportunities (Amos-Wilson, 1999).

In the traditional workplace, therefore, women cannot participate equally when measured by the managerial assumptions of the 'ideal worker', that is, someone who is committed to the organisation on the premise of being available 24/7, taking on extended working hours and complying with the structure of work to be performed. Essentially, the 'ideal worker' encapsulates masculine traits whereas women are regarded as off-norm. This is not ideal for the traditional workplace and career progression, because women's unique biological function of reproduction is seen to require 'special' accommodation in the workplace (Bosch, 2014).

Within this traditional context, women tend to perform roles that are lower in status to their male counterparts. This task segregation is socially constructed, resulting in within-job gender inequality which has a direct economic outcome (Chan & Anteby, 2016). These traditions are socially constructed and impact the gendering, racialisation and classing process of particular job categories (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016).

The effect of gendered organisations on women is that they feel devalued and threatened by self-serving and domineering cultures, in that the organisation is seen to support stereotypical masculine values, such as being tough-minded and powerful (Rutherford, 2001). This perception is reinforced through rewarding behaviours that conform to these gender-based values. However, research has revealed the emergence of new values that organisations can adopt to drive positive outcomes, with feminine characteristics such as agreeableness, communication, structure and authority underpinning transformational leadership (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

2.2.3.5 Societal Expectations

Gender is socially constructed based on the cultural and economic expectations of the role of women in society, in that society perceives a women's role as caretaker and nurturer, and consequently values women in the role of housewife over worker. The perception, therefore, is that the behaviours required to conform to social and workplace expectations are incongruent (Bartram, 2005). Men are consequently seen as the breadwinners and females the homemakers. These stereotypes are based on behaviours associated with gender-typical social roles (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Career women find that progressing to middle management positions enables them to express their career ambitions and provides a degree of flexibility to fulfil their family obligations. However, advancing beyond middle management into senior and top management positions impacts their ability to fulfil both career ambitions and family obligations amidst societal expectations, all of which limits their freedom to make a pivotal choice: career or family (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

By choosing to pursue their careers and progress into leadership roles, women have to face perceptions of incongruity between feminine and leadership roles. This prejudice toward women leaders can result in less favourable evaluations of their leadership potential and performance, with women in these positions encountering bias and being penalised for nonconformity to the sociocultural expectations of femininity (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

2.3 Organisational Factors

2.3.1 Practices of Exclusion

2.3.1.1 Introduction

Practices of exclusion in management ranks are often subtle – at times perpetuated unconsciously. Jones et al. (2016) described the subtlety of discriminatory practices as the unconscious enactment of interpersonal discrimination that is further entrenched and perceived as common everyday interactions. These discriminatory practices are observed in various forms such as harassment, incivility and disrespectful treatment, and are sometimes enacted as joking. The key difference between these forms of discriminatory practices is that some are overt; they constitute blatantly prejudicial behaviour which members of minority groups experience as disrespectful treatment practiced to reinforce that they are inherently inferior (Carrim,2017; Jones, Peddie Gilrane, King & Gray, 2016).

In contrast, subtle discrimination has become more prevalent in society. Ironically, this is because of improvements in legislative and policy changes, which clearly identify discriminatory practices that are not to be tolerated (Darity & Mason, 1998). Subtle discrimination operates ambiguously; the express intent to harm members of minority groups may be unconsciously enacted (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016). The difficulty in detecting subtle forms of discrimination is exacerbated because it occurs at a higher frequency than overt discriminatory and therefore has a chronic impact on its targets (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016).

2.3.1.2 Personal and Organisational Ramifications

The harmful effects of interpersonal prejudice experienced through subtle discrimination are that women and minority groups continue to experience this negative impact, reinforcing stigmatisation which studies have proven is negatively related to job satisfaction (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016). Fortunately, shifts in the social and political landscape across the world have led to a reduction in the frequency of overt discriminatory practices, and to swift action being taken when this occurs (Deitch et al., 2003).

This is further enforced by social movements calling for equality and social justice, such as UN Women being the global champion for gender equality (UN Women, 2022). In the private sector, the International Women's Forum is an invitation only network of preeminent female leaders, which was founded in 1974 with the commitment of advancing women leadership and gender equality (International Women's Forum, 2022).

Finally, Boardroom Africa has the largest regional network of female executives in Africa, with their mission being to promote the advancement of female talent to boards across the continent (The Boardroom Africa, 2022)

2.3.1.3 Context-specific

Practices of exclusion include the use of language other than business language, micro-aggressive acts, restricted access to opportunities, exclusion from informal social networks, inability to influence strategic decision-making and challenges when navigating organisational politics (Amos-Wilson, 1999). The combined impact of these exclusionary practices influences organisational cultures and practices, which in turn foster conditions that are unfavourable for minority groups to progress, i.e., they are excluded from job advancement opportunities (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

2.3.1.4 Job Satisfaction

The systemic nature of exclusionary practices influences organisational policies that embed systemic job discrimination, because minority groups' opportunities for promotion are limited. This, in turn, further entrenches income inequality (McKeen & Richardson, 1992). In an organisational culture that perpetuates inequality, minority groups are often unaware of the full extent and consequences of these systemic exclusionary practices and are disadvantaged in terms of pay disparity and overall job satisfaction (Chan & Anteby, 2016).

2.3.1.5 Attributional Discrimination

"It's the little things: The everyday interactions that get under the skin of Blacks and Whites", claimed (Williams, 2001, as cited in Deitch et al. 2003, p.1304) in their research on the attributional nature of discriminatory acts.

Attributional negative treatment occurs when the targets of discrimination cannot be certain whether this is due to their race, gender or any other attributes they represent (Deitch, et al., 2003). Furthermore, perceptions of discriminatory practice are frequently viewed through the lens of culture and religion as a concept of Westernisation (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010). Exclusionary practices are perpetuated when those experiencing discrimination cannot assess the intention of the behaviour because of the ambiguous nature of the discrimination, and may lack ways to deal with these practices, leading to feelings of hopelessness (Deitch et al., 2003).

2.3.2 Boundary-Making Practices

2.3.2.1 Introduction

When boundary-making practices are embodied in patriarchal, exclusionary strategies, women are excluded from areas of management (Jeong & Harrison, 2017). Described as social closure, power is monopolised by one group, thereby closing off opportunities to another group, referred to as the outsiders (Rutherford, 2001). This process of exclusion is manifested though a range of barrier strategies.

2.3.2.2 Barrier Strategies

One barrier strategy that limits women's advancement into the senior management ranks is what literature refers to as the glass ceiling. This is a convergence of both individual and systemic factors, reinforced by societal expectations of the management roles men and women are suited to occupy (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

This concept of the 'glass ceiling' was introduced in 1986 in the *Wall Street Journal*. Evidence of it can be seen in company recruitment practices, retention and promotion processes, gender stereotyping linked to preferred leadership styles, and structural and cultural explanations rooted in feminist theory (Weyer, 2007; Davies-Netzley, 1998).

Organisations may nurture the glass ceiling by keeping in place strategies that are determined by masculine values and leadership styles sustained by organisational culture and polices (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Within this context, women are significantly underrepresented in strategy-making roles, in business development and as chief executive officers.

This disparity persists despite decades of organisational scholarship, which has failed to show whether there is a demonstrable performance difference or disadvantage to firms between the capabilities of men and those of women when occupying key senior management roles (Jeong & Harrison, 2017).

2.3.2.3 Invisible Glass

The cumulative effect of the processes that uphold the glass ceiling is to restrict women's opportunities for promotion into the most senior levels within organisations. This occurs despite women having the relevant skills, experience and qualifications articulated in the role criteria (Palmer & Bosch, 2017).

Women experience the very real effects of this invisible barrier once they reach a career plateau (Mckeen & Richardson, 1992; Mavin, 2001).

Key factors which enforce the glass ceiling concept include stereotypical perceptions of how women communicate, their management style, the value ascribed to participating in networking and how women experience work-family conflicts (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015). Despite policy and legislative changes calling for gender equity, this invisible glass barrier remains. A wholesale shift on the concept of empowerment as it relates to gender equity is thus required (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

2.3.2.4 Identifying Glass Ceilings

The glass ceiling perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management through subtle and overt practices of discrimination that restrict their access to the top jobs; women can see the positions, but are not able to attain them.

Literature has identified some of the hidden obstacles that create a glass ceiling, including credentials, promotional opportunities, remuneration, corporate practices, stereotyping and systemic nature (Mathur-Helm, 2006; April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007; Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990), which are explained as follows:

- When candidates are assessed based on their credentials, women face barriers to career advancement despite their capabilities to perform the role.
- Limited promotion opportunities are presented within the male-dominated management ranks, so women are discouraged from seeking senior management roles.
- Organisations have made progress on income differentials related to gender, however while many organisations are paying women higher salaries, they still hesitate to appoint them to senior management positions.
- Institutionalised corporate practices in human resources that relate to recruitment, promotion and succession planning are often detrimental to the advancement of women.
- Stereotyping of women is upheld by behavioural and cultural perceptions of preferred leadership styles.
- Feminist theory explains the discrimination as both structurally and culturally constructed; social structures prevent changes in organisational systems that would progress gender equity.

This invisible barrier leads women to experience prejudice from the moment they enter the workforce (Mavin, 2001). The glass ceiling is distinctively gender-driven; studies show that although men and women entering the workforce initially develop through different positions at the same pace, there is a steady and steep leakage through the corporate pipeline (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015). Women on average represent 47% of non-management roles, however as they progress through junior, middle and senior management, there is a steep and steady decline in representation in the senior management ranks (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016).

2.3.2.5 Progressing Toward the Glass Ceiling

The greatest barrier women face in business is being able to break into top management roles. This is partly because if women believe that organisations create growth and are progressive, they do not necessarily understand the effects of the glass ceiling (McKeen & Richardson, 1992). Women are usually confronted by these when they become a threat for succession into top management roles.

One of the most prevalent personal barriers inhibiting women's career advancement is management's perception about how women manage work and family obligations, yet studies have found that a greater barrier is a non-supportive organisational culture and a distrust that women have the requisite competencies to be considered for promotion (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Women's ongoing experiences of discriminatory practices testify to these barriers, while their male counterparts continue to thrive in their organisation and progress through the management ranks (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

2.3.2.6 Glass Ceilings in Organisational Systems

Women's inability to identify or understand a glass ceiling and respond effectively inhibits their career advancement. Additionally, they often have to operate and deliver in male-dominated management cultures (McKeen & Richardson, 1992).

Proponents of the 'Think-Male-Think-Manager' paradigm attribute male domination in management to particular characteristics for success that men possess. This gender stereotyping of managerial positions reinforces the effects of glass ceilings in organisations (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

The challenges do not end if a woman does successfully navigate the effects of the glass ceiling. When in line for promotion to top management positions, women often find themselves enmeshed in corporate politics, resulting in organisational conflict (Mathur-Helm, 2006). The stress, professionally and personally, of dealing with this conflict can deter women from pursuing further promotional opportunities (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). In reaction to the combined effects of the barriers they encounter, many women resign from their organisation, citing damage to their self-esteem and personal pain culminating in immense frustration. It is clear that discrimination against women as it relates to their experience and progression in organisations is deeply embedded in work practices and cultural norms (Mathur-Helm, 2006; Davies-Netzley, 1998).

2.3.2.7 Beyond Glass Ceilings

The first step for organisations managed by gender-exclusive leadership teams is to identify and dismantle the glass ceiling, however women are also unclear about which attributes have led them to successfully crack the glass ceiling (McKeen & Richardson, 1992).

Additionally, because men have traditionally occupied the highest levels of organisations, they are keen to preserve these as their sites of power and knowledge, and are also reluctant to admit that women have the potential to participate (Bartram, 2005).

Studies indicate that women who break through the glass ceiling have the following characteristics: productive mentoring relationships; demonstrable management experience; career risk-taking; and behaviour supported by an impressive track record.

They also demonstrate personal traits such as being tough, assertive, amicable, decisive, demanding, attaining further educational development, developing similar interests to male counterparts, extending their network and finally, reconciling their family-work conflicts (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007; Davies-Netzley, 1998).

Even after women have broken through the glass ceiling, they are perceived as 'the outsiders on the inside', which affects their perspectives of career mobility and success in upper management (Rutherford, 2001). This characterisation can isolate women, negatively impacting their performance, and they are rarely accepted into informal networks that would support their career success and advancement (Davies-Netzley, 1998).

Studies indicate when a woman has been appointed to lead an organisation, the firm experiences a short-term stock decline, which perpetuates the social construct that the role and responsibilities of a CEO are incongruent with a woman's leadership style (Jeong & Harrison, 2017). A further factor that attributes poor organisational performance to the appointment of a woman as CEO is that women have been prevented from acquiring the necessary skills and experience for the role. Additionally, women's leadership skills can be perceived as non-effective, leading to negative shareholder responses. Yet despite these short-term effects, in the longer term, organisations can experience a net benefit in performance as a result of a woman's strategic actions in mitigating risk (Jeong & Harrison, 2017).

2.3.2.8 Glass Walls

In addition to the glass ceiling, in recent years women managers have experienced the 'glass wall'. In this situation, they are effectively positioned outside the mainstream workplace activities that would position them for promotion into senior management. Instead, they occupy managerial positions in the service of the decision-making managerial roles, occupied predominantly by men (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010). Women and minority groups experience this empowered powerlessness across both public and private sectors. The term 'empowered powerless' is described by April and Singh (2018) as a woman not having the necessary authority as a senior executive, because the real power of decision-making is held by the dominant white male group. The empowered powerless experience thus leads to feelings of not being taken seriously, being disrespected and of having one's voice muted.

2.3.2.9 Glass Cliffs

Once through the glass ceiling, women face greater scrutiny and criticism in leadership roles, and have to overcome additional barriers beyond those already identified (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo, & Michel, 2016). Recent studies explain this as the emergence of a 'glass cliff'. This cliff places women in top management roles that are associated with greater risk of failure, often during turbulent times in an organisation (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

The roles are presented as an attractive opportunity or challenge, which women are expected to accept with gratitude. An offer such as this in times of crisis is explained by a disinclination for the 'Think-Manager-Think-Male' approach, because the attributes required to lead an organisation during those times are identified as being understanding, helpful, intuitive, creative and cheerful (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

Therefore, in crisis situations, organisations 'Think-Crisis-Think-Female', as gender plays a causal role in promoting women into glass cliff positions. Ryan and Haslam explained this as follows (Ryan & Haslam, 2007):

- Convergence of both structural and psychological factors.
- Perceptions that women are equipped with socio-emotional challenges.
- Manifestation of benevolent sexism in the workplace.
- In-group favouritism that reserves 'cushy' roles for men.
- Context-dependent perceptions of risk and opportunity.

Inevitably, promoting women in these challenging conditions can set them up to fail. Even though failure is systemically influenced, women tend to take the blame upon themselves and feel the need to 'take the fall' in the interest of the organisation and to exonerate their colleagues (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

Once the female appointment fails in a system created and upheld by her male counterparts, the 'valiant male knight' is then appointed to 'save the situation'. This pattern reinforces the underrepresentation of women in key executive roles (Griffin, Harding, & Learmonth, 2017).

2.3.3 Men's Networks

2.3.3.1 Introduction

The process of exclusion continues as boundary-making practices through social closure strategies observed in gendered networks (Rutherford, 2001; Zietsman & April, 2021). Networking has been identified as one of the key levers for career development and access to promotional opportunities. Men's only networks have been largely criticised for their inherently exclusionary nature based on gender (Mathur-Helm, 2006). More recently, these exclusionary practices, institutionalised through men-only membership clubs, have been challenged as being in breach of equality legislation and contributing to the perpetual underrepresentation of women in business and exclusion from events and opportunities that stimulate business investments (April, Dharani, & April, 2023; Gentleman, 2020).

An example is that of Emily Bender, who took legal action against London's men-only membership club, the Garrick Club, which was founded in 1831. She argued that, 'Even if you don't talk about work, it's about having that secret connection because you socialise together. We all know how important these invisible connections are' (Gentleman, 2020).

2.3.3.2 Professional Success

One of the key barriers women encounter in navigating professional success through the management ranks is the impact of networks (Rutherford, 2001). In this regard, exclusionary practice is both intentional and unintentional. Intentionally, men's networks create interest groups related to activities or events that are typically male-inclined, such as sporting events, for example golfing, and social events, for example visiting strip clubs (Rutherford, 2001).

The deliberate male orientation assumed within these networks prevents women from forming relationships that are essential in developing the business and expanding their own networks to progress their careers (Mavin, 2001). Organisations and professional bodies have responded to this phenomenon by establishing similar women's networks, however these typically do not hold the same status nor result in similar opportunities for women in relation to men's networks (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010).

2.3.3.3 'Old Boys' Club

Studies in South Africa have found evidence of exclusionary cultures in top management that continue to inhibit the progression of women into top management roles. Commonly referred to as 'old boys clubs' these men's network groups alienate women (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Women in senior management positions have highlighted the peer success factor in the 'old boys club' because the members similar interests in leisure and sporting facilities enhance their relationships, which in turn influence their likelihood of being promoted (Davies-Netzley, 1998). The literature suggests that women who progress successfully may identify with this 'clique', i.e., they adapt their behaviours so that they converse in the group language, act like one of the group's members, and play the male game (Rutherford, 2001). They do so in order to be accepted by their male counterparts because they have identified the influence that men have to inhibit their career progression (Mathur-Helm, 2002).

2.3.4 Women's Networks

The complex social context in Africa lends itself to implicit gender inequality as African women contend with various social identities in multiple cultural context (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). These multiple identities exist within an African economic context, on a continent which has been plunged into numerous crises over decades of post-colonial rule, therefore, women are actively pursuing economic opportunities and social change (Mikell, 1998).

As such, leaders become more sensitised to the principles of transformation, and they are giving effect to establishing women's (skills and personal) development and networks so as to progress women's professional success. Davidson, Fielden and Omar (2001) cited one such network established for Black British female business owners as a source of learning, as well as providing emotional and business support from fellow female business owners. These networks often lack access to key decision-makers, however, as women remain largely underrepresented in senior business roles (Palmer & Bosch, 2017).

2.3.5 Institutionalised Exclusion

Male-dominated senior management influences succession planning and promotion criteria, often through male elite networks such as old boys clubs (Mathur-Helm, 2006). This practice is entrenched in business and both influences business decisions and then legitimises them in boardrooms, to the exclusion of women. This practice thus continues to act as a barrier to women's career progress (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007).

The inherent nature of this established practice is that men legitimise their participation through the ideology of individualism, upheld by social-structural variables (Davies-Netzley, 1998). Even though there has been an increase in the number of women in management positions, these networks provide exclusive access to other men in similar positions; women are thus dependent upon the willingness of the 'boys' in the 'club' to accept them (Davies-Netzley, 1998). Taken together, gender and networking are conceptualised as social practices designed to reinforce gender inequality.

Access is guarded by the network gatekeepers because they have the power to influence the composition of the 'club' by evaluating potential candidates according to unspoken criteria (Palmer & Bosch, 2017). Women recognise from the outside that the parameters to achieving success in these men's networks are reliant on peer similarities and sharing similar social and leisure interests (Davies-Netzley, 1998).

When compared to men, women's experience of interpersonal relationships and of accessing channels of communication differ disadvantageously. Studies have found that women are further away from key decision-makers and removed from the centre of power channels. This distance has a direct relationship with career progression, because women are thus seen as asocial and deprived of access to powerful people in organisations (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015).

2.3.6 Systemic Favouritism

The adversity experienced by women as they progress through their management careers is further exacerbated by the manifestation of vertical segregation, which essentially places men at higher levels of authority (Omar & Davidson, 2001). These levels of authority are systemically maintained through the exertion of power in the workplace.

Therefore, the underrepresentation of women in senior management is perpetuated by systematically favouring a particular interest group by designing systems that legitimise gender bias. This power involves behaviour that is intentionally directed to progress the interests of one group over another. The result is the hierarchisation of individuals in which deviation from the associated classification is punished, and in this way the system is maintained (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011).

2.3.7 Attitudes Towards Women

2.3.7.1 Introduction

In Africa, female leaders have cited attitudes toward women in the workplace as one of the key challenges they faced as they progressed into senior and top management, in both the public and private sectors (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016). This section will develop this notion through extant literature on commonly held attitudes, managerial and employee perceptions toward female leaders, the influence of managerial competencies, and the impact of promotional opportunities.

2.3.7.2 Commonly Held Attitudes Towards Women

The cultural and social environment in which men and women grow up is probably the determining factor affecting attitudes towards women at home and at work (Prekel, 1980). Commonly held attitudes compare woman managers with their male counterparts rather than assessing women's suitability for the role requirements. Male managers are perceived as objective, independent, logical and competitive, whereas woman managers are stereotyped as gentle, sensitive, illogical and emotional (Dubno, 1985).

These attitudes remain prevalent in the gender-related behaviours in the workplace, which perpetuate the infamous glass ceiling (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Social constructionist accounts of these gender differences are explained through understanding the societal expectations that produce and maintain inequality (Weyer, 2007).

Theories of management and gender implicitly guide the expectations of behaviours linked to gender, resulting in stereotypes that have a direct impact on how men and women experience the workplace (Weyer, 2007). The same behaviour displayed by both men and women is interpreted differently; when a man acts forcefully he is perceived as being a leader, but when a woman acts forcefully, she is perceived as being unacceptably pushy (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

These perceived stereotypes negatively impact interpersonal relationships, which women inherently develop and which satisfy their need for self-esteem. Cumulatively, this can lead to a decline in well-being, mental wellness and eventually women's performance in their role (Kellerman, 1980).

2.3.7.3 Managerial Perception of Women

In 1980, Prekel expanded on a lecture presented in 1979 entitled, Women – a vital human resource , publishing a follow-up article in the *South African Journal of Business Management*. The salient features of her contribution were that women at the time wanted meaningful positions, with the opportunity to grow their careers, however these aspirations were deterred by stereotypes that posited that women were 'lucky' to have reached such positions. These perceptions influenced managerial decisions about women's suitability for promotional opportunities (Prekel, 1980).

These notions still prevail. Managers assume that family-work conflict could arise, so they hesitate to promote women or send them on assignment, often without discussing these matters with the woman concerned (Moodley, Holt, Leke, & Desvaux, 2016). Thus, the perceptions male managers hold about their female employees seeking career progress is readily maintained. Over time, as women consistently perform in their roles, male managers learn with experience that women 'really' can add value (Belliveau, 2012).

2.3.7.4 Perceptions of Managerial Competencies

Employees' perceptions of managerial and leadership competence reinforce gender-based stereotyping. These perceptions are often traditionally institutionalised by how society distinguishes gender role differentiation, particularly as it relates to the generally acceptable norms and values of society and to the sex-based division of labour (Mavin, 2001).

This is underpinned by the social orientation that men outperform women in management and leadership roles, especially in male-dominated industries (Chan & Anteby, 2016). The disproportionate ratio of men to women in the management ranks further exacerbates the situation, even though managerial and leadership competence is articulated in relation to achieving organisational goals by means of knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017).

Perceptions of managerial competence based on gender are perpetuated by gender-based stereotyping which results in preference for male managers (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007). This has far-reaching consequences for the recruitment, selection and promotion processes in organisations, further perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in management roles (Cobb, 2016). At the entry level to the management ranks, managerial competence is generally attributed to functional and technical competencies gained through formal qualifications and leadership skills developed through exposure and targeted training (Cobb, 2016).

However, progress to senior management requires greater social and leadership skills, including multicultural communication competence and strategic problem-solving abilities that consider technological and global trends, i.e., there is a deliberate and necessary shift in the competencies required to progress through the management ranks (Viera da Cunha & Pina e Cunha, 2002; Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Samuel and Mokoaleli (2017) further contested that a core managerial competency that drives a firm's competitive advantage is a leader's human resources capabilities, i.e., senior managers require greater dimensions of people management skills in addition to strategic and functional competencies.

2.3.7.5 Impact on Promotional Opportunities for Women

Undoubtedly, the managerial perception of women's career aspirations directly impacts the promotional opportunities that women are considered for (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017). Rationally, male managers accept the principles that underpin equal opportunity on the premise that all managers acquire the necessary managerial skills to effectively contribute to creating value for the organisation, however, their beliefs on this matter are that women are not able to compete on equal terms with men because they are subjective, agreeable, lack ambition and are less able to acquire mathematical or mechanical skills in relation to the roles their male counterparts occupy (Matur-Helm, 2006).

Conversely, studies find that the feminine leadership style brings a competitive advantage to organisations (Harvard Business Review, 2017). Characteristics of a 'feminine organisation' are to surrender the typically male pursuits of control of self and others through performance-orientated behaviours that serve individualism and ambition in favour of a coordinated organisation through building trust and considering work-life-balance (Viera da Cunha & Pina e Cunha, 2002).

2.3.8 Organisational Practice

2.3.8.1 Introduction

Institutional practices and processes of differentiation and stratification are built into organisations and produce and reproduce relationships of privilege and inequality (Holvino, 2008). Extant literature provides some insight into the perpetual underrepresentation of women in senior management in the context of institutionalised organisational practices (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017).

Women's progress is impeded by a number of organisational practices that influence power hierarchy, personnel policies and reward structures (Erwee, 1992). These organisational dimensions will be further expanded on in the section that follows.

2.3.8.2 Organisational Culture

The constituents of organisational culture include company background, physical artefacts, gender awareness, management style and working conditions (Rutherford, 2001). The latter refers to working long hours, public-private divide, sexual harassment, language, communication style, sexualisation, combative sporting and informal networks that are exclusionary in nature (Rutherford, 2001).

Culture is the intangible glue that keeps these systems of meaning and significance in place, providing stability and defending the system and its people from the unknown. People search for meaning in their roles and have a need to be part of driving organisational purpose. When the values, practices and beliefs of the organisation are incongruent with those of its people, the culture manifested through beliefs and behaviours becomes a boundary-making practice (Rutherford, 2001; April, Makgoba, & Forster, 2018).

This is evident in organisational cultures that perpetuate toxic leadership styles, which negatively impact the working environment if left unchecked. Zietsman and April (2021) found this to be one of the leading causes of millennial women resigning from their organisations.

In the workplace, the convergence of cultural perspectives on categories such as race, gender and class, and their interactions with organisational culture, produce inequalities that are most apparent in interactions on the job. Theorised as homosocial reproduction in that people prefer working with those who have similar traits (race, class, gender), this inadvertently excludes those from diverse backgrounds. To maintain social homogeneity, however, line managers institutionalise and reproduce this practice (Zietsman & April, 2021). These interactions can be formal and informal, and between peers and those at different levels in the organisational hierarchy.

They often reinforce inequalities based on cultural perspectives within a hegemonic masculine organisational context. This is further complicated by sexuality in confirming clear gender differences, to the detriment of efforts to achieve equality (Acker, 2012). It is therefore apparent that exclusionary practices exist to maintain the status quo within the structures of power, in favour of the privileged and in order to legitimise their oppression of the marginalised (James, 2019).

Organisational culture encapsulates the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values that are deemed acceptable, and is often in denial of the inequality it perpetuates. However, as women progress through management, the same set of values are used to scrutinise their leadership and decision-making, with heightened expectations of their impact on organisational performance (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo, & Michel, 2016).

2.3.8.3 Career Management

In their career progression, women experience gender discrimination in relation to their male counterparts, who describe their progression as ‘moving up the ladder quickly’. Both men and women assert that hard work alone is not enough to manage upward career mobility, which is dependent on intelligence and talent, however career opportunities are limited to white males, despite women being just as capable as men in displaying qualities for upward progression (Davies-Netzley, 1998).

Workplace relations are key to career management, yet these are based on gender ideologies in a male-dominated environment. These ideologies pose barriers to accepting women leaders and to women’s overall experience of job satisfaction, with gender inequalities manifesting as women’s experiences of male managers receiving preferential treatment as it relates to remuneration, performance management and general trust in their capabilities (April & Singh, 2018).

It is widely accepted that men have more extensive, often exclusive, networks than women (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). This disadvantages women's career progression because a positive bias towards males exists in terms of promotional opportunities. Women's career progress is influenced by the existence, or lack thereof, of support structures, and the belief that their career would have progressed differently if they were male (Lloyd & Mey, 2007) .

While a number of management misconceptions of women's careers prevails, there are still real differences in the career experiences of men and women. These require a refocus and redesign in the approaches to career structures and career management in order to allow women to be released from the straitjacket of male-stream career frameworks (Mavin, 2001).

2.3.8.4 Working Arrangements

Maternal employment inevitably leads to balancing full-time work and family demands, placing a strain on the maternal coping required to resolve work-family conflict (Bagraim & Harrison, 2013). This has been cited as one of the biggest challenges in the career development of women, particularly in relation to the social construct of an 'ideal worker' (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

The idea that value-add is determined by extended working hours and demanding job requirements is historically embedded in traditional organisational which has been cultures designed by men (Rutherford, 2001; Zietsman & April, 2021).

Women in senior management roles have to prove their loyalty and commitment in this regard by participating in longer working hours and senior management social functions (Mathur-Helm 2006). The result is that women require more flexible working environments that allow them to balance their work-family conflicts (Lloyd & Mey, 2007).

A consequence of the extended work hours culture is that women take work home. Although they are physically present with their families, they continue to feel pressure to satisfy the organisation's output requirements (Rutherford, 2001). The effect of this is work intensity, which is described as a subjective assessment of the amount of work a person does in a given period, and the interrelatedness of emotional labour and physical exhaustion which are mutually reinforcing and detrimental (Chan & Anteby, 2016).

2.3.8.5 Reward Practices

Income inequality is well established as a defining social problem; it has a reciprocal relationship with social inequality and is characterised by unequal opportunities and rewards based on an individual's social status (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003).

Involving race, gender and class in contemporary society, income inequality is measured by trends in income distribution, the impact of technological developments outstripping the supply of skilled labour, the impact of globalisation on the demand for higher skilled labour in developed markets, and access to unskilled labour in developing markets (Cobb, 2016). The final measurement is the impact of policy making and organisational remuneration benchmarking.

As women have progressed into the upper echelons of management, the wage gap has become more noticeable; income distribution among female staff is much lower than that of their male counterparts in comparable roles (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015; Belliveau, 2012).

Women are thus forced to adopt strategies to access higher paying occupations, such as changing employers or using external offers to increase their compensation within the organisation. Regrettably, these strategies often fail as the wage gap continues to deepen, resulting in women not seeing the same returns. Men adopting these strategies generally receive a better outcome (Belliveau, 2012).

The disparities in material remuneration, where women earn lower salaries for the same role as their male counterparts, means that, as a minority group, they find themselves having to fight for rights such as equal pay, equal opportunities and the right to compete for a role (Kellerman, 1980; Chan & Anteby, 2016).

The family pay gap remains an issue. Women with children experience an earnings regression, with evidence of a further pay gap when comparing pay between women who have children and those who do not in comparable roles. Married men with children receive a wage premium, however (Darity & Mason, 1998).

The 2015 *South African Women's Report* noted that the role of parenthood influences the penalties or advantages experienced in remuneration practice. Referring to a construct called the 'motherhood penalty', the report claimed that: "While mothers earn significantly less than childless women with the same characteristics – referred to as the motherhood penalty – fathers earn somewhat more than childless men with the same characteristics – referred to as the fatherhood bonus" (Bosch, 2015, p.6).

2.3.8.6 Recruitment Practices

Employers' policies and recruitment practices are heavily influenced by their beliefs regarding the capabilities of women applicants. This in turn affects the type of jobs women are offered and their future promotional opportunities, which reflects employers' deliberate decisions to exclude women from senior roles and their associated promotional pathways (Erwee, 1992). Women's previous experience of gender inequality in recruitment and selection for senior management roles may influence them to 'lean out' of competing for roles (Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017).

Awareness of specific contextual challenges influences the direction of recruitment and selection for senior management roles. Research by Gartner entitled, When Hiring Execs, Context Matters Most, demonstrates that organisations will be more successful if they fully consider the peculiarities of a leadership context (Harvard Business Review, 2017).

"Companies have been hiring and developing these generic workhorse leaders when what they really need is a thoroughbred whose strengths are specifically suited to a particular racetrack" (Harvard Business Review, 2017, p. 2).

2.3.9 Factors Impacting Advancement

2.3.9.1 Introduction

This section explores the factors impacting the advancement of women through management ranks by identifying the structural barriers and stereotyping competencies required for advancement. The discussion further expands on managerial perceptions of flexibility in the workplace and concludes with women's attitudes towards the factors impacting their advancement.

2.3.9.2 Structural Barriers

Systemic evidence refutes the perceptions that women are ineffective as managers, proposing rather that the barriers to their advancement are structural and psychological. These include the impact of legal systems, unequal educational access and cultural and socio-historical factors (Erwee, 1992). These factors manifest in the workplace as traditional forms of discrimination in that women are sexualised and not recognised for their career contributions or aspirations (Prekel, 1980).

Psychologically, stereotyping underpins assumptions that draw distinctions between men and women, and supports the belief that women prioritise family responsibilities at the expense of business concerns (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015).

The result is that women lose confidence in themselves and their abilities as they tend to personalise the effects of stereotyping. This reinforces the cultural conditioning of their lack of assertiveness, i.e., that women often indulge in excessive self-reproach (Prekel, 1980).

2.3.9.3 Competency Stereotyping

Notably, there is relative consensus on the factors that impact the advancement of African women in leadership and management, i.e., early socialisation, limited educational attainment, multiple roles, gender stereotyping, subtle discrimination and organisational policies and procedures (Ngambi & Nkomo, 2009).

The organisational mentoring of women has been proposed as one of the most important competencies required for career advancement, however this is affected by the impact of gender relations and the perception that women cannot fully undertake their business roles due to work-life conflicts within this context. (Amis, Lawrence, Hirsch, & McGahan, 2018) Ambitious women who aspire to advance their careers are sexualised by male colleagues who blatantly disregard their marital status, as sex is conceptualised as an expression of power for men (Amos-Wilson, 1999).

One competency stereotype that influences career advancement is the level of assertion that women leaders can express, as societal expectations liken women to caregivers and nurturers. In balancing career aspirations and these societal expectations, women identify with the imposter syndrome in that they second guess themselves, questioning their worthiness for the position they hold, and therefore hold back in making contributions as they believe that their viewpoints and insights will not add value (April & Sikatali, 2019).

2.3.9.4 Perceptions of Flexibility

Women frequently find themselves at the centre of family responsibilities, therefore they seek out roles that offer flexibility when pursuing their career aspirations. Their choice at this juncture is thus to choose between upward career mobility and family stability (Mavin, 2001).

Research indicates that this is one of the biggest challenges faced by executive women, more so for those with partners who are also in executive business roles in that work-life balance leans toward more work and less toward family time, which is a sacrifice that results in feelings of guilt for many women (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

The literature indicates a clear divide between how men experience career progression as opposed to women (Mavin 2001):

- The first issue is the impact of starting a family, which is influenced by biological and societal variables that men do not have to contend with during their career.
- The second key issue is the gender-based discriminatory practices that women must contend with, which lead to being considered for fewer promotional opportunities.

Therefore, employers should reconsider their human resource strategies so as to encourage women to advance in the organisation. A failure to apply a considered approach will impact women's perceptions of the fairness of the organisational system to support a diversity of skills and experience, leading to women seeking alternative employment (Mavin, 2001).

2.3.9.5 Women's Attitudes

As women progress through the management ranks, the cumulative effect of the boundaries and stereotypes they encounter on the way affects their attitudes to every aspect of their role. This, in turn, impacts their interpersonal relationships, their perceptions of others' competence, and how they navigate their career progression (Holvino, 2008).

As they manage their careers, women tend to personalise negative feedback in a professional context, which leads to them losing enthusiasm for work and organisational success. These behaviours are perceived as sentimental and lacking the necessary assertiveness required for top management positions (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015).

2.3.10 Women-to-Women Management Dynamics

2.3.10.1 Introduction

The underrepresentation of women becomes more pronounced in senior management roles. Within this context, the attitudes of women leaders towards the promotion and development of other women are significant. This includes women reporting directly to these leaders. Their reluctance, unwillingness and lack of support has been theorised as the Queen Bee Syndrome (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007). This section will expand on the importance of women in senior management, their behaviours and their perceptions towards other women in the management pipeline.

2.3.10.2 Women-Led Organisations

Although few in number, some women are overcoming the barriers to advancement and reaching top management roles to lead organisations (Davies-Netzley, 1998). The transformation of leadership at the most senior levels affects the image of organisations and the expectations of other women in the workplace, enabling organisations to attract diverse talent from a growing talent pool. Further to this, organisational prestige, altruistic actions and having a woman as a CEO have emerged as key advantages in an economy that is grappling with diversity and the need to retain highly skilled employees (Mavin, 2001).

2.3.10.3 Women in the Management Pipeline

As the population of women in middle management grows, so do their expectations that women in the senior management ranks will show solidarity and support to those coming through (Mavin, 2008). If these expectations are not met, the senior woman is derided as a 'Queen Bee' who is frustrating the progress of other women. Through overt bad behaviour, this type of woman leader is construed as "The Queen Bee is commonly constructed as a bitch who stings other women if her power is threatened and, as a concept, the Queen Bee blames individual women for not supporting other women." (Mavin, 2008, p. S75).

2.3.10.4 Senior Women's Support

The reluctance of senior women to support the development and promotion of other women in business plays a role in the systemic discrimination against women in society (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). Those women in top management carry the burden of the cumulative effect of the barriers and discriminatory practices they have had to overcome, which leads to their belief that women who have not attained senior positions are not deserving of their support (Amos-Wilson, 1999).

Attitudes towards women managers indicate that they are focussed on their own deliverables and career progression, and they tend to be harder on other women when assessing their potential for advancement. This lack of support and interest in the development of other women is problematised as a fear of being outperformed and by the bitterness of having worked hard to get to the top (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). Reluctance by women in executive management positions to support other women has also been found to be driven by the fear of risk to their own careers and therefore of maintaining their unique position in the organisation (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

Women are faced with social stereotypes which ascribe feminine traits such as being supportive and nurturing to them. However, when women eventually conform to masculine traits, observed as traditional leadership, they face the double-bind; a woman leader is condemned if she acts according to the male-defined leadership roles, and is referred to as a 'Queen Bee' (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). Tensions surface as other women in the workplace hold expectations of women in senior management, which are in contradiction to the Queen Bee effect.

2.3.10.5 Workplace Equality

Organisational factors have a direct impact on career progression in that gender in the workplace is conceptualised through the lens of workplace equality and organisational effectiveness (Rutherford, 2001). However, instead of blaming the oppressed for blocked mobility, when the focus moves from gender as a structural affect that either conceals or reveals the oppression that women experience, the organisation becomes the target of change (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016). These organisational factors targeted for change include workplace culture, recruitment policies and practices, mentoring and socialisation within the organisation (Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017).

2.3.10.6 Same-Sex Conflict

Sheppard and Aquino (2107) argued that female, same-sex conflict, as theorised in the Queen Bee syndrome, is exaggerated in the workplace compared to male same-sex conflict. They explained this tension occurring as women advance in their careers, yet little research has investigated a similar syndrome occurring among men. The gendered nature of organisations is thus perpetuated by placing a greater responsibility on women to enact the change. The advancement of women in achieving equitable representation across the management ranks relates to how they achieve meaningful change in society (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003).

2.4 Intersectionality

2.4.1 Introduction

Inequality in society has become systemic and reinforced over time between groups across the globe. While social justice is a topic of prominent discourse, the underlying structures that produce and sustain social inequalities are overlooked (Bilge, 2013).

A standard analysis of the various factors or mechanisms of inequality limits understanding of the complexity of people's lived experiences, however intersectionality provides a framework to understand and act on the multiplicity of inequality and the simultaneous effects of those who experience it (Brown, 2015).

Intersectionality has become a key concept for advocates of social justice in various fields (Tomlinson, 2103). In the present study, intersectionality theory is used in order to understand the interaction of various categories such as race, gender, professional background, marital status and ethnicity, and thereby gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

2.4.2 Intersectional Theory

The premise of intersectionality theory is that individual identity is informed by multiple categories derived from social context, background and history, all of which exist simultaneously in that people are part of more than one social group because of their multi-layered identities. Intersectionality aims to reveal the interaction of these multiple layers within a given social context (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016). Furthermore, intersectionality develops our understanding of complex social phenomena through analysis of the interconnectedness of various categories that simultaneously exist in distinct experiences. The process thereby illuminates the inseparability of multiple systems of oppression that operate simultaneously in the lived experiences of the oppressed (Carastathis, 2014).

Intersectional theory is increasingly used to understand the complexity of social interactions, based on the premise that people have multiple layered identities that are derived from socio-historical influences in the context of structured power (Carbado, 2013). People are members of various categories and the intersection of those categories in social interactions determines the privilege or disadvantages they experience (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). In essence, the vision of intersectionality theory is to produce transformative knowledge, activism and non-oppressive coalitions (Bilge, 2013).

Intersectional theory invokes the idea of horizons; of what is still to be discovered through dreaming, wondering, imagining and world-making. Profoundly destabilising, it is a desire to keep dreaming of a just social world (Nash, 2017).

This discourse, however, remains Western-dominated and is therefore knowledge incomplete as it relates to the appropriation of intersectionality for women of colour. No research to date has provided conclusive evidence of gender-related differences attributable to leadership styles, although the intersection of race and gender are widely accepted in literature (Holvino, 2008).

2.4.3 Institutionalised Processes

Intersectional theory expands on the idea that gendered processes do not stand on their own, but are shaped by the intersection of individual and institutional processes that perpetuates various forms of inequality and exclusion (Acker, 2012). Intersectional theory seeks to illustrate the intersection of race and gender in societal settings. It has evolved to show how these categories of differences are constructed through complex interlocking, independent and simultaneous processes and practices, positioning groups societally and organisationally through different institutionalised processes (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016). In recent years, intersectionality has changed to accommodate the convergence of corporate diversity culture and identity politics, which have affected intellectual, political and moral capital (Bilge, 2013).

Consequently, institutionalised processes and practices of discrimination intersect and overlap. An intersection lens allows for an understanding of how the effects of political, social and historical factors impact groups (Tomlinson, 2013). To illustrate the concept of political intersection, women of colour form part of a group (gender) and subgroup (race). In this case, the political agenda within the groups seems split, which leads women of colour to limit the interest of the entire group (Crenshaw 1993).

The convergence of identity theories with intersectionality draws our attention to the socio-political-historical context, which allows the state to exert power over diverse groups through differentiating systems of domination (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016).These position diverse groups and other categories of otherness within society and organisational structures. For women, the experience of the intersection of these socio-political-historical contexts creates complex and dynamic effects on their identity formations (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016).

Intersectionality avoids reducing experiences to a single category of oppression by recognising that multiple categories exist simultaneously. The claim to intersectionality is thus premised on including those historically excluded in the social context in recognition of the deeply ingrained cognitive exclusions perpetuated (Carastathis, 2014).

2.4.4 Multi-layered Identities

The purpose of this literature review was to broaden understanding of the intersection of multiple categories on the lived experiences of minority groups and their experience of exclusionary practices of women in the management. Topics explored include individual identity, managerial identity and hybrid identities. Individual identity is multi-layered; it incorporates both surface level and socio-psychological dimensions. These include race, gender, age, class, religion, national origin, sexuality and other categories of difference that do not exist in isolation, but rather operate collectively (Crenshaw, 1993; Tomlinson & Baruch, 2013; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016)

This collective interaction of the multiple identity categories affects the experiences and behaviours of women as they relate to practices of exclusion, exploitation, oppression, injustice and inequality within different social and political contexts (Tomlinson & Baruch, 2013). This interlocking of categories underpins the importance of both social location and hegemonic sites of power, in that social location refers to the position occupied in society as it relates to categories of race, gender and class, based on social location privilege. Oppression is determined by access to, and positioning in, hierarchical power relations (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Crenshaw, 1993).

Managerial identity interlocks with individual identity, as the dimensions include masculine behaviours such as assertiveness, conflict resolution and working closely with male counterparts. In adopting these traits of managerial identity, women face a double-edged sword as their managerial authority is not respected by colleagues because of resistance in the organisational culture to the total integration of women and in which there is a full adoption of managerial prescriptions (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016).

Interest in the understanding of managerial identity has grown over recent years, with studies focussing on managerial control, regulation of identity and the role of influencers in effecting managerial identities. When women have to interlock individual identity, managerial identity and social identity they have had to make a conscious choice to embrace these masculine managerial identities because they understood that unless they did so, their career progress would be hampered (Carrim, 2017).

As mentioned, no research in the workplace provides conclusive evidence of gender leadership styles (Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012). However, women face the choice to adopt masculine organisational values while retaining their cultural values.

This is a process conceptualised as hybrid identity, which is the practice of blending distinct cultures or traditions in interactions with others. The complexity of multiple identities in the context of hybridity is that people have to negotiate and deal with various identities and the interaction that follows in intrapersonal relations at work (Carrim, 2017; Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

2.4.5 Organisational Intersectionality

Intersectionality has been used as a framework to understand discriminatory practices and to develop an understanding of inequality in the post-colonial workplace, by identifying identity demarcations through notions of hybridity, liminality, fluidity and fragmentation (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016). As they progress through the management ranks, minority groups experience identity demarcations as 'tokenism'. Sociologically, tokenism explains the interaction of minority groups' identity categories as a factor in the organisation's commitment to diversity (Brown, 2015).

This means that changes in the socio-political-historical context have created opportunities for minority and underrepresented groups to enter the managerial ranks. In so doing, they face deeply embedded historical racial and patriarchal practices as they step into the managerial ranks of the dominant 'white man's business' (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016). A 'white man's business' world is built on imperialism and capitalism.

When intersected with factors of gender and class, it explains the position of women across the management ranks, already an integral struggle for African women in relation to their Western counterparts (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). The 'upper echelons' theory demonstrates the demographic characteristic of a manager based primarily on the masculine traits observable in the 'white man's business'. This theory postulates the crucial importance of the organisation's management through limited rationality, conflict of multiple goals and different levels of aspiration (Jeong & Harrison, 2017).

However, research into demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, age and functional experience, is still limited, whilst globalisation has given organisations opportunities to enter new markets. This requires management teams with international experience, as they are able to access their knowledge and contacts which are important to internationalise organisations (Đerđa, 2017). As the demand for expatriates has grown, and with it, gendered talent pools, organisations are being forced to consider women for expatriate positions. The success of female expatriates on global assignments is impacted by cultural and environmental conditions, however; the majority of women on international assignments are white women (Mathur-Helm, 2002).

2.4.6 Simultaneous Interactions

The simultaneous interaction of multiple intersecting categories and systems develops an understanding of the lived experiences of women and the structural complexity that perpetuates oppression. The proposition of simultaneity is that, due to the interlocking nature of systemic inequalities, multiple categories operate simultaneously in the lived experiences of the oppressed (Carastathis, 2014). Any attempt to study gender in isolation from race and ethnicity negates their interlinking nature. (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016)

Simultaneity has therefore been articulated to identify the categories of differences such as gender, race, class and sexual orientation, to mention a few. The objective is to establish a comprehensive understanding between individuals and institutions by giving recognition to both a structural and an individual level of analysis. Individual level analysis exposes a person's lived experiences based on social location, along with race, gender and class, all of which are contextually bound. At a structural level, simultaneity expands our understanding of the cumulative effects of the interaction of processes of differentiation, systems of domination and institutional processes (Hancock, 2007; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016). In progressing through the management ranks, women have had to endure a range of barriers and overcome the passivity imposed upon them during their earlier years of socialisation. The consequence of this intersection with pre-existing vulnerabilities creates further dimensions of disempowerment (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Crenshaw K. , 1989).

2.5 Summary of Literature Reviewed

The summary of the literature reviewed in relation to the phenomenon and context of the study is presented in Figure 2:

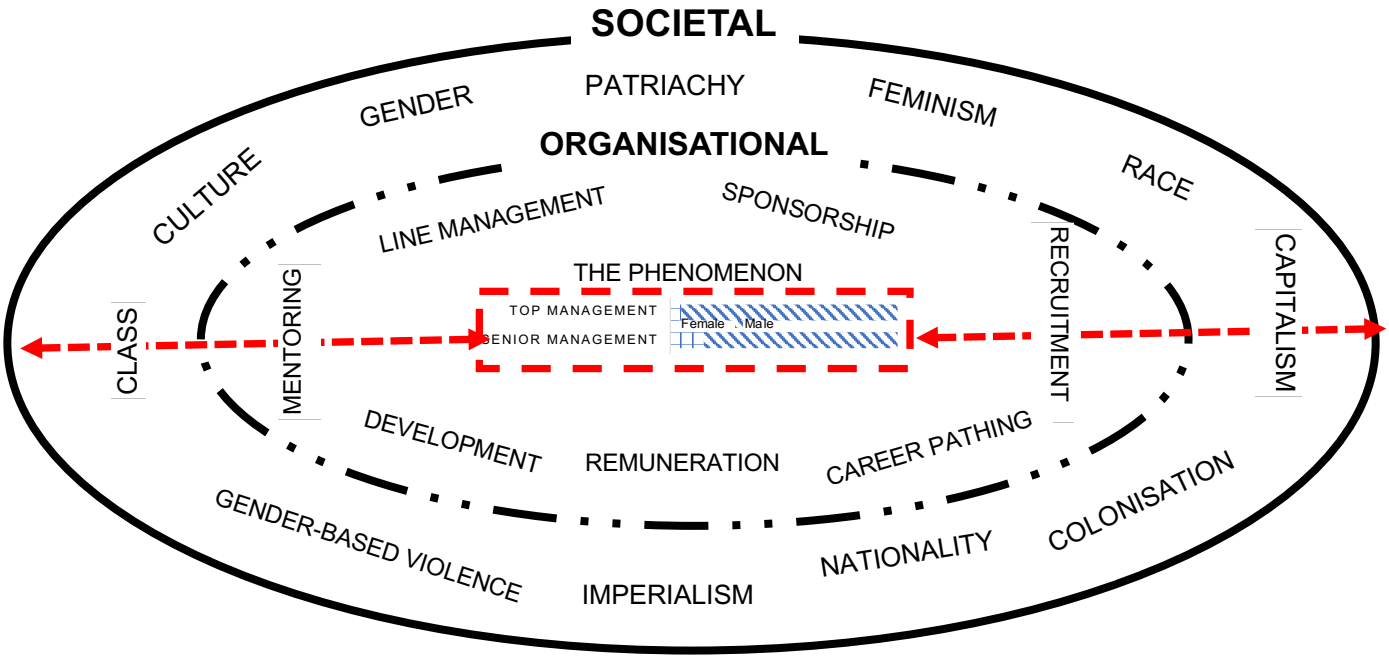
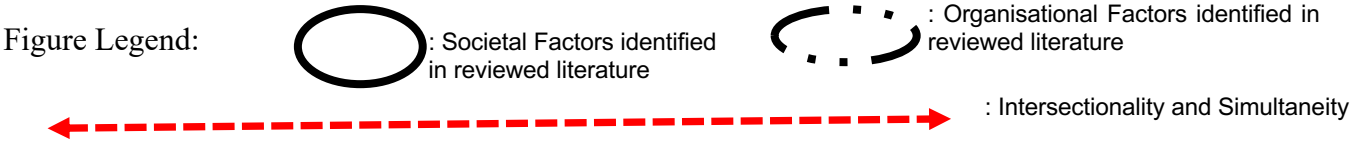


Figure 2: Key findings of reviewed literature



2.5.1 Societal Context

The limitation of the literature review is its context, Africa. Research output on understanding the underrepresentation of women in senior management in Africa is significantly lower in relation to global studies produced on this phenomenon (Nkomo, 2011; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). In this context, the attention of the literature review was focussed on understanding how African women's voices are represented in literature. The finding was limited and negligible (Gordema, 2010; Nkomo, 2017). Specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa, the production of this knowledge remains complex in terms of the multiplicity of social contexts and the sensitivity of gender equality. Although there is call for expansion of this literature as it relates to the intersection of gender, class, race and the impact of colonisation within the various cultural contexts, the gap in the literature remains (Ampofo, Beoku-

Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). The influence of early childhood socialisation within the multiplicity of social contexts in Africa is primarily set within patriarchal systems (Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020). Understanding this produced a deeper understanding of the development of gender-based social norms in a masculine social system.

The resultant perceptions of gender equality and gender-related behaviours in the workplace is that they are connected to the gendered nature of organisations. These are sustained by organisational cultures that continue to reproduce inequality, as culture keeps the systems of meaning in place (April & Sikatali, 2019; Kellerman, 1980; Lauwo, 2018; Weyer, 2007; Rutherford, 2001; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010).

2.5.2 Organisational Context

Exclusionary practices are embodied in the patriarchal social system in Africa and reinforced through boundary-making practices (Mavin, 2001). The literature explored these in the manifestation of the invisible glass barrier in the senior management ranks. This was further expanded on through literature on the glass ceiling and glass walls, culminating in the glass cliff, which is the appointment of women into top management during turbulent times in the organisation, increasing their risk of failure (Weyer, 2007; McKeen & Richardson, 1992; Mavin, 2001; Mathur-Helm, 2006; April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007; Omran, Alizadeh & Esmaeeli, 2015; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2001; Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

The literature further expanded on the inherently exclusionary organisational, personal and social practices that women encounter as their careers progress. These are manifested in the anticipated work-family conflict, attitudes towards women who do not conform to societal expectations by taking on roles as the breadwinners, gender-based violence and stay-at-home fathers (Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014; Richards Solomon, 2014; Bagraim & Harrison, 2013). There was discussion of competency stereotyping related to gender, gendered social and professional networking influences on key decision-making, and finally, the cumulative influence on organisational practices, i.e., recruitment, reward, development, promotional opportunities and workplace conflict (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017; Mavin, 2008; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020; Mathur-Helm, 2006; April & Sikatali, 2019; Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017).

2.5.3 Intersectionality and Simultaneity

The literature review sought to find a framework to understand the multiplicity of inequality within the African context, and the simultaneous effect on the lived experiences of women as they progress through management. Therefore, intersectionality literature was reviewed as it is increasingly applied to understand the complexity of social interactions, on the basis that people are part of more than one social group. Intersectionality recognises the multi-layered identities that determine the privileges and disadvantages that women experience in their career progression (Brown, 2015; Carastathis, 2014; Crenshaw, 1993; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Tomlinson & Baruch, 2013; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Đerđa, 2017; Hancock, 2007; Holvino, 2008).

2.5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the appropriate literature reviewed were globally-dominated narratives based on peer-review studies produced in the West (Goredema, 2010; Kellerman, 1980; Weyer, 2007; Rutherford, 2001; McKeen & Richardson, 1992; Mavin, 2001; Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Sheppard & Aquino, 2017; Davies-Netzley, 1998; Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017; Carastathis, 2014; Crenshaw, 1991; Đerđa, 2017; Hancock, 2007; Holvino, 2010) to a lesser extent within a South-African context (Acker, 2012; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Carrim, 2018; April & Sikatali, 2019), and negligible insights within the broader African context given the lack of published material specifically on the research topic (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004; Lauwo, 2018; Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020) – hence the significance and importance of this study in contributing to the gap in the academic body of knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The goal of this research was to understand a human phenomenon, i.e., the subtle or less conscious exclusionary practices in management and the impact on the lived experiences of women in senior management. An interpretive research paradigm was deemed suitable (Bhattacherjee, 2012) as it sought to understand the world as it is from the frame of reference of the respondent, and sees the social world as an emergent social process created by individuals through an interrogation of the social status quo. Meaning is a multi-constructed reality, depending on the context and personal frames of reference of people as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

A phenomenographic research method was appropriate for the goal of this research because it sought to understand individuals' lived experiences by exploring the concepts under investigation (Osteraker, 2011). Respondents were required to express their views in their own words, allowing the researcher to capture their subjective experiences. To achieve this goal, hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen as the research approach, with a particular kind of contemplative openness (Spence, 2017, p. 836; Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in considered journaling and reflexively engaged and expanded her horizons of understanding (Spence, 2017, p. 836).

In an iterative interpretive process, the hermeneutic circle reconciles the discord between observations to the entirety of a social phenomenon, and in so doing constructs and crystalizes a theory that represents the lived experiences of the respondents (Kidd & Kidd, 1981). This process of understanding the phenomenon and observations continues until theoretical saturation is reached, i.e., when additional iterations yield no further insights into the phenomenon (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The interpretive paradigm was suitable for this study as it had the potential to generate a new understanding of a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

3.2 Ontology

Ontology raises questions regarding the form and nature of reality, and what is known about the phenomenon from an ontological perspective. The interpretivist framework recognises the existence of multiple realities that are constructed and altered. This approach to uncovering realities produces knowledge, seen as the best understanding produced of the phenomenon (Laverty, 2003).
The phenomenon is explored from a chosen paradigm, that is, a set of basic beliefs that defines for its holder the nature of the 'world' and their place in it. These beliefs are based on faith, as one cannot determine ultimate truthfulness or factuality (Laverty, 2003).

A paradigm is a human construction that relies on persuasiveness and usefulness rather than proof, therefore paradigms are open to human error and thus open to change (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The interpretive paradigm is essentially concerned with understanding the world as it exists; the aim is to understand the fundamental nature of society at a level of subjective experience, which is an emergent social process created by the individuals concerned (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

The goal of this research was to understand a human phenomenon which fits the goal of the interpretive paradigm as meanings constructed by human beings are in a unique way context dependent and influenced by their personal frames of reference. The interpretive paradigm was suitable for this study as it had the potential to generate a new understanding of a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

3.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is described as assumptions about the way the world is studied, which is achieved by examining the nature of the relationship between the known (objective) and unknown (subjective) (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Epistemologically, this study investigated the relationship between the knower and the known, in order to develop knowledge about a human experience. The investigator (researcher) and investigated (respondents) are interactively linked in the creation of the findings (Laverty, 2003).

3.3.1 Purpose of Phenomenological Approach

The purpose of choosing a phenomenological approach to this study was to illuminate the specific identity of the phenomenon through the lived experiences of the respondents. As such, it was powerful in gaining direct access to the respondents' experiences without being clouded by known assumptions and conventional wisdom (Lester, 1999).

Phenomenological strategies include transforming experiences into texts that will be further developed into abstract themes. In addition, hermeneutics allow for an added level of abstraction, as the hermeneutic circle facilitates understanding and interpretation between the parts (data) and the whole (text) through reflexivity in the process of continual reflection on the interpretation of what emerges greater understanding of the phenomenon occurs (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

This study weaved together phenomenological and intersectional approaches because the researcher recognised that the goal of exploratory research is to extract the core attributes of respondents' textual-structural descriptions of their lived experiences (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

3.3.2 Phenomenography as a Research Method

Phenomenography as a research method was suited to the goal of this study, which was to understand individuals' lived experiences in exploring the concepts perpetuating the phenomenon (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). As phenomenographic researchers are interested in how respondents experience their world and conceptualise their reality, in-depth interviews were used (Osteraker, 2011).

Respondents were required to express their views in their own words, allowing the researcher to capture the individuals' subjective experiences (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Research respondents (from Africa and worked in Africa) were from: South-Africa, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Lesotho, Senegal, Gabon Republic, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and the United Kingdom. To achieve this goal, hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen because it provides a credible and rigorous approach to the interpretation of verbal and non-verbal communication and is widely accepted as describing lived experiences from those living them (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

3.3.3 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Similar to phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with human experiences lived in the world, with a focus on illuminating details that are often overlooked (Kidd & Kidd, 1981). The goal is to create meaning and a sense of understanding of the phenomenon. Hermeneutics is the study of human cultural activity as text towards interpreting the expressed meaning, with text being understood to include both written and verbal communication (Laverty, 2003). This interpretive process was achieved through the hermeneutic circle in a process of co-creation and the production of meaning in that interpretation maintains the quality within the context of meaning. In so doing, themes in understanding the phenomenon are developed (Kidd & Kidd, 1981).

3.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study was designed before ethical clearance to test the purpose of the intended research design and to develop key insights that would support the main study research design. The pilot study was developed as follows:

- An interview protocol was designed.
- A convenience sampling technique was applied by contacting members of the target population from the researcher's professional network. These contacts had to meet practical criteria such as accessibility and willingness to participate (geography: based in Africa; demography: African nationality; background: 10 years+ working experience with three years+ in senior management, reporting directly to the CEO and Board of their companies). Four respondents were identified (Financial Services; Oil Field Engineering; Fisheries; Petroleum Retailer) and their consent was obtained.
- Open-ended interviews were conducted (45 - 90min) and recorded on the following topics: career chronology and progression through the management ranks; experience of their line managers throughout their career journeys; experience of the dynamics of management teams; and work-life-integration as it relates to the respondent's role in immediate or extended family.
- Field notes were taken during the interviews.
- The audio recordings were transcribed.
- Data were analysed through NVivo12 (qualitative data software analysis application) to develop initial codes.

The results of the coding exercise primarily identified categories in relation to their importance to the respondents' career journeys. The emerging data structure led to characterisation of the data into prominent, context-relevant themes. The key themes that emerged from the pilot study were related to a general category and a career journey category. These are briefly discussed in the results section.

3.4.1 Pilot Study Insights – General

The results of the coding exercise primarily identified the following general insights:

- **Management Practice**

Management practice was identified as the organisational managerial practices that either progressed or inhibited respondents' career journeys. These included line manager relationships, performance management practices, development opportunities and the professionalisation of management culture.

- **Women Line Managers**

Women managers was the second theme that emerged as an important contributor to the respondents' career journey. Two of the four respondents related challenges in being managed by a woman at some point in their career journey. These relationships were fraught with either unrealistic performance expectations or the respondent did not receive the support she needed to develop further in her career.

- **Costs and Sacrifices**

During the interview process, the respondents recalled some good and some difficult career experiences, and reflected on the highs and the lows of progressing through the management ranks. In addition to this, they spoke of the personal costs and sacrifices they had unavoidably encountered as their careers advanced, such as corporate ladders, politics, glass ceilings, glass cliffs and navigating 'Queen Bee' line managers.

- **Mother Role**

Three of the four respondents were mothers and reflected on the pressures of progressing their careers while taking care of their families. These pressures affected their opportunities for career mobility, such as their ability to relocate to take up career opportunities and the potential impact on the family; decisions around whether to stay late at work; single parenthood; and difficulties attending school events.

- **Sponsors**

A key consideration raised was the importance of professional sponsors throughout the women's careers, particularly a sponsor who believed in their potential and could provide career opportunities to develop that potential. They also commented on the challenge of being either the only woman or part of a small group of women in senior management, and the perception of being an 'outsider'.

3.4.2 Pilot Study Insights – Career Journey

In exploring and coding the lived experience of the respondents' career journeys, the following key themes emerged:

- **Management Practice**

This theme related to the respondents' experiences of their line manager relationships. They commented on how the organisational performance management practices of their organisations did not adequately reflect the value added, and of being afforded, or not afforded, development opportunities to improve their promotability. They also expressed insights into their experiences of professional working climates and the subtle actions that lead to exclusionary practices.

- **Women-to-Women Management Dynamics**

Some of the respondents raised the difficulties they experienced in reporting to women line managers. Tensions in these relationships were largely driven by unrealistic performance expectations and not getting sufficient, or any, support to develop further in their careers.

- **Family and Cultural Dynamics**

All the pilot study respondents shared the view that the role of African women was still deeply entrenched in traditional family values, i.e., traditional African societies still require women to be the primary caregivers of their immediate families, and often of extended families. Women also have to support their husbands or male partners, as well as the males' immediate families. All this had a personal impact on the respondents' career progression and mobility.

3.4.3 Summary

The pilot study provided a good grounding for the collection of data for the main study. The interview survey for the main study was updated to incorporate functional discipline of qualification, ethnicity, and an open-ended question at the end of every section. Also, the researcher's interviewing techniques were honed, particularly in keeping the interview respondents' 'on course' and 'on topic' in answering the research questions.

3.5 Research Design

A qualitative research strategy was followed as it allowed the researcher to highlight the lived experiences and voices of the respondents while incorporating factors and practices of everyday life (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). Various categories were identified based on respondents' self-identification determined by the goal of the study, which considered ethnic and cultural social antecedents (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). In-depth interviews in the form of guided conversations were conducted to extract detailed information on particular and sensitive areas of the study (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The responses revealed multiple understandings and alternative meanings (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010).

3.6 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique combined non-randomised convenience sampling, snowballing, a directory search of registered company directors, and contacting members of the target population within the researcher's professional network. Respondents had to meet practical criteria such as accessibility and willingness to participate (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The target population for this research was women from various African nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, who held senior management roles and had worked in Africa. Appendix D sets out an overview of the 40 female respondent profiles'.

3.7 Data Collection

Following ethical clearance (see Appendix A), the respondents were contacted to set up the in-depth interviews using the interview protocol (see Appendix C). Informed consent was required before the interviews were conducted (see Appendix B).

During the data collection phase, several challenges were encountered given the positions of seniority the respondents held, as demonstrated in Appendix D. Interviews were scheduled both on-line and face-to-face (Bhattacherjee, 2012) depending on the respondents' preferred locations and the range of time zones in which the respondents lived.

The majority of the respondents (77%) opted for on-line interviews with the remaining (23%) opting for in-person interviews – the total number of interviews were 40. All interviews were conducted using the same interview survey and similar timing to ensure consistency in data gathered.

This resulted in a few challenges, including time delays, travelling requirements, connectivity issues and rescheduling due to changes in respondents' availability. With permission, the interviews were voice recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken to augment the data gathering process (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done through interpretation of the phenomenon through the lived experience of the respondents. The data was thus embedded in the social context, both from the subjective perspective of experiencing the phenomenon and by understanding their explanation of why the phenomenon exists (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

A systemic inductive approach to concept development was used to analyse the data (Lester, 1999). This allowed the researcher to make the process meaningful for the people living the experience, as well as scientifically rigorous for theorising. This process maintained scientific rigour – demonstrated through linkages between data and insights, yet it gave 'voice' to the research respondents without imposing existing concepts in theory on their experiences, which is a hallmark of high-quality qualitative research. In this way, new concepts emerged and knowledge was produced (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012).

Inductive coding was applied, i.e., codes progressively emerged during data collection. This method of data analysis was better grounded empirically and demonstrated the researcher's openness, rather than force-fitting data to pre-existing codes (Pratt, 2009).

The purpose was to capture the primary content and essence in qualitative data analysis. A code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolises interpreted meaning of each data point for the purposes of theory building. At a later stage, this process involved detailed analysis and interpretation of the data, prompting deeper reflection on the meaning in the data. It is therefore a method of heuristic discovery (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Throughout the data analysis stages, prejudice developed from either personal experience or derived from the literature had to be mitigated against through consciously cross-checking developed constructs against the original transcripts which captured the respondents' constructs.

Phenomenological strategies in data analysis allowed the researcher to transform the respondents' lived experiences into a tangible expression of their essence through textual development. This was done in such a way that the text was at once a reflexive recreation and a reflexing appropriation of something meaningful, in that it became a tangible description of human actions, behaviours and experiences as observed in reality. Consequently, the themes developed through the phenomenological strategies were understood as structures of experience and offered the researcher a robust understanding of the phenomenon (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Through heuristic discovery, the initial codes were generated in NVivo12 for traceability, which formed the basis for interpreting the data. This process encouraged deeper reflection on the data's meaning, for the purposes of theory building at a later stage (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Throughout the data analysis stages, it was imperative that the researcher's prejudice, developed from either personal experience or derived from the literature, was mitigated against. This was done by the researcher consciously cross-checking developed constructs against the original transcripts, which captured the respondents' lived experience (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

Based on the data gathered, the first cycle of codes resulted in 21 concepts being identified. These were then organised into three themes as they relate to explaining the phenomenon under investigation (see Figure 3).

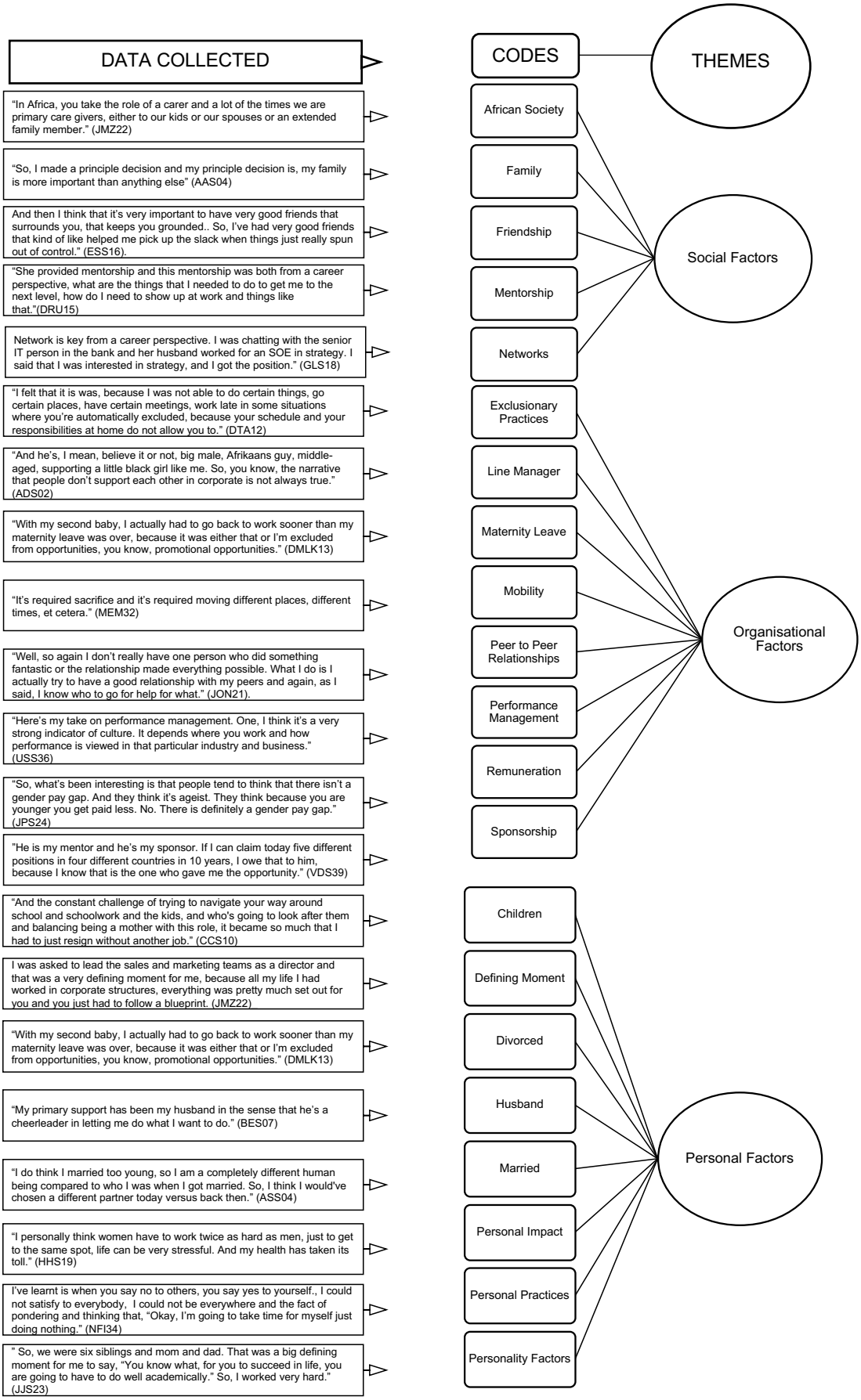


Figure 3: Overview of Data Structure

Social Factors (Theme 1) categorised concepts related to the research context, Africa; including the role of the family on career progression; and impact of friendships, mentoring and networks on development of respondents' career progression. Organisational Factors (Theme 2) includes concepts embedded in the experience of exclusionary practices; line manager relationship; maternity leave practices; mobility related to regional and international work assignments; experience of peer-to-peer relationships; experience of performance management systems; remuneration and reward practices; and experience of sponsor relationships. Personal Factors (Theme 3) included concepts related to impact of motherhood as it relates to children; career defining moments in career progression; impact of relational status on career progression (married, single, divorced); husbands in relation to spousal support; personal impact suffered as results of career progressing; integrated personal practices adopted to mitigate impact on wellbeing; and respondents personality factors.

3.9 Research Ethics

The nature of the research involved collecting data from living people, as the aim was to explore the lived experiences of the phenomenon so as to contribute to the production of knowledge in management theory. Ethical clearance was applied for prior to data collection in accordance with the standards set by the Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC), as the data gathered extended to human respondents (Christian, 2005). Participation in the research was voluntary and non-incentivised. The respondents were made aware of this through an informed consent declaration and were told that they could withdraw from the research at any time during the process. The respondents were assured that the data gathered during this study would be kept confidential. Once the research was approved for publication, the audio recordings were deleted (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

3.10 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the research methodology used, which was best suited to attaining the research goal. The discussion expanded on the research method and the purpose of following a phenomenographic approach to this study.The chosen theoretical framework was contextualised, and the unique features of hermeneutic phenomenology were elaborated on to extend understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The research design considered the intended purpose of the qualitative research strategy, which was echoed in the research instruments designed for this study and the process of data collection. The chapter closed with a description of the ethical considerations required by this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data gathered during the interview process. The interviewer wrote down the respondents' feedback for each section and the discussion was voice recorded and transcribed. The hand-written notes from the interview protocol were written up as a qualitative data report. The transcriptions, hand-written field notes, and field notes report were read, reread, coded and recoded as it became apparent that a number of themes repeatedly emerged. The main study was done on a completely voluntary and non-incentivised basis. Informed consent declarations were obtained from respondents, and they were made aware that the data gathered during this study would be kept confidential.

4.2 Main Study Results

This section will present the results of the main study following the data analysis process explained in the previous chapter. The results are grouped into two categories:

- Qualitative overview:
    - Respondent profiles
    - Career experience
    - Defining moments
    - Motherhood
    - Personal support
- Overall themes:
    - Line management practices
    - Career sponsorship
    - Performance and rewards
    - Peer-to-peer networking
    - Family support
    - Mentorship

4.3 Respondent Profiles

The respondent profiles are presented based on the regional demarcation of countries in giving recognition to the context-specific factors in the regions identified are as follows:

1. South Africa
2. Southern Africa
3. Central Africa
4. East Africa
5. West Africa
6. International

This section presents an overview of the respondents' career experience, qualifications, background, dependents, management tenure and marital status. The South African respondents explained their ethnicity based on racial classifications (Black, White, Coloured, Indian) (see Figure 4).

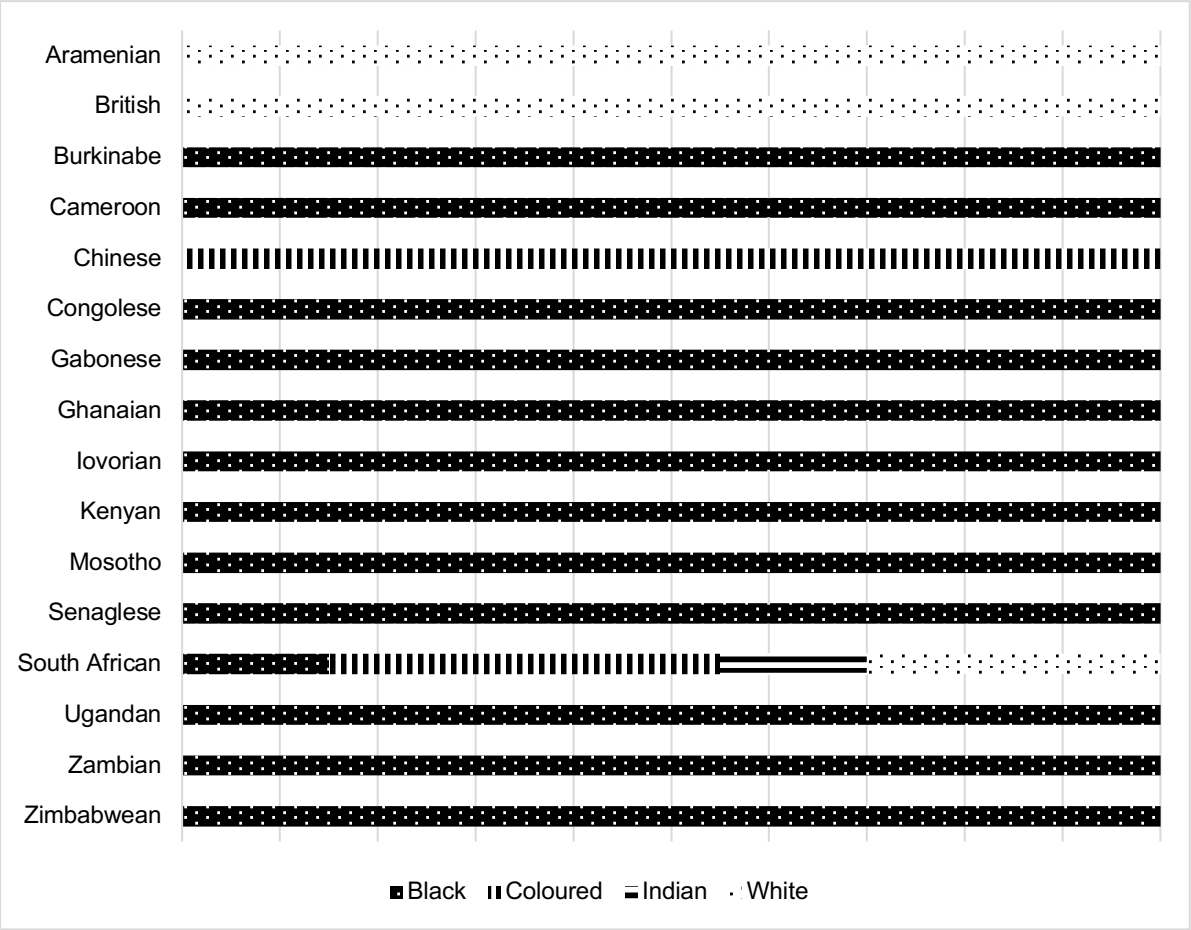


Figure 4: Nationality and race

The respondent profile data was gathered across 15 nationalities. Table 1 presents economic data as it relates to the population of the home countries, sorted by country gross domestic product (GDP) per capita which is a key indicator of a countries' economic growth (World Bank, 2022). The literacy rate, the ability to read and write, is one of the key indicators of countries' economic development in that highly developed countries report literacy rates above 96% and developing countries below 65% (World Population Review, 2022)

Table 1: Respondents home country economic data

Home Country	Population	GDP Per Capita (USD)	Literacy Rate
United Kingdom	68 456 457	$46 483	99%
Gabon	2 331 533	$15 106	83%
South Africa	60 756 135	$13 361	95%
Armenia	2 971 466	$13 312	99%
Ghana	32 395 450	$5 744	77%
Cote d'Ivoire	27 742 298	$5 466	43%
Kenya	56 215 221	$4 578	78%
Cameroon	27 911 548	$3 868	75%
Zimbabwe	15 331 428	$3 537	87%
Senegal	17 653 671	$3 503	56%
Zambia	19 470 234	$3 458	85%
Lesotho	2 175 699	$2 444	79%
Uganda	48 432 863	$2 294	74%
Burkina Faso	22 102 838	$2 274	38%
Democratic Republic of Congo	95 240 792	$1 142	77%

Source: World Bank (2022); World Population Review (2022)

4.3.1 South Africa

4.3.1.1 Respondent Profiles

The South African respondents, who represented 43% of the main study respondents, described their ethnicity in the context of the South African racial classifications: 14% Black, 43% Coloured, 14% Indian and 29% White (see Table 2).

Table 2: South-African respondents

RESPONDENT CODE	CONTINENT	REGION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY
ADS02	Africa	South Africa	South African	Black
CRS08	Africa	South Africa	South African	Black
MMS30	Africa	South Africa	South African	Black
ACS05	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
BGS06	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
ENS17	Africa	South Africa	Chinese	Coloured
ESS16	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
GLS18	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
LVAS26	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
NES35	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
USS36	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
WFS40	Africa	South Africa	South African	Coloured
ATS01	Africa	South Africa	South African	Indian
JJS23	Africa	South Africa	South African	Indian
VSS38	Africa	South Africa	South African	Indian
AAS04	Africa	South Africa	South African	White
CCS10	Africa	South Africa	South African	White
HHS19	Africa	South Africa	South African	White
JPS24	Africa	South Africa	South African	White
LOS27	Africa	South Africa	South African	White
LMS29	Africa	South Africa	South African	White

4.3.1.2 Background and Education

Using the highest formal educational qualification, the respondents' backgrounds and education were as follows: 5% held a Matric Certificate; 24% a Bachelor and/or Honours degree; 38% were professionally qualified as a CA(SA); 28% held Masters degrees, and 5% held a PhD. Of these qualifications, 48% were obtained in the field of commerce, followed by 33% in the social sciences, 14% in the engineering field and 5% in the health sciences. In terms of management tenure, the combined years of the South African respondents across management ranks amounted to 318, ranging from five to 29 years' experience. Their social status referred to marital status: 24% of the respondents were single (the majority because of divorce), 76% were in a relationship and the majority were married. Of these married women, 14% had no dependents and 86% had dependents ranging from one to five in number. Dependents included both children and adult parents for whose care and financial support the respondents were directly responsible. Most of the dependents were children.

4.3.2 Southern Africa

4.3.2.1 Respondent Profile

The Southern Africa respondents were represented across three nationalities: 20% Zimbabwean, 40% Mosotho and 40% Zambian (see Table 3 below). Of these, 40% lived in South Africa, with the remaining 60% living in their home countries.

Table 3: Southern-African respondents

RESPONDENT CODE	CONTINENT	REGION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY
MRS31	Africa	Southern Africa	Mosotho	Black
MSL33	Africa	Southern Africa	Mosotho	Black
CSZ11	Africa	Southern Africa	Zambian	Black
JMZ22	Africa	Southern Africa	Zambian	Black
CKS09	Africa	Southern Africa	Zimbabwean	Black

4.3.2.2 Background and Education

The management tenure of the respondents ranged from three to 10 years in senior roles, with the majority in the social services field, one in government and one in commerce. The majority held a minimum qualification of a Master's degree, one was a CA(SA) and one had a PhD.

Three were in a spousal relationship and two reported that they were single. All the respondents had financial and social dependents, including their immediate and extended families for whom they were directly responsible.

4.3.3 Central Africa

4.3.3.1 Respondent Profiles

The Central African respondents represented two nationalities (see Table 4), of which one respondent was based in South Africa and the other in the United States of America.

Table 4: Central-African respondents

RESPONDENT CODE	CONTINENT	REGION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY
LYA28	Africa	Central Africa	Congolese	Black
BES07	Africa	Central Africa	Cameroonian	Black

4.3.3.2 Background and Education

Both respondents had held senior management roles across the oil and gas and energy sectors. Both had obtained a Master's degree in their educational fields and their management tenure ranged from 10 to 12 years across various industries. Both were married, each with two child dependents.

4.3.4 East Africa

4.3.4.1 Respondent Profiles

The respondents from East Africa were represented by two nationalities (see Table 5). One respondent was based in South Africa and the remaining two in their home countries.

Table 5: East-African respondents

RESPONDENT CODE	CONTINENT	REGION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY
DMK13	Africa	East Africa	Kenyan	Black
JNS25	Africa	East Africa	Kenyan	Black
DRU15	Africa	East Africa	Ugandan	Black

4.3.4.2 Background and Education

The respondents' management tenures ranged from 10 to 15 years, all in the field of commerce. The majority had obtained a Master's degree and one had a PhD. All the respondents described themselves as having spousal support and as being directly responsible for children, ranging from two to four dependents.

4.3.5 West Africa

4.3.5.1 Respondent Profiles

The West Africans in the study were represented by five nationalities (see Table 6), the majority of whom lived outside their home country, residing in South Africa, the United Kingdom, and other West African countries. Only two were based in their home countries.

Table 6: West-African respondents

RESPONDENT CODE	CONTINENT	REGION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY
DAE14	Africa	West Africa	Ghanaian	Black
IDI20	Africa	West Africa	Ivorian	Black
MEM32	Africa	West Africa	Ghanaian	Black
NFI34	Africa	West Africa	Senegalese	Black
DTA12	Africa	West Africa	Burkinabé	Black
VAG37	Africa	West Africa	Gabonese	Black
VDS39	Africa	West Africa	Senegalese	Black

4.3.5.2 Background and Education

Their management tenure ranged from six to 25 years across various industries, with the majority having gained experience in commercial fields and one in the education sector. A total of 86% of the respondents had obtained a Master's degree and 4% were professionally qualified Chartered Accountants. Two respondents were married, two were single and three were divorced, of which one had partner support even though she was divorced.

4.3.6 International

4.3.6.1 Respondent Profile

The international respondents were included in this study because their lived experience was relevant to the goals of this study. The respondents represented two nationalities (see Table 7). Neither respondent was based in her home country; the British national was based in the United Arab Emirates and the Armenian national was based in Nigeria.

Table 7: International respondents

RESPONDENT CODE	CONTINENT	REGION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY
JON21	Asia	International	Armenian	White
AHU03	United Kingdom	International	British	White

4.3.6.2 Background and Education

Both respondents were qualified; one had obtained a Bachelor's degree and the other a PhD in their related fields of work. Both held senior roles in management from five to 12 years. Both were married with direct child dependents – one had two children and the other had three.

4.4 Career Experience

This section will present the results of the study based on the lived career experiences of the respondents. The information includes the roles the respondents held during their career journeys, as well as the impact of mentoring, professional sponsors, development opportunities, career mobility and related topics.

The respondents provided examples of defining moments in their career journeys that significantly shaped their career trajectories; the impact of practices of inclusion, exclusion, gender bias and career enhancement; as well as how all the factors impacted their personal well-being.

Finally, the respondents concluded with their own insights on other factors they felt the researcher should consider in order to understand the practices of exclusion in management, and how these offer some insights into why women are underrepresented in senior management.

The following themes will be presented below in order of respondents' regional demarcation that is: South-Africa; Southern-Africa; Central-Africa; East-Africa; West-Africa; and International

- Defining Moments

Defining moments are moments or the influence of people that substantially changed the trajectory of the respondents' career progression.

- Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

This section covers the overt and unconscious exclusionary practices respondents have personally experienced or observed as they progressed through their career journeys.

- Personal Impact

The career impact on overall well-being including strain on family relationships, spousal support, guilt, and the mental and physical wellness of respondents is discussed here. Respondents also described the actions they put in place to cope with the effects of their career experiences.

- Sponsorship

This section explores whether the influence of, or access to, professional sponsors impacted the respondents' career progression, and what their experiences of the sponsor relationships were.

- Management Practices

The role of line managers was central in the career progress of the respondents. This section presents data on the role of their line managers and the enhancing or inhibiting effects it had on their career journeys.

- Reward Practice

The respondents' knowledge of the gender wage pay gap, the influence it had on their career journeys and the opportunities they pursued is explored in this section.

- Peer-to-Peer Relationships

The influence of organisational peer-to-peer relationships in accelerating or inhibiting the career journeys of the respondents is discussed in this section.

- Spousal and Family Support

This section discusses the support received from spouses and the influence of this on the career opportunities the respondents pursued.

- Mentorship

The role of mentorship, formal mentoring relationships and self-sought mentors that have influenced the advancement of the respondents is discussed here.

- Motherhood

Over 80% of the respondents were mothers, with one to five dependents per household. Of the remaining respondents, some still had sibling or adult dependent responsibilities. This section explores the impact of motherhood on navigating career journeys.

4.5 South African Career Experience

4.5.1 Defining Moments

Key themes in what shaped the defining moments in the respondents' careers emerged. Chief among these were potential identification, risk-taking behaviour, early career development, personal factors and professional development. These are discussed in detail below.

4.5.1.1 Potential identification

The role of senior executives who identified the respondents' potential and the steps that followed had a significant impact on their career trajectories. These steps included expanding their management role responsibilities, gaining cross-functional exposure, and accessing opportunities to manage teams as reported by respondent ATS01. Cross-functional exposure allowed the respondents to pursue career opportunities outside their functional expertise into general management roles. Respondent ADS02 described those who identified and developed her talent as the 'biggest supporters and champions'.

These senior executives were referred to by respondent NES35 as someone that took a risk on her. They not only identified the respondents' potential but developed it by appointing her to roles for which she did not have the necessary experience and advocating for her with key stakeholders to influence promotional opportunities as explained by respondent NES35.

Respondent USS36 described the support received from her senior executives as someone who took her under his wing, encouraging her to make pivotal career decisions while pushing her to realise their potential and developed her resilience.

4.5.1.2 Risk-Taking

The respondents' career trajectories were influenced by taking on high risk roles. Respondent ATS01 was tasked with the turnaround of a function, although it was a daunting task, she applied herself and excelled in delivering the objective, for which she received recognition from leadership with a top achiever award. In making deliberate choices to take on these roles, respondent CRS08 took the opportunity to develop relevant experience to be considered for promotion and commensurate rewards and incentives. Other risk-taking choices involved decisions to move from the public sector to the private sector as described by respondent GLS18, in one case driven primarily by the state organ's tardiness in decision-making and misaligned personal and organisational values.

Other defining moments were shaped by respondents taking up opportunities to move cities in order to secure roles that aligned to their career aspirations. This was reflected on by HHS19, who moved from her hometown of Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg to secure a role in accounting. There she met a career sponsor who encouraged her to complete her articles. He subsequently gave her the necessary experience to successfully meet the requirements to obtain her CA(SA), which then gave her access to various business opportunities.

However, while relocating was productive for some, it was unsettling for others. LVAS26 moved to Cape Town to take up a role in the manufacturing and engineering sector, where she was appointed as the lead project engineer. She recalled that she was one of few women on the project, and non-white; one male colleague commented, 'I will not work with a kleurling (coloured)'. She felt that she had to prove him wrong, and was subsequently promoted to Senior Engineer.

Respondent JPS24 stated that working outside the borders of South Africa commented that the decision to develop functional experiences travelling and working on various continents expanded their knowledge and networks; you gain insights outside of your technical expertise.

The final category that emerged in career defining moments was the transition in roles across functional lines and various business units. VSS38, who qualified as a chemical engineer, took a cross-functional career change in a role as Marketing Director in a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods company. Shortly thereafter the company was involved in a food poisoning crisis, which had severe consequences for the brand. In this tumultuous environment, she successfully rebuilt brand confidence by developing active stakeholder relationships. This, as she recalled it, stretched her capabilities in both leadership and functional knowledge.

The experience of role transition within the same organisation, even in the same business, means taking on different opportunities within the same functional field. Those who had experienced this spoke of the functional depth they developed, as well as growing their leadership experience and institutional knowledge. Reflecting on this experience, WFS40 said, men showed a lot more support than women through informal mentorship in the workplace.

4.5.1.3 Early Career Development

The impact of early career development opportunities provided defining moments in the respondents' career trajectories. Respondent AAS04 stated that in 1985, she was the first female bursar in a financial and auditing firm. She was later told it was a bit of an experiment, but she performed exceptionally well and accelerated into senior management through various roles within the firm.

This trend continued as the respondents reflected on their first functional roles. As early as the age of 25, respondent MMS30 did an internship at a prestigious financial institution, although that was the first- and last-time she was formally employed as she decided to pursue her own business interests given the exposure she got on the programme.

Conversely, when the respondents' early careers developed within their functional disciplines, their functional career trajectories were accelerated. Respondent ACS05 started a career in nursing, where her strengths as a young professional were recognised by the head of the unit. She progressed as a researcher and recalled a CEO she worked with who instilled in her the performance ethic of never settling. Similarly, while on short term work assignments in her functional discipline, respondent ESS16 was given the opportunity to develop her functional skill set under the guidance of a functional line manager. She benefited from the experience by putting into practice what she was taught in her academic training.

4.5.1.4 Personal Factors

Developing self-confidence was key in shaping the career trajectories of respondents. Most of the women in the study relied on their functional expertise and pursued further formal development opportunities. Respondent BGS06 explained that obtaining a business degree after completing her professional qualification supported her career progress because it gave her confidence in key business concepts. In developing their self-confidence, the respondents' potential was easily identified. Respondent NES35's career progressed as her potential was recognised and she was perceived to have the right attitude, which was evident in how she showed up in delivery of her role objectives.

The next factor that emerged as a defining moment that shaped the respondents' careers was a significant organisational change such as a merger or acquisition as experienced by respondent LVAS26 in that there are changes in culture and values within an organisation, which may not be aligned with her personal and professional values. Respondent LVAS26 experienced a culture change when her company, a high performing South African firm, was acquired by a multinational organisation. The leadership change which followed was influenced heavily by the acquiring company; respondent LVAS26 described their organisational culture as 'American culture, in which one had to shout to be heard'. This culture shift eventually pushed her out of the company, even though she was offered a senior executive role to remain. Many respondents described the alignment of personal values and organisational values as directly impacting their professional brand and integrity. To this end, respondent GLS18 explained that in order to develop her professional brand, it was important to build effective relationships with stakeholders. She took this on as a development goal, supported by a business coach.

Interestingly, the career trajectories of respondents with an entrepreneurial inclination were shaped by their behaviours as leaders and their level of ownership of company outcomes. Respondent ATS01 attributed some of her success in her role to her initial interest in entrepreneurship, as she viewed her business partners as her clients and was involved in solving business challenges.

Entrepreneurial mindset instilled a sense of ambition and drive in respondent CCS10, because she was eager to grow the businesses and seize opportunities in their organisation as an intrapreneur developing innovative product and business solutions inside their organisations.

Finally, the socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents influenced how defining moments shaped the progress of their careers. Respondent JJS23 commented on how her upbringing influenced her attitude and work ethic as she came from a poor family and had to fend for herself so she focussed on succeeding academically, although she was shy at school, she reflected on how she had grown in confidence over the years and become a confident public speaker.

4.5.1.5 Professional Development

The decision and sacrifice involved in pursuing further educational and professional development also shaped career defining moments, however the respondents commented that they could lose out on career opportunities if they took time away from work to meet academic requirements. Respondent ENS17 explained that her career experience was negatively affected by her pursuit of professional development as she needed study leave. She was moved from one client to another because of the time she had taken off. Reflecting on this experience, she learnt that you have to fend for yourself in pursuing career goals.

Respondent HHS19 echoed this sentiment. She spent most of her career in male-dominated industries such as mining and industrials, and development opportunities were prioritised in favour of her male counterparts. In one such instance she was overlooked for an international management development programme offered by INSEAD. Her approach, therefore, has been to advance her own development by self-funding her studies.

Organisational support for professional development was found to influence defining moments. The respondents shared the view that receiving study assistance and being awarded scholarships were significantly influential. Respondent JJS23 explained that this assistance gave her the opportunity to pursue her professional qualifications as a CA(SA), while at the same time progressing her career through institutions like Harvard. This allowed her to diversify her experience as she did her articles and worked in both the public and private sectors. In the private sector she moved across various industries and gained a variety of experience.

4.5.2 Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

4.5.2.1 Socio-Economic Background

Upon reflecting on practices of exclusion that they had experienced in the management ranks, respondents noted that the impact of the old boys' club was a deliberate and overt practice of exclusion. Respondent ATS01 experienced a subtle version of this when those from a privileged background had exposure to certain lifestyles. The example she recalled was when in certain social settings, the conversation would revolve around activities like hunting or golf, which were a foreign concept to her and therefore excluded her from the narrative. She referred to rich people jokes that conveyed the different lives that executives who came from privileged backgrounds had been exposed to, compared to those who grew up with marginalised, impoverished backgrounds. In her view, different was certainly not equal in a social context with peers from third generation wealth, while she was the first of her generation to progress into executive management as a qualified professional ATS01.

4.5.2.2 Business Meeting Conduct

Due to policy changes prescribed in the Employment Equity Act, the demographics of management ranks have transformed over the last two decades. From being led by white male Afrikaans and English speakers, business conversations can now take place in the language of the most dominant group. (Government, 1998)

As explained by respondent ADS02, in South Africa there is a reasonable expectation that most business activities will be conducted in English, as South Africa has 11 official languages but in most industries the accepted language of business is English. Despite this, Afrikaans organisations still continue the legacy of conducting business activities in Afrikaans. As a second language English speaker, the respondent found that she could not participate in business meetings when colleagues switched into Afrikaans. Despite her bringing to their attention the need to keep to a shared business language, they still did it all the time thus she had to adapt by learning Afrikaans in order to develop her career. Similarly, respondent GLS18 experienced language exclusion when the leaders switched into a native language during official meetings or when socialising at the workplace. Those not conversant in the vernacular were blatantly excluded from the discussions.

Outside the borders of South Africa, cultural norms from another country could lead to the experience of exclusionary practices. Respondent ENS17 recalled a North American colleague who was seconded to Canada, whose communication style was overbearing and excluded others from participating in meetings. Given the cultural norms in Canada, the respondent decided to address the issue by referring her North American colleague to the company values. After that, she didn't say another word in the meetings and her colleagues applauded her for addressing the situation.

Beyond business language exclusion, dominant groups often use institutional business jargon within the organisational context. CRS08 experienced business jargon as an exclusionary practice in highly regulated industries where the use of business terms and anecdotes was used in meetings. As someone recruited from outside the industry, at times she could not participate in those conversations. She believed that this type of exclusionary practices was an exertion of power to demonstrate that she does not know the industry as explained by the respondent: "I think a lot of it is around jargon and what people perceive you don't know and how they use that to your advantage or disadvantage mostly, particularly in financial services that could be highly regulated or highly structured in a way. Where there is accountants or actuaries and I'm an engineer so it was never a natural fit, I find that often times people try and exert power and influence by showing you that they know more and a lot of it in my experience is just veiled with misconception or jargon and all sorts of terms that when you actually break it down everyone would actually understand." (CRS08)

However, setting aside language and cultural barriers, when women do participate in business meetings, the respondents noted that their male senior managers still undermine their contributions. As explained by respondent ACS05, it was clear that her views did not matter. This came across as condescending and left her feeling belittled, for example, a male colleague was chosen to present work that she had produced. Her view on exclusionary practices that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in management is that women's voices are often muted in management, therefore their contributions are undermined. Alternatively, their outputs are substituted with no recognition given, as expressed by LOS27 that they literally did not hear her voice.

In the senior management ranks, where women are the minority, respondent JJS23 felt that only the men in the room's voices were heard, but she decided to stay the course. In her view, she had to know her work to make a contribution even though there are blockages in the system, women should stay the course to progress in the management ranks.

Respondent JJS23 recalled having been directly impacted by exclusionary practices in that she had to write an email to participate in a meeting; concluding that there are so many ways to ask to be included. Respondent VSS38 opinion is that some industries are seen as a boys' world, where people have already made up their minds who the decision-makers are, leaving women with no opportunities to engage.

4.5.2.3 Social Networking

In their experience, the respondents have found that business decisions are often made over social gatherings such as dinners, pub visits and after work drinks. Respondent ENS17 recalled that, in the earlier part of her career, the organisation she was working for expected that all heads of department had to learn to play golf as they hosted corporate golf days, women in these roles therefore had to learn the sport. These activities usually took place during times the women had set aside to spend with their families, so those not able to participate due to family commitments were automatically excluded as explained by respondent AAS04 explained that her experience of this type of exclusion was that it often occurred subtly, so she learned you had to invite yourself to networking events hosted for clients, typically male, including sporting events such as rugby or cricket, again excluding those with family responsibilities. Respondent AAS04 then decided to host networking events herself by extending invitations to clients and their families, in this way she was able to include her family at these sporting events and the clients actually loved bringing their families along to the events. In conclusion respondent LMS29 described the value of networks as instrumental in her career trajectory in referring to it as 'career defining'. The exclusion continues through a culture of story-telling as described by LMS29 at sporting events such as rugby or golf men exclusively relates to' thereby excluding women as they are not able to relate to the content and the 'chauvinistic' context.

4.5.2.4 Sexualisation

Sexual harassment is a key exclusionary practice, which is not often brought to light as a subtle yet damaging practice. Respondent CCS10 was exposed to inappropriate sexual innuendos from her male counterparts on both private and public platforms: 'you're just a girl with boobs' upon reflecting on this she said that it made me feel dirty and it made it difficult for her to continue performing in that type of environment. Furthermore, respondent CCS10 was excluded from social activities such as golf, which was an opportunity extended to her male colleagues in the boys' club, where discussions from the boardroom would continue on the golf course.

It is the opinion of respondent CCS10 that there is a lack of understanding of the various life stages of women and the demands of family responsibilities accompanying it therefore women are excluded especially those who did not have personal support structures, and this impedes progress into senior management roles.

4.5.2.5 Cliques

Beyond the concept of the boys' club was the emergence of non-gendered functional or decision-making cliques, which have unspoken rules of access and influence functional or career decisions. Respondent ESS16 explained that not being part of the club influenced the ongoing work dynamic within her function and between her function and the corporate head office team, as she was based remotely at a client site whilst the rest of her colleagues were based at the corporate head office. Typically, she was excluded from meetings and other office social functions, resulting in a sense of isolation from her functional team. This influenced her career progression as she did not have visibility and exposure to the key decision-makers in the function. This eventually led to her being impacted by a restructuring exercise in which she opted to exit the function and take on a business role.

Relationships developed between colleagues with similar interests as is the case for male colleagues, playing golf or cycling together influences workplace decisions. Respondent ESS16 defined these circles of influence based on the respondents and the outcomes, e.g., direct line manager and his peers; professional relationships personally pursued and external circles in which 'sitting on management boards in which one is not in the know and not part of the function'. In the experience of respondent GLS18, to gain access to these circles, woman should work and make an effort, as everyone needs someone that is trustworthy, and in some instances in her acting as a counsellor to key decision makers she was commended for adding value to.

These cliques exist across the management ranks, LOS27 shared that, it is unconscious, in the language used, in swearing, and that she had to hold her ground a lot more, in her experience it was necessary to join the clique members for drinks in the afternoon, but despite her efforts, she recalled not being invited to a supplier golf day while a male colleague who reported to her was. Respondent VSS38 described her experience of these masculine events as socialisation including crazy nights and drinking tequila.

Stereotypical roles are ascribed to women based on gender bias, which characterises women as suited to 'warm and fuzzy' roles. Masculine values and cultures leave women resorting to taking on attributes that they are not inherently comfortable with in an attempt to try and fit into a masculine management culture said respondent USS36.

The effects of the cliques spill over into the workplace and manifest in corporate politics, as described by respondent USS36. Of the many exclusionary practices she observed or experienced, what stood out for her was corporate politics, where the toxicity that exists within key stakeholder groups, specifically the all boys' club, has been a phenomenon for years.

4.5.3 Personal Impact

The personal negative impact on their well-being as the respondents' careers progressed through the management ranks was a common experience. Respondent BGS06 recalled being treated with less tolerance for what was perceived as weakness in the management ranks. The respondents shared insights into the effects of these practices and the mitigating actions they had to take. CRS08 noted the difficulties she faced trying to prioritise objectives, both in her career and personal life. WFS40, meanwhile, described how she dealt with the negative impact of her career progress by creating boundaries, as this assisted her to balance work and personal requirements. Respondent GLS18 developed resilience through practices such as journaling their thoughts, diligence in exercise routines, meditation and prioritising self-care with regular massages and other treats.

How respondents had to negotiate the strain of advancing their careers demonstrated deliberate decision-making. Respondent LVAS26 elaborated on how she managed the impact by explaining that, she had to focus on her health and personal wellness. It was her opinion that it is possible for mothers to have their careers if they delegate. In order to prioritise her well-being, NES35 had to adopt wellness practices such as meditation, yoga and building psychological resilience and she had to disassociate from fear as a woman of colour.

4.5.3.1 Physical Strain

Respondent NES35 described the personal impact of the strain she experienced from ongoing practices of exclusion in the workplace, and the impact on her family and social life as she tried to progress her career.

Early on in her career respondent NES35 experienced tremendous strain, in her early twenties she worked long hours which resulted in a severe impact on her physical health as she wanted to get to the top as she felt she had to prove that as a coloured woman she is competent'. Similarly, respondent VSS38 suffered ongoing stress while developing her career, with more severe health consequences. She recalled the impact on her physical health as resulting from an apoplexy of the pituitary gland, which required multiple therapies due to the damage it caused.

Other respondents' career progression negatively impacted her health, as experienced by GLS18 as she reached pre-burnout at one point in her career when she felt stifled in her role, as she was made aware that her line manager had held her back from opportunities. This led to her going into depression, which she addressed timeously with preventative health care. The experience gave her the courage to resign from the organisation.

GLS18 recalled many examples of the strain of developing her career that were related to stress, spasms, and exploding when dealing with complex situations. To mitigate the effect of these negative impacts respondent USS36 took up yoga as well as prayer, as she 'believes in a higher power'. To deal with toxic situations, respondent VSS38 decided to listen to her body; remain spiritually grounded; giving people an opportunity to do good and as a leader adding values to others'. In addition to this she took up physical exercise at a gym. Respondent LMS29 said throughout her career there has never been one source of support as she wanted it all which she describes as having children, an education and a career, therefore, she tirelessly made it work through juggling systems, making lists, planning and giving her children stability therefore managing stress has been important in her career journey.

Upon reflecting on the personal impact of developing her career experience, respondent ADS02 recalled that during her tenure in corporates she worked non-stop, and was therefore not present in her life or marriage. She attributed this to the culture of corporations that build notions of importance. This impacted her health severely as she felt the system working against her; she constantly felt that she was fighting. Through this respondent ADS02 learnt that she inherently had an entrepreneurial inclination and retrospectively realised that she was growing into her calling.

4.5.3.2 Emotional Strain

The result of making career decisions at the expense of personal and family sacrifices impacted the respondents' emotional well-being. As explained by WFS40, the negative impact she suffered involved making tough decisions and not knowing how it would work out in balancing her work, personal and family needs.

The considered decisions that respondents took to pursue their career progress while overcoming exclusionary practices often resulted in feelings of inadequacy that impacted their self-confidence, as experienced by respondent ATS01.

On reflecting on the impact of exclusionary practices, she related that her confidence was affected. She almost felt embarrassed as she could not relate to the lifestyle parallels drawn by her privileged colleagues due to the impact of her socio-economic background on her life experience. This left her feeling frustrated as because she could not contribute to a narrative, she was not able to comprehend the lifestyle parallels drawn by the privileged.

This sense of not belonging created a sense of alienation. Earlier in her career, respondent ADS02's response to encountering these types of exclusionary practices would be to resign as this type of exclusion made her feel inadequate in her roles.

As JPS24 explained, she observed and experienced 'imposter syndrome', where women work and gain experience yet are afraid of taking career risks. Therefore, respondent JPS24 had the need to remain curious in pursuing growth in the choices she made, however business is decisive she had to remain resilient during and stop making decisions based on fear. Respondent LMS29's opinion is that when women are moved into top positions, they don't see themselves succeeding at it as they feel like a token appointee.

Imposter syndrome was reinforced by exclusion from meetings at which their roles in the organisation meant that they should participate. This was the experience of WFS40, where one of the key exclusionary practices she experienced in her career was not being included in discussions. Key decisions were taken that she was not involved in and reflecting on this made her feel like she have no value to add resulting in here feeling angry and frustrated, impacting her motivation to perform in her role.

4.5.3.3 Social Support

The respondents discussed how instrumental their spousal and family support had been in helping them deal with the negative effects of perpetuated exposure to, and their experience of, exclusionary practices. Respondent HHS19 said her husband was her primary support throughout her career journey, as he did not feel threatened and was her biggest influence in developing her career. Responding HHS19 experienced that women work twice as hard to get the same outcomes in their careers in relation to their male counterparts, taking on physical and mental strain in the process as women tend to take their roles more seriously, upon reflecting on her 30+ year career, she concluded that, she spent too much time working and not living.

Respondent BGS06 who were single relied on their extended family and friends as their primary support while respondent GLS18 who had made a conscious choice to be single and not have children relied on their immediate family for support. As a single career woman from a family of three sisters, throughout her career she had relied on her younger sister, also a single career woman. They travelled together on holiday and shared a similar career trajectory into executive management. GLS18 had never been married or had children, and took an all or nothing approach to her career development as she loves learning, developing her career, focussing on her health and spending time with her family.

4.5.3.4 Physical Practices

Women take on personal practices to alleviate career-induced strain, as explained by respondent BGS06. She had gained weight over time but addressed this through exercise such as yoga and pilates. Similarly, respondent AAS04 lessened the long-term effects of career strain by taking regular exercise, following a plant-based diet and staying hydrated. As a result, she lost the excess weight. For some respondents the decision was a matter of necessity, as explained by ESS16. Her health was severely impacted as a result of both work and personal strain, to the extent that she was diagnosed with a chronic condition and had to go on a treatment plan. She decided to reduce this impact by taking up yoga, reading and engaging in spiritual practices to develop her resilience.

Finally, respondent ADS02 described how, in order to get some relief from the strain she experienced while developing her career, she adopted personal practices to develop resilience. These included working a shorter week (she starts her work week on a Tuesday) in order to take the time to focus on herself. She referred to this as ‘my day’, because she spends weekends with her family.

4.5.3.5 Social Practices

The respondents experience well-being management as multi-dimensional, which includes setting boundaries. The key lesson for respondent WFS40 was that many people have jobs and they are employed to do certain tasks. It is therefore important to understand the different roles and jobs in the company and require people to do their work through learning what to say 'no' to based on what her workplan demands, this practice of setting boundaries proved vital in creating time for the respondents to nurture their well-being.

The approach of respondent ENS17 was to set start and stop times. These boundaries allow her time for regular exercise and running alone as a form of meditation, because it helps her to clear her mind, furthermore, she participates in a theatre club which allows her to zone out and reflect or socialise, following through on these boundaries at home she sees her husband as her equal, and working a full day means that she is not solely responsible for meal preparation.

The impact of career progression takes a toll not only on family but on social relationships as well. Because of the time ACS05 invested in her career journey she focussed less on building social relationships with friends and family, but she learnt over time to make an effort to contact and rebuild these relationships. Some managed to nurture their social relationships whilst progressing their careers. CRS08 explained that she makes time to engage socially with friends in her book club which keeps her grounded. Focussing on her career in the early part of her life meant that respondent ENS17 married at a late stage, did not have children, and relied on supportive friends throughout her career journey.

Through setting boundaries, respondents are able to focus on their families, although respondent AAS04 explained that in order to spend more time with her family she includes her sons in preparing meals and doing other chores around the house. She learnt to prioritise what is important in accepting that she cannot do everything and delegate activities where possible like doing online grocery shopping. For respondent CRS08, to balance her family commitments she had to learn to let go and ask for help, so she appointed an au pair to assist with childcare duties. Respondent JJS23, meanwhile, set time aside to take three to four vacations a year with her family to lessen the negative effects of her career progress, and she typically includes her extended family on these vacations at her own expense.

4.5.3.6 Personal Perspective

Over their career journeys, the respondents gathered insights from their experiences. Respondent ADS02, through learning how to adapt her behaviour, she increased her understanding and rationalised the exclusionary practices stating that they did not mean to alienate her therefore she had no need to be militant as exclusion are often unconscious.

The approach of respondent WFS40 to being excluded was to go and find out from the people what happened and understand why in order for her to find a strategy that works. Respondent CRS08 found a more practical method and described her use of an Executive Coach as an investment in her career journey. She also emphasised that trust is built through delivery and performance, therefore she has always been conscious to do well.

Respondent AAS04 had experienced a multiplicity of exclusionary practices throughout her career, but believed that she could never let anyone get her under by maintaining a positive mental attitude in the face of adversity. Finally, MMS30 was optimistic in that she believed that she created her own opportunities, mostly through her networks and introductions she pushed for opportunities and asserted herself, as this makes her feel empowered.

4.5.4 Sponsorship

4.5.4.1 Female Sponsors

Sponsorship emerged as a key theme for the respondents. Respondent ATS01 had a female executive sponsor, the Chief Financial Officer, who took time over a number of years to guide her with unpacking her career path, both within the organisation at the time and outside that specific firm. This was done through frank and open conversations about the respondent's career trajectory. ATS01 also identified a CEO who pushed her through giving her the role of acting managing director, which was outside her functional expertise but supported her development as a result of this, she was given the opportunity to present to the company board which gave her expertise visibility and a voice with the chairman of the board.

The experience of respondent AAS04 was that there is a lack of female role models in senior management, therefore younger women with ambitions to grow their careers still require sponsorship to create the necessary opportunities for progress.

Respondent LOS27 reported to a woman CEO and her experience was that as a female business leader took a chance on her; she was prepared to back her. She also provided the respondent with the freedom to perform her role effectively because she was a hands-off manager. By proving she had LOS27's back and trusting her, she enabled her to do more and the more she did, the freer rein she received from her line manager.

4.5.4.2 Male Sponsors

Respondent CRS08 said as a black woman her sponsors had been mostly white males. Reflecting on her career experience, she emphasised the role that sponsorship had played in accelerating her career path, including through building effective relationships and a keen focus on meeting her sponsor's expectations, because he had taken chances repeatedly on her.

Respondent USS36, a coloured woman, noted that her sponsor was an Indian male, who was a seasoned banking executive who supported her career progress. As a key professional sponsor, he would give her feedback regularly. He would say 'we need to talk' and at times he would tell her to correct her approach and at times encourage her to be bold.

4.5.4.3 Line Managers

The role of the line manager as sponsor was key for respondent ACS05 in that it significantly influenced her career experience as he pushed her for excellence. Respondent LVAS26's first line manager was her professional sponsor, and role modelled the leadership qualities she admired that he was a gentleman that built himself up having grown up in the townships of Pretoria; there was something about his humanness, he would never flinch and would exude calmness in a storm. LVAS26 concluded that he had the ability to make really good decisions and demonstrated leadership to her through his calm approach.

4.5.4.4 Sponsor Attributes

The distinctive attributes of sponsors influence access to opportunities. AAS04 explained that her career experience was significantly influenced and sponsored by a senior director in her firm, while respondent GLS18 viewed her sponsor as a strong leader with high performance expectations, who created opportunities for her progression through championing her profile with key decision-makers.

And supporting her with preparing for the roles as described by respondent ENS17 in that her sponsor played a key role in her career by helping her to develop her interviewing skills and challenging her to take on executive roles. Many respondents were able to draw on the experience of their sponsors, for example VSS38 explained that throughout her career journey she had many key professional sponsors from whom she drew inspiration, which changed throughout her career. WFS40 had the benefit of specific professional sponsors (directors), who over the years were able to provide guidance and support because they believed she could do a bigger job and they provided her with leadership development experience in key roles.

4.5.4.5 No Sponsors

Of the South African respondents, 23% said that they had no sponsors throughout their careers. JJS23 elaborated on her experience and said that she does not attribute her career success to anyone as she had no sponsor, she had to fight and be persistent in therefore, she took on her own new assignments and participated in recruitment or panel discussions on her own abilities, which progressed her career. The experience of JPS24 was that women need advocates – 'someone that would go out on a limb' and take a risk on her, noting that, she did it on her own for a long time. Respondent LMS29 described the results of not having a sponsor as accelerating her career as the lack of sponsor support when taking on new roles pushed her to grow faster in mastering the position.

4.5.5 Management Practice

4.5.5.1 Authentic Leadership

This section expands on the role of the line manager in progressing the career journeys of the respondents and the practices that contributed to this. Respondent ATS01 explained that a line manager practice that contributed to her career trajectory was an openness to be challenged and to push the envelope. She thrived in a corporate environment where she was taken through leadership development and exposed to global mindsets in a multinational working environment. Similarly, for respondent USS36 in a South Africa-based firm, a line manager who progressed her career was very direct and authentic in his leadership style, which was transparent. He was supportive in that he assigned an executive coach to her and encouraged her to actively participate in business debates.

4.5.5.2 Career Exposure

The next theme that emerged is career exposure opportunities provided by line managers. Respondent ADS02's experience in her corporate career was that a line manager who significantly progressed her career experience was one who gave her opportunities through exposure, promotion and autonomy to operate in her role. His key strengths lay in harnessing relationships; she stated that 'he was big on relationships'.

The theme of line managers with strong relationship-building skills continued. Beyond creating opportunities, relationship building influenced reward as experienced by respondent CRS08. She fondly recalled a line manager who had a light touch management style, which gave her the autonomy to operate. He was strong on relationship-building and extended social activities to the partners and families of his team. Furthermore, she was remunerated well during that time, which she referred to as being 'golden-handcuffed'.

Another example of how creating exposure by appointing respondents to key projects was given by respondent ENS17. She had a line manager who significantly influenced her career progress by affording her the opportunity to work on a key project that the organisation desperately needed help to implement, this was achieved within one year, which created promotional opportunities for her and led to her rise in the management ranks.

Respondent GLS18 recalled being encouraged by a line manager who recognised her ability and created opportunities for her to develop and be stretched professionally, even though at times it felt like he threw her into the deep end to demonstrate her capabilities. One such assignment was to develop a business case and strategy from scratch, which gave her exposure to key decision-makers and accelerated her learning of various aspects of the business. All this developed her career credibility and later positioned her for lateral and promotional opportunities.

4.5.5.3 Autonomous Working

Autonomy to perform their roles was consistently cited by respondents, even though this was a functional requirement. Given the nature of respondent ACS05's role and the scientific research industry, the 'hands-off' management style of her line manager enabled her to significantly progress her career and operate autonomously.

However, other respondents still required guidance and support, as explained by JNS25, managers took the time to sit down and explain the business. When she transferred to a new role in the organisation, she recalled her line manager at the time explicitly saying, 'I'm here to protect you and guide you as your manager' this reassurance helped her get the work done and supported her work life demands. Respondent LMS's line manager significantly progressed her career as under his leadership she was given free-reign to run independently and deliver her objectives and she was given opportunities to do things differently and saw their relations as 'partnering to deliver work'.

4.5.5.4 Guidance and Support

Respondents' career journeys were positively impacted by line managers who demonstrated support and provided guidance when required, it has been the experience of respondent VSS38 that there are more good managers than bad, based on an element of trust which she referred to as the umbrella theory, in that they hold up the umbrella for you when it rains down around you.

Furthermore, a good line manager was able to give VSS38 great feedback and responses as they held the mirror up to her. This allowed her to step up and they would watch out for her, giving her accountability and trusting that she would put her best foot forward and take risks. This feedback was vital as it pointed out development areas that the respondent was not necessarily aware of. This was also demonstrated in the experience of respondent WFS40, who had a line manager who significantly progressed her career by pointing out her blind spots, giving her advice and identifying projects that gave her broader exposure.

4.5.5.5 Tenuous Relationship

The relationship between line managers and respondents emerged as a key theme. ADS02's career progress was hindered by a line manager who was threatened by her competence, to the extent that he would bad mouth her to clients. This tenuous relationship became personal as he would make derogatory comments, such as volunteering her to be the 'babysitter' because he did not value her contribution or acknowledge her competencies. In her experience, a line manager is someone you are supposed to look up to and therefore this type of behaviour hurt her coming from someone who should have her back, she had to learn to adapt her behaviour over this period.

A line manager who stifled the career progress of USS36 was experienced by the respondent as being insecure in that she felt like line manager were competing with her for exposure as given that her predecessor was a white male with a specialist skill set. In transitioning to managing this manager, she tried to rationalise the gap and had to be bold enough to dare to address it.

Over time these tenuous relationships become toxic, as explained by respondent HHS19. Later in her career there was a line manager who was well known for being extremely negative and derogatory. His management style was abusive which resulted in a lack of trust, further straining the relationship.

As VSS38 explained, she also had a line manager who hindered her progress, which was horrible as there was a lack of trust which led to her feeling insecure' therefore, she focused on building good relationships in the organisation, but her line manager was authoritative and prone to second guessing her.

4.5.5.6 Mismatched Expectations

Clarity in role expectations and career development emerged as a key expectation that respondents had of their line managers, which started at the beginning of the employment relationship. Respondent CRS08 recalled a line manager who hindered her career progress in that she was sold a dream job, but upon joining the organisation her line manager did not treat her equitably. This led to misunderstandings and when she wanted to create and do new things as she was consistently inhibited by her line manager which resulted in her resigning from the role.

Expectations on performance outcomes alignment was described as vital by the respondents. ATS01 was frustrated by delayed decision-making when working for a parastatal where governmental procedures frustrated her career progress, so she also resigned. Respondent WFS40, however, stayed in the organisation despite her experience of misaligned expectations. She experienced line managers who hindered her career progress in that they exaggerated her gaps and were not ready to address it. In response to this she decided to actively focus on managing her own development plan; she realised that she would not be in that role forever, therefore she persevered.

Respondent AAS04, meanwhile, took a different approach by requesting a reduced working schedule to accommodate her family responsibilities, with the expectation that the outcomes and associated remuneration would be reduced to 75%. Her line manager's response was that she had to make it happen, therefore her ability to develop and perform was the result of her own outcomes by growing her portfolio and revenue for the firm as a full-time resource, despite working a reduced work schedule with a commensurate income.

4.5.5.7 Stifled Career Development

Respondents with a high-performance drive experienced that consistently delivering positive outcomes created a comfort zone for their line managers, which hindered the respondents' opportunities of be considered for other roles in the organisation.

Reflecting on her career, respondent GLS18 explained that it had been her experience that sometimes women become so good at delivering in their current role, that they are excluded from opportunities for growth. This was her experience and led to her feeling stifled in a role for six years with her career stagnating, as her line manager was content with having her around because she was a good team player and high performer. She stated that she should have taken more courageous decisions in exploring various career opportunities.

Conversely, when faced with a similar practice, respondent JNS25 recalled having to go through a selection process for a promotion role when her line manager wanted to retain her in his division for various reasons. She had to assert herself to get the promotion, and made it clear that she was not going to accept that behaviour.

4.5.5.8 Female Line Managers

The theme of a women-to-women management dynamic emerged even though most of the respondents' line managers had been male. The expectations and experience of reporting to a woman were elaborated on by ACS05, who described a female line manager who hindered her progress by micromanaging her outputs, making it almost impossible for the respondent to deliver on a project. As a result, she felt that her contributions were undervalued. This perpetuates the perception that women find it difficult to manage other women.

JNS25 claimed that her experience of this perception has been her feeling that women cannot manage other women, which helps to prolong the underrepresentation of women in the management ranks. When women do not support the progression of other women, they hinder their career progress as she would pick up in 'off the cuff comments about women', followed by an expectation that the women will respond to such comments in a 'gentle, kind, and understanding' manner. In contrast, experienced that when men 'misbehave' and women leaders attempt to correct them, it is seen as bad; as long as you are gentle you are seen as good therefore, women in leadership roles face higher scrutiny said respondent JNS25. Similarly respondent LMS29's said that men fear women in senior positions and bluntly and openly having conversations about women that is harsh and clinical whereas women in senior management roles feel like they have to navigate corporate politics and handle leadership with kid gloves.

Respondent BGS06 described a specific female line manager with whom she had a difficult relationship with as the 'Queen Bee', reflecting on this relationship made her very sad. Further to this, respondent USS36 observed that women should support other female leaders.

4.5.5.9 Side-lined

Respondents experienced being side-lined in recruitment decisions when they were completely excluded from the hiring process or when unreasonable selection criteria were set. Two examples illustrate this:

- Respondent USS36 recalled a hiring decision that she should have been involved in, however she discovered from company emails that the hiring manager asked specifically for her to be side-lined from the process. This resulted in awkwardness in their relationship which she had to address as it could not be avoided.
- Respondent NES35 shared an example about a time when the firm was recruiting a Legal Director and in discussing the requirements subtle criteria was mentioned to favour candidates earmarked for the role.

4.5.5.10 Performance Management

The impact of the various performance management systems that the respondents had experienced was explored to understand the effect these had on their careers. The first factor to emerge was the influence of performance management on organisational culture.

Respondent USS36 elaborated on this, noting that in her experience, a company's performance management system is a strong indicator of culture based on how performance is viewed. While working at a German multinational company, she found their performance management system to be systemised and clinical. In contrast, her experience of a FMCG firm's performance management system was that there were too many talented individuals, which resulted in a highly performance-orientated organisation. Her most recent experience within the banking industry was that it was too subjective, particularly within an entrepreneurial organisational culture which is more focussed on the leader's opinions than on the outcomes of a performance management system.

Performance management systems that leave too much room for subjective input had a negative impact on the respondents' career progression. JNS25 reflected how performance management systems had impacted her career experience, mentioning that pinning down accountability is tricky in a development organisation. This contrasted with her experience in a professional firm where accountability was clearly structured, but as it was based on a compliance business model, managing performance in that context was challenging and one had to manage one's own performance fairly into management levels.

The practice of performance management, however, is often different from the intended purpose of the system's outcomes. Respondent CCS10 said that although she had been exposed to high quality performance management systems, it was her opinion that these do not work effectively in senior roles and serve merely as compliance tools in a tick-box exercise. In contrast, respondent WFS40's experience of a performance management system was that it is results-driven and measures progress. However, she admitted that when line managers' subjectivity becomes overly involved in the process, instead of driving focus it has been her experience that she was not able to connect performance with reward.

In some instances, the respondents' experience of their performance management was limited. Respondent NES35 related that her experience of performance management practices was that she was not managed with formal objectives and the KPIs were skewed, therefore a gap existed between the performance management system and the delivery of results. In the experience of BGS06, there was a gap between how performance was managed in relation to what was actually being delivered in terms of the business objectives. In the case of ACS05, the nature of the roles she performed meant that the outcomes were aligned to suit staff requirements.

A controversial view on performance management systems was shared by respondent ADS02, who argued that performance management is not something you need a system for. The aim, she said, was to help people and recognise their contributions whilst driving their passion to deliver. Respondent LMS29's opinion on performance management were that people manipulate the system when incentivisation solicits the wrong behaviours instead of recognising reward excellence.

4.5.6 Reward Practice

4.5.6.1 Gender Pay Gap

Respondents had broad knowledge of the gender pay gap but could not definitively articulate the impact it had on their career experience and total compensation. Respondent ENS17 noted that her male peers were paid more than her, but she rationalised it by saying that she would take lower pay if the career path is better. Respondent GLS18 was directly impacted by the gender pay gap, but only realised at later stage in her career in the organisation that she was underpaid in relation to her male counterparts. On discovering this she was angry and has since decided to do her homework before accepting offers. This was also the approach taken by respondent JJS23 who had been impacted by gender pay gap. She addressed the issue directly and negotiated her package: 'I've absolutely been impacted by the gender pay gap; you need to negotiate your offers.'

Respondent JPS24 echoed this assertive approach and the need for women to do their research. Her career experience had certainly been impacted by the gender pay gap in that the offers she received would be benchmarked against her earnings instead of the market pay rate for the role. She navigated this through negotiating the right price for the value she brought to the role based on her track record. Her experience was that she has to multi-skill and build experience across various opportunities is that she required situational leadership and know when to assert herself in not backing down from challenges she concluded that: 'you don't hope for a career, you plan your career.'

Some respondents addressed the income disparity at a later stage in their careers. ACS05 experienced the gender pay gap when she was appointed as programme director and was offered a lower package in relations to the role requirements. She raised this with management and had to go through a process that took over three months to get the company to correct it. For respondent HHS19, it took an organisational-led initiative by the most senior executive in the business to remedy the gender pay gap issue. Her remuneration was corrected through dedicated focus to close the gap and she was offered a 25% increase in earnings.

Respondent LVAS26 needed the support of her line manager when she realised the pay disparity. He made sure this was eradicated by lobbying, which resulted in retrospective fixes to correct her pay as this involved a legacy of pay disparities.

Respondent MMS30 had limited experience in being managed during her first job, which she then exited to start her own business, however she experienced the same gendered effect on income in her own company. Although she defines her own income as a business owner, she has come up against male-run firms that were paid higher rates. This talks to the impact of male networks and socialised income decisions, as experienced by respondent LOS27. Reflecting on the gender pay gap, she asserted that it had a negative impact in that it was upheld by performance management that was subjective, ad-hoc and stunted her career growth as deals were made on the golf course and in strip-clubs.

4.5.6.2 Health Impact

The impact of developing their careers was accompanied by strenuous conditions that impacted the respondents' health, and, as experienced by respondent AAS04, their income. She explained that given her hardworking nature she was able to still deliver at her full capacity even though her income was affected as a result of her requesting reduced working hours to accommodate her family responsibilities. When she encountered a health issue and had to undergo severe medical treatment, she continued working, but recalled a meeting where the line manager looked straight at her and insinuated that people should not return to work if they are ill, her line manager started an internal campaign to go against her, however his efforts failed as she continued performing and her contribution was recognised despite her health conditions.

4.5.6.3 Race Pay Gap

Racial pay discrimination was recorded by many respondents. NES35 stated that one should get equal pay for equal work, sharing that she would evaluate her compensation by checking compensation in her field with her friends and discovered an income disparity between different races she observed that people of colour were paid lower salaries in relation to their white counterparts. Respondent USS36 had a more direct encounter with the race and gender pay gap when her compensation was affected when she took on a role previously occupied by a white male with specialist experience, but was appointed at a lower salary. She felt frustrated which impacted her behavioural, as she was aware that she did not receive equal pay for the role.

4.5.6.4 Peer Income Inequality

ESS16 was at a senior management level at the time of her exit and she took on a less demanding role at her next position. Even though there was no impact on her salary when she joined, she was paid significantly higher than her peers in the new organisation, which negatively impacted her future pay adjustments within her function. Respondent ATS01 recounted her indifference to the impact of the gender pay gap in her roles as she attributed her earnings to an accelerated career path, therefore the gap related more to her age in relation to her peers rather than to her gender. CCS10 experienced this with a pay gap when she earned less than her peers and felt helpless to control this inequality. However, this gap was corrected over time for which she felt so grateful. To the converse, respondent AAS04 did not experience correction of peer income inequality based on location of work in that while she was based in the Pretoria office, she later discovered that colleagues at the same level in the Johannesburg office earned at least 20% more, a gap which her manager at the time could not justify.

4.5.6.5 Equal Pay Perception

Because of their roles, some of the respondents had direct access to salary ranges. As JNS25 explained, in her organisation she had direct access to the salary ranges as it was well known that the organisation was governed by a strict policy, therefore she was not exposed to a gender pay gap during her tenure. Similarly, respondent CRS08 had direct access to salaries. In her opinion, pay is an expression of organisational power dynamics because it relates to performance and relationships with those in positions of power who make pay-related decisions. Pay information is often veiled in secrecy and inadvertent psychological innuendos occur when women are promoted and start earning more than their male counterparts.

Respondent ADS02 left an organisation to start her own firm, where as CEO, she is able to pay women more and bring them to where they should be because they are so often undervalued. This, however, was not her personal experience in her corporate career, where she had to fight to balance the pay gap and break the cycle that produced income differentials. These issues should have been addressed earlier in their careers, explained respondent WFS40, however as a young professional, pay information was not easily available.

4.5.7 Peer-to-Peer Relationships

4.5.7.1 Mutually Beneficial

Peer relationships in the workplace had a direct impact on the career progression of the respondents. For some this was positive, as explained by ATS01. Her experience of the peer-to-peer relationships that influenced her career included relationships with professional mothers at her daughters' school and with workplace colleagues. These relationships were characterised by openness, and she built credibility among her peers while building her professional profile and knowledge.

There is mutual benefit in these relationships in the workplace, said LVAS26. Given the nature of her role, her counterparts were mostly male, but these relationships supported the development of both her people skills and technical skills. In a team context, effective peer-to-peer relationships impact team performance, reported HHS19. She enjoyed productive peer-to-peer relationships, and the teams she worked with supported each other and worked independently while being high performers. These positive peer-to peer relationships, working with competent and confident peers, provided respondent USS36 with the support to bounce ideas off on them and collaborate on business objectives. USS36 noted that there is a loneliness in senior management, therefore one of her peers, a clinical psychologist, supported her at times during her career journey.

4.5.7.2 Relationship-building skills

Relationship-building skills were essential in progressing the career journeys of the respondents. AAS04 reflected on the value of cultivating good relationships with peers across the organisation, as well as the importance of networking and productive introductions that supported the development of her career. For some respondents, relationship-building had to become intentional. Respondent ACS05 explained that she had to make a conscious effort to build effective peer-to-peer relationships and at times lead by example when personality clashes occurred.

This was especially required when working with diverse peers. CRS08 emphasised the importance of peer-to-peer relationships in her role and building effective relationships across various age categories and generations in her leadership teams. Respondent VSS38 echoed the impact of team dynamics on effective peer-to-peer relationships. Reflecting on her peer-to-peer relationships, her experience was that she was incredibly blessed with networks and relationships that were key to leveraging results. There was an 'X-factor' in that her peers built each other up and supported one another. Their connections were incredibly tight knit and colleagues were like siblings said respondent VSS38.

4.5.7.3 Personal Support

Some respondents fondly recalled the support they had received from developing effective peer-to-peer relationships. ESS19 described a difficult time in her life and career when she developed a close and supportive relationship with a co-worker. They would check-in on each other and share their career frustrations as peers within the same function. Respondent ENS17 was similarly supported by complementary personality types. Her male colleague had qualified in equivalent terms as a CA(SA) in Ghana, but 'he was very laid back' while she described herself as a typical type-A personality. Respondent WFS40 reported that giving and receiving feedback supported her career progress as long as the feedback was characterised by honesty.

NES35 reflected on her relationship with the General Counsel of EMEA, based in North America, who supported her career development. She could share issues in the organisation with her, and in turn would coach respondent NES35 how to have difficult conversations and encouraged her to build relationships across functions.

4.5.7.4 Toxic Peer Behaviour

Some respondents reported on the inhibiting impact that poor peer-to-peer relationships had on their career progress, including ADS02. Reflecting on the influence of these relationships, she recalled a female colleague who made her life 'a living hell'. This colleague was older and more senior in experience, therefore the respondent had respect for her even though that respect was not a two-way street. When ADS02 was promoted, this specific colleague continued with her corporate bullying tactics, which damaged the respondent's career experience until she decided she would no longer tolerate that behaviour.

The difficulty in navigating toxic work cultures that influence peer-to-peer relationships is in having the courage to be open and honest and able to 'call a spade a spade' said respondent JJS23. This is often challenging in the workplace where a silo mentality exists, and territorial behaviours mean that colleagues do not willingly share information inhibiting her from contributing in her role in which she had to develop quiet toughness.

4.5.7.5 Corporate Politics

Sabotage and corporate politics were reported as another inhibiting factor in peer-to-peer relationships. CCA10 reported that she had often been subjected to her performance being sabotaged by her male counterparts, who were on the same reporting line as her to the CEO. It was evident that this was about being a woman in a man's world, so she was consistently exposed to political games and positioning as they worked to advance their own career interests. This toxic behaviour influenced the organisational culture. Similarly, as GLS18 experienced, culture shifts within an organisation can result in toxicity, which manifests itself in colleagues backstabbing. This creates a fear to express one's own opinions, inhibiting collaboration and solution-building. In this context, top performers start questioning their own abilities as their input is stifled, which eventually leads to resignations.

Respondent JPS24 commented on how corporate politics impact peer-to-peer relationships. Her view was that you need to understand 'who is for you and who is working with you' in that some of her peers she classified as working with their own agendas and motives, and she experienced that she had difficulty in progressing an some of her peers would go on the journey with her in supporting her career progress. Despite the emphasis on professional peers being team players, respondent MMS30's experience was that she was expected to be a team player, however she saw herself as the team leader as she were comfortable to takes charge which at times were perceived by other as aggressive, condescending or rude.

4.5.8 Spousal and Family Support

4.5.8.1 Supportive Husbands

Just over three-quarters (76%) of the South African respondents reported that they were married, and in most instances they described their husbands as their primary support in developing their career, i.e., these relationships influenced the career opportunities they pursued. JJS23's husband was her school romance, and over time he had been her mentor, a devil's advocate, and supported her with family responsibilities and their children.

Every career decision she made was made with her husband, therefore his role in her career journey greatly influenced the career opportunities she pursued. She recalled taking a professional sabbatical from her board role when appointed Chairman-elect to relieve the pressure of having to fulfil both roles, as there was an increased expectation of travel which would have negatively impacted her personally and professionally.

The husband of respondent ACS05 supported her by crafting her journey and the career opportunities she pursued. She described taking on significant and challenging roles when she was appointed Director of Programs with the National Health Institute in the USA. Similarly, respondent WFS40 described her husband as her pillar of support, playing a mentoring and coaching role in her career journey. She reported that with his support, she felt she could do anything. This belief had helped her progress her career continuously, as she had the assurance that someone had her back. Even at times when things were rough with the children, they would have key conversations about the roles she pursued and when her children became teenagers, they both shared in the responsibility of being their primary caregivers.

Mobility was a key enabler to the respondents' career progress and their ability to take on business travel. Her husband's support allowed respondent ADS02 to take the opportunity for business travel while he took on the childcare responsibilities. Similarly, some of the respondents had to trade-off their short-term career progress to support their husband's career opportunities, as experienced by respondent VSS38. Throughout their marriage they have shown support for each other's career objectives, for example she followed her husband on an international assignment: these amazing opportunities were discussed through having real, honest conversations, because they involved her making some sacrifices in her career which she found difficult at the time. Now, back in their home country, her husband is her primary personal support in taking responsibility for childcare duties in with support from domestic help as they both have demanding careers.

Therefore, the choice of marriage partner has had a significant influence on the career journey of some respondents. As CRS08 explained, her primary personal support has been her second husband, as he shared her career ambition and supported her journey. She reflected that one of the key decisions that impacted her career progression was her choice of life partner after her divorce.

4.5.8.2 House Husbands

Some respondents reported that the support of their husbands who were fully dedicated to family responsibilities was very important in their career progression:

- As a mother of four sons, JPS24's husband took on a supportive role while being self-employed, which gave the family more flexibility. She deliberately took time to build networks of support tribes with other professional women, as well as with people in the same social frame of reference, i.e., who did not stereotype the roles of men and women in society.

- Respondent LVAS26's husband has been her greatest support throughout her career journey in that her husband created the environment for their family in order for her to support her decision to pursue a corporate career, whilst he is also a successful businessman, he is able to work from home and help out with the parental responsibilities, this enabled her to move to wherever her next promotion were and gave them the flexibility to relocate across the country.

4.5.8.3 Family and Friends Support

Some respondents relied more on support from their family and parental support. ATS01 explained that her primary personal support throughout her career has been her mother, and in later years she took on financial responsibility for her extended family. ATS01 reflected on her first marriage in her early 20s, when she prioritised others above her own needs. She became exasperated by her ethnic background, which was characterised by a culture of eating rich foods and women seen as subservient to men. This led to the breakdown of not only ATS01's health, but also the demise of her marriage which ended in divorce.

Respondent MMS30 was not married and relied on her mother and sister as her key support figures throughout her professional journey her family have been the cornerstone to navigate key decisions in that they supported her through negative experiences in her professional endeavours, which she believed made her stronger, in which she gained a lot of insight.

Sibling support emerged as a theme for some respondents in terms of their primary supporters, assisting them with family responsibilities and giving them assurances when pursuing career opportunities:

- ESS16's sisters were her greatest support throughout her career journey; they've been her anchors during difficult times. In addition, she surrounded herself with friends who supported her and would take on some of her parental duties when she needed to work longer hours.

- USS36's primary personal support in developing her career was her older siblings. She proudly shared that her three sisters are professionals in law, medicine and psychology respectively. In addition, she has a work sponsor who is always checking in with her and pushes her to progress her career.

4.5.8.4 Self-Reliance

For some respondents, choice or circumstance had made them self-reliant, only seeking support when required. Respondent LOS27 explained that she did not attribute personal support to a particular person as she progressed her career in that she identify who to go for support in specific instances, her mother has been a 'listening ear' and she relied on her father for business advice, but she ultimately made decisions for herself. More recently, respondent LOS27 relied on her second husband as her previous marriage had ended at a defining moment for her in her career. She wanted to change jobs and prioritise her career ambitions, successfully so a within a year she was offered a CFO role at the age of 28 which developed her experience in listed firms.

4.5.9 Mentorship

4.5.9.1 Mentoring Impact

Half of the South African respondents reported that they had actively pursued a mentoring relationship as part of their career progression. Respondent ENS17 reported that her mentoring relationships had created opportunities for her to review her career experience and take on new roles, as well as guiding her to take on smaller board roles to develop the confidence and experience to take on greater roles in the future. She studied things to help her understand her role. When the mentoring relationship is characterised by giving open and honest feedback informally and the mentor is readily available to give advice, as experienced by respondent GLS18.

Mentor enabled respondents to obtain guidance in career decision-making. Respondent VSS38 reported that she had actively pursued mentoring relationships as she was looking for someone to be a sounding board and to get good balance in taking career decisions. Mentoring relationships positively pushed respondent ACS05 to pursue career opportunities and explore possibilities, who recalled growing fond of her mentor over time and their relationship has since become a friendship.

The benefit of having been mentored throughout the career journey was best described by LVAS26, who said that it opened her eyes and allowed her to prioritise her career and develop a strong work ethic; she stated that she had to work hard as numbers speak louder than words. When she reached executive management, the role of the mentor changed and it became more a reflective relationship to hold up the mirror.

This helped at this senior management level, where she had to deal with political games driven by insecurity. She learnt to navigate through these challenges by developing political and social capital. It was her experience that in executive management, it is essential to become political, which she referred to as fluff, not substance. She noted that she had seen high level political manoeuvring happen in every organisation. Despite being excluded by a male-dominated environment and leadership, as she progressed into leadership roles in general management in manufacturing, she was told that she was the first female Technical General Manager in 125 years of the organisation. Before her appointment women representation in that role was non-existent, which led to her becoming a mentor. Being a mentor opened a door which allowed me to see how exclusion is perpetrated by both genders in the technical side of the business, from junior to senior levels. She observed white exclusion as a coloured woman in engineering and recalled a conversation with a senior leader from the UK head office in which he referred to her as ‘you people’ at which point she addressed with him immediately.

It was clear that mentors had been instrumental for some respondent MMS30 in the development of her career she reported that one of her mentors was the CEO of the Wealth division of a large bank that opened her eyes to her own development and created doors of opportunity for her. This mentoring relationship developed over a period of ten years and flourished into a friendship. Another mentor who played a key role in the development of respondent MMS30 was a Principal Partner at a financial firm, her guidance helped her develop networking skills and further inspired her entrepreneurial prowess.

These mentoring sessions can take on various formats, as described by USS36. Throughout her career she actively pursued professional mentoring relationships, both inside and outside of the organisation, even if at times this was just a coffee catch-up or a virtual meeting over Skype. Some respondents had to actively seek out mentors as they recognised the impact that mentoring would have on progressing their careers.

The experience of NES35 was that she had to find a mentor and approached the CEO who was ten years her senior. This had the biggest impact on her career and was a defining moment. Another mentoring relationship that supported her career development was with the CFO, who was married to a strong career woman. To some extent this influenced his management style in that he was very flexible and acknowledged the pressures of being a mother for example, respondent NES35 breastfed for two hours every day. He was a strong leader and focussed on developing her.
She concluded that mentorship and sponsorship are key to progressing women's careers. She also endorsed networking forums, explaining that the CEO's Women's Forum was an initiative started in her firm as women were underrepresented in executive management roles, with the aim of putting metrics in place to track progress against putting women into these roles.

However, for some respondents the mentoring experience was established with more difficulty, as described by respondent WFS40, mentorship was important in her career journey, but mostly male mentors. She tried a female mentor, however at the time she needed more formal mentorship and set up an agreement to have regular sessions with the female senior director, however 'it was not a great experience'.

4.5.9.2 Not Mentored

Half of the South African respondents had not actively sought out mentoring relationships, either formally or informally. They were more self-reliant in progressing their careers, as described by respondent ATS01 who took a pragmatic approach to pursuing her career goals.

Respondent ADS02 reported she had actively sought out a mentoring relationship, when she became Chief Information Officer, an executive coach was appointed to assist her development into the C-Suite. Her executive coaching journey allowed her to reflect on her own thoughts as she navigated her career experience in senior management. This relationship developed beyond executive coaching into a friendship over time.

Similarly, respondent JJS23 did not recall having had any mentors to bounce ideas off; her husband supported her in her career decisions. In retrospect she admitted that she now sees the merit in having a professional mentor in today's world of work. Respondent JPS24 acknowledged that although she did not have a mentor, she was groomed through learning and exposure over time to become technically proficient. In her opinion, a mentor is essential to understand corporate politics so as 'to opt into the rules of the game'. Similarly respondent LMS29 said she never entertained being mentored as she developed her career whilst studying part-time and having children before the age of thirty, however, in the later stage of her career she saw the value of mentoring younger professionals and the value of management training as her career has developed through on on-the job opportunities and exposure.

This view was echoed by respondent LOS27 who had not actively pursued mentoring; who never had a mentor or had a role model, however she had been involved with mentoring others she recognise that this has been a gap in her career progression. For this reason, respondent LOS27 had been participating in a Chief Financial Officer professional network and attended one such networking session, although she stated that she has yet to see a material impact of these networking sessions on her career progress. This was also the career experience of respondent ESS16, who had not actively pursued mentoring relationships but recalled being mentored by an executive in her previous organisation in that her mentor gave her board level exposure and progressed her career across all departments within her functional discipline.

4.5.9.3 Unmentored Mentors

Even though some of the respondents had not sought out mentors during their career journeys, because they had achieved management seniority they were often sought out to mentor others. BGS06 explained that she had not actively pursued mentoring relationships and attributed her career progress to development opportunities she was offered. Among these were a few weeks in the USA on a study mission, an INSEAD programme in France and an HR Executive programme at Harvard. Respondent CRS08 reported that because she is well educated and experienced, she often mentors others and has various peers she relies on for input as touch points, not formal mentors.

Those with longer management tenures, such as respondent CCS10, reported that she has never had a professional mentor but has been approached to mentor others given her career success. Similarly, respondent AAS04 had not actively pursued mentoring relationships, but had often been approached to be a mentor. She attributed this to her willingness to support the development of others as well as her success in delivering. Finally, respondent HHS19 said that early on her career she did not actively pursue mentoring relationships, but as her career progressed, she had been approached to mentor others.

4.5.10 Motherhood

4.5.10.1 Childbearing

The choice and impact of motherhood emerged as having significant influence on the career opportunities and career development of women. Respondent JJS23 said that becoming a mother was a defining moment for her. As it happened at the time that her career was on an upward trajectory, the support of her husband was crucial as she felt anxious; as she had to demonstrate her worth through delivering in her role.

Conversely, respondent JPS24 reported that she realised, she can't actually care what others say, she recalled having to travel for work when one of her children fell ill and while sitting in a boardroom in another country she thought, 'I have to get home now' and relayed this to her line manager. On returning home she felt guilty that she let her work down and that it could be a career-limiting move. Reflecting on this incident she noted that vulnerability is important; she need to know when to ask for help. For someone who sees herself as self-sufficient, which she describe as being present in every moment is important to her. She recalled driving with her son one day, and he said to her, 'Mom, one day when I grow up and get married, I don't want my wife to work, mom you work so hard, and I don't want my wife to work so hard'.

4.5.10.2 Co-Parenting

The role of co-parenting emerged as a key enabler in the career progression of mothers. Respondent NES35 reported that her husband had been her primary personal support throughout her career experience in that he helped her as a young mom of a one-year-old, which she sees as her biggest job, in balancing her career outcomes and family commitment, which at times she made her feel totally overwhelming and her husband understood the impact it had on her.

4.5.10.3 Workplace Dynamics

The impact of maternity leave hindered the career progression of many respondents, as experienced by respondent LVAS26 when she was appointed into a new role. Her line manager at the time made it difficult in that it felt like a tug of war even though she delivered results in her role, the line management relationship was a guarded and one of making excuses during; this time her line manager progressed his own people. LVAS29's her experience of line managers who supported her progression through the management ranks were effective in performance management and affording her development opportunities to grow.

Returning to the workplace after maternity leave proved as challenging. Respondent VSS38 said that as a young mother she felt that she had to cover her back as she was being micromanaged. This created difficulties which resulted in a breakdown of trust and led her to resign without another job to go to. In response to some of the challenges that returning to work after maternity leave involved, respondent AAS04 started a mentoring group for mothers to share insights and provide guidance on tips on how to cope and organise one's life.

Respondent NES35 had an example of how practical arrangements could assist childbearing employees, because it had been her experience that companies are able to put practices in place to make the work environment female-friendly. A pregnant HR employee noticed the distance that pregnant women had to walk from the car park to the building entrance, so she designated six parking bays close to the entrance of the building for pregnant employees.

Exclusion from meetings and decision-making continued during motherhood, as experienced by JPS24. She recalled that after her son was born, meetings would take place early in the morning before she arrived her colleagues would have catch-up meetings which would take place 15 minutes before the actual meeting time and she would be expected to do the 'leg work', which excluded her from participating in strategic decision-making. She managed this by being deliberate; it took courage to have her recommendations and insights incorporated. In the experience of LOS27, the exclusion is often unconscious and done without thought. As she made her way through the management ranks during her child-bearing years, she often encountered aggression or inferences that she was not reliable.

4.5.10.4 Balancing Career and Motherhood Demands

Respondent WFS40 described the challenges of balancing a career as a working mother, as well as the problematic belief that some jobs are not safe for women. Identifying that some challenging projects and jobs are not suitable for women perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management. The stress in the work environment is not conducive for child-bearing, as observed by respondent ENS17, to the extent that in one department most of the women experienced birth complications.

Respondent JJS23 experienced that juggling work and personal commitments perpetuated the underrepresentation of women in senior management. There was the inconvenience of being a mother, in that she to breastfeed and ask for a breastfeeding room, as she were expected to continue working, even if that meant setting up a home office. It is respondent JJS23' experience that you have to be brave to ask for what you need, particularly if you are a woman with young children.

As a mother of a young family, respondent VSS38 found balancing her family responsibilities challenging when colleagues did not respect timekeeping and ended meetings beyond normal business hours. This placed a significant strain on her as her husband worked 120kms away from home, therefore she was the primary caregiver. Her frustration was finding the balance between taking care of her young family and competing in corporates to realise her career goals.

4.5.10.5 Maternal Guilt

Reflecting on the personal impact of trying to balance home and work responsibilities, the experience of respondent LOS27 was that women have to manage the roles of mother and wife during peak periods, such as year-end or budgeting, with pressure to deliver 100% at work and 100% at home. As a result, she felt that personally, she was not good at balancing the needs of a two-year-old son and her approach in this regard was that work is work, and home is home. In the afternoons she made a practice to spend time in nature. At the time of the interview, she was seven months pregnant and preparing to proceed on maternity leave, which made her feel guilty. This was made worse by the managerial attitudes that she was going on a 'big leave of absence', which led her to break down.

4.5.10.6 Societal Expectations

As a mother, respondent CRS08 felt the pressure to conform to the societal paradigm that she was the primary caregiver to her son therefore women have to develop a greater level of personal mastery as they deal with various exclusionary practices. She concluded by saying that women have to be more practical in managing their careers and focus on building their general business knowledge.

The cultural background that respondent CCS10 came from impacted the demands placed on her as a mother, which were further exacerbated when she divorced her first husband. When she became a single mother, the leadership of the company underestimated the impact of this. They failed to support her through this stage, as was evident in the amount of business travel she was expected to undertake in her role, which led to her resignation.

4.6 Southern African Career Experience

4.6.1 Defining Moments

4.6.1.1 International and Regional Experience

One of the salient features of the Southern African respondents' experience was their pursuit of international or regional experiences. They sought these through short-term work assignments, further professional development or taking up roles in another country. In this group, 40% lived and worked outside their home country.

Respondent CSZ11 described her career defining moments when working in the United Kingdom as well as in South Africa, i.e., outside her home country. This allowed her to gain international exposure and build relationships across the business. These assignments did not include her family, therefore her personal support network at home was important for her to progress in her career.

Respondent JMZ22 sought international exposure because becoming a mother significantly impacted her career, especially in the industry she operated in at the time; telecoms is unforgiving, turnover is high, and you require high levels of EQ. More than half of the leadership team at that time resigned from their roles and decided to pursue business qualifications in the UK. This gave her exposure to different cultures and expanded her business knowledge. While studying, she did short-term maternity cover for a fintech firm which further bolstered her experience.

4.6.1.2 Professional Development and Exposure

Another defining moment that shaped the career journeys of this group was professional development and gaining exposure that led to promotional opportunities. A defining moment for respondent MRS31 was when she was nominated and appointed by a professional body to preside over the institution based in Rwanda.

For respondent CKS09, defining moments were influenced by her professional development. She qualified early on in her career and was sponsored by a Finance Director who took a personal interest in her career development. He encouraged her to make it to partner level in the firm and pushed her to perform as she aspired to be the first African Black female partner. When this was achieved, she saw her role for other women in the firm as a voice of encouragement.

As she reached senior management early on her career, she felt the need to develop her confidence, so she requested opportunities for development and was given access to a prestigious leadership development programme delivered by the University of Kellogg. Over time she started to own the role and was given further opportunities to lead teams and develop her managerial capabilities. She then developed her business knowledge outside her professional field by completing an EMBA. This allowed her to broaden her knowledge and ultimately transition out of her functional expertise into a commercial role.

4.6.2 Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

4.6.2.1 After-Hours Socialising

After work social activities were reported as one of the key exclusionary practices experienced. CSZ11 described being excluded from events such as going for cocktails at pubs because she could not participate due to family commitments. During some of these activities' clients would be entertained, therefore she had to think of different ways to build client relationships and did so by setting up client lunches. Respondent JMZ22 related to this. She experienced exclusionary practices with after-hours meetings set up at gentlemen's only clubs. While the invitation would be extended to colleagues and clients, as a woman she was prohibited from participating in these meetings. Reflecting on this experience it made her angry and aggressive; she learnt that she had to fight to make career progress.

4.6.2.2 Gendered Recruitment

The role of gender, socially and within the business environment, was a key influence on the exclusionary practices that women in Southern Africa experienced. Respondent MSL33 articulated that her career journey was significantly developed when she pursued academic studies and she was encouraged by a seasoned professional in her field: 'He was the first Mosotho to qualify as a psychologist.' Because of this, her studies were sponsored by the government. She completed her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, studying abroad away from family, so she had to learn to do things on her own which broadened her life experience and gave her exposure to other cultures. When she returned to her home country, professionally qualified and with experience, the Director of Clinical Psychology retired, which created an opportunity for her career progression. However, at the time she was seen as the young woman in the department, and subsequently the role was then changed to Senior Head of Function in Clinical Psychology. She challenged this as the role was responsible for the department and managing the team of clinical psychologists. She had to do so much more to be recognised and go the extra mile and her transfer into the role was contested whilst she had to endure abuse.

4.6.2.3 Legislative Environment

The labour environment in different countries varies in maturity in terms of employment equity, which has an impact on the experience of exclusion:

- Within-Country Legislation

  Amendments to the Employment Act in Zambia provided women with four months' maternity leave, which had a twofold impact (The Employment Code Act No 3 of 2019, 2019). Women as the primary caregivers at birth require time off work, but although this is mandated through maternity leave legislation, in practical terms their career journey does not progress during this time. In respondent JMZ22's experience, the second effect of the amendments to the Employment Act in Zambia was that jobs started to be advertised as open for men only.

- Foreign National Legislation

  As a foreign national, the subtleness of the focus on transformation and roles being advertised implies that only South Africans will be considered. This excluded respondent MRS31 from promotional opportunities and stifled her career progress. She was then on fixed term contracts, which created instability, reduced her income and, regardless of her personal commitment to perform in her role, made her feel sad.

4.6.3 Personal Impact

4.6.3.1 Life Traumas

Working long hours and the pressure of a corporate career led to respondent JMZ22 suffering a miscarriage. The loss of her baby impacted her severely and she had to take six months off from work, but she recalled the exceptional support she received from her line manager, her team, and the firm at large.

4.6.3.2 Spousal Support

This support was critical for the respondents to follow their career pursuits. CSZ11's husband was her primary support through her career journey. Because of this she was able to pursue secondment opportunities in another country, which further developed her skills.

CSZ11's husband was instrumental in supporting her so she could undertake the required business travel and work long hours as he took care of family commitments. Nevertheless, the ongoing stress of progressing her career in this way impacted her health; she suffered from blood issues and diminished social relationships as she prioritised her time around her career.

4.6.3.3 Family Support

The role of immediate and extended family support in an African context emerged as a key enabler to career progression. Respondent MRS31 explained that her family was her primary personal support during her career journey, and she had taken on additional financial responsibility for her siblings in return. The nature of her role requires long hours in the office, which at times became emotionally taxing. To alleviate work and career pressure she has taken up yoga and spends more time with her family: 'I love cooking and entertaining.'

4.6.4 Sponsorship

4.6.4.1 Professional Sponsors

Professional sponsors also played a key role in the respondents' career development. MRS31 described her professional sponsor as providing her with access to opportunities as well as funding to complete her educational pursuits. Respondent JMZ22 added that she had actively pursued relationships with both men and women to enable her career development. As a result, she had had the benefit of a professional sponsor who created opportunities for her to get exposure, while developing her credibility in business: she was the first woman to speak at a client event.

4.6.5 Management Practice

4.6.5.1 Development Support

Managers who enabled the career progression of the respondents were able to guide their performance and create opportunities for career development. Respondent CSZ11 reported that her line manager supported her through relevant performance appraisals and provided her with development support and opportunities to gain exposure, which significantly progressed her career. Respondent MRS31 referred to a line manager who played a key role in supporting her development and provided her with the opportunity to transfer within her function and take on greater responsibilities, as she had a clear vision.

4.6.5.2 Perceived Family-Work Conflict

An obstacle in a woman's career progression comes if managers perceive family commitments as a reason not to promote women, as respondent CSZ11 explained, in her observation, women are automatically excluded from career mobility opportunities because the perception is that they prioritise family responsibilities at the expense of her career development. This perception can be further reinforced by cultural beliefs.

4.6.5.3 Poor Managerial Competencies

Poor managerial competencies can also frustrate career progression. CKS09 experienced a line manager who treated her like a child and would present her work as his own. Furthermore, he was not supportive of her development and constantly opposed her progress. There was a level of professional jealousy in this behaviour as she was earmarked to progress, but it was a defining moment for her when the lack of support from her line manager took her performance rating from outstanding to mediocre.

Beyond professional inadequacies, managers' personal traits could hinder career development. MRS31 reported that her line manager was backbiting; her line manager was a snake and managed the function through favouritism. For respondent CSZ11, her line manager's approach to prioritising team performance over personal welfare hindered her progress.

4.6.5.4 Expatriate Managers

Being managed by an expatriate had a distinct impact on the career progression of the respondents. As described by JMZ22, expatriate line manager was different in his ways of doing things. This manager led by example and gave her the opportunity to develop and grow without the need to put punitive measures in place.

4.6.6 Reward Practice

4.6.6.1 Gendered Pay

The respondents experienced the effect of pay practices related to gender as respondent CSZ11 demonstrated that the gender pay gap resulted in an income differential based purely on her gender and not on her performance in her role. Knowledge of the income differential was not widely known by the respondents, which further exacerbated the pay gap. When reflecting on the gender pay gap, respondent CKS09 stated, 'let me be the first person to say that I'm not good at negotiating salary'. Her view was that one needs to focus on getting the work done and the financial reward will follow, because senior management earnings capacity is determined by business performance. However, when pay was regulated, the respondents did not experience the gender pay gap, as demonstrated by respondent MLS33. She was not directly impacted as the salaries were pre-set in the Ministry of Health.

4.6.6.2 Male Reward Acceleration

Some of the respondents observed that the acceleration of male counterparts through the management ranks had a direct influence on the widening gender pay gap. MRS31 reported that in her experience, her male counterparts would often move quickly up the management ranks as they were mostly unencumbered by family responsibilities. Within her field it's about putting in the hours, which is challenging when juggling family responsibilities.

4.6.7 Peer-to-Peer Relationships

4.6.7.1 Peer Sabotage

CKS09 recalled a peer who blatantly undermined her. She would set up meetings with her team and collect complaints about her leadership style, at which point her colleague told CKS09, 'I don't report to you, I work with you'. This relationship inhibited the respondent's ability to operate effectively in her role in the company.

4.6.7.2 Specialist Professionals

However, some of the respondents experienced a more collaborative peer environment, which could have been due to the nature of their roles. The experience of respondent MSL33 was that she had to learn from other professionals as you have no-one to refer to". In her work situation "there was no supervisor, therefore you managed yourself" and people "had to go for their own promotion".

4.6.8 Spousal and Family Support

4.6.8.1 Supportive Husbands

Supportive husbands proved vital for the respondents; they were their primary support structure, motivating their wives to develop their careers, this was the case for respondent CSZ11, whose husband's support gave her the platform to pursue opportunities for exposure and the confidence to perform in her roles. The effect of spousal support stretched beyond careers to include help with resolving work and family conflicts and bearing the personal impact of the wife's career progress. Respondent MSL33 described her husband as her primary personal support, especially when she felt the impact personally. They had a child with autism who required special care, and when the respondent had to complete her professional qualification in the United Kingdom, her husband played the primary care giver role at home and "he pushed" her to succeed.

4.6.8.2 Parental Support

For some respondents, their mothers were part of their primary support, in addition to the support offered by their husbands, as illustrated by respondent JMZ22 that said that her mother and husband had been her primary supports, providing her with the necessary personal assistance to pursue her career goals. However, the tragic death of her baby changed her career aspirations.

4.6.9 Mentorship

4.6.9.1 Impact of Mentoring

Mentoring benefitted respondent MSL33 throughout her career experience, who learnt to fight to get what she deserved. She experienced this when she had her children, because although the law protects women when giving birth and while on maternity leave, she had to "stand and fight" to be home for six months.

Respondent JMZ22 described herself as a product of mentoring, having been afforded the opportunity to learn from "older women" across various corporate fields. Further to this, she actively developed relationships with both men and women to enable her career development. Similarly, for respondent CKS09, the role of mentorship was important for her career. This started early on with her first line manager in Zimbabwe, who was functionally astute and groomed her professionally by giving her exposure to strategic conversations and meetings. Although he no longer works with her, he still plays a business mentoring role in her career.

4.6.9.2 Identifying Mentees

Respondent MRS31 identified a need within her specialist field in health sciences, when she observed that black students were underrepresented. She therefore took a keen interest in identifying those students with potential who needed support and an opportunity to progress in their academic pursuits.

4.6.9.3 Non-Mentored

Of the Southern African respondents, only CSZ11 reported that she had not actively pursued a mentoring relationship, however she had developed external and personal support networks that provided her with career support.

4.6.10 Motherhood

4.6.10.1 Single Motherhood

The minority of respondents were single mothers by choice. Respondent CKS09 decided to pursue her career and have children on her own, without the support of a partner. She had her extended family as her primary personal support structure to take care of her needs as well as those of her children, and she emphasised that an adequate support structure was important in both her professional and personal life to avoid escalating tension due to demands from both.

4.6.10.2 Career Impact

Most respondents acknowledged the impact of motherhood on their careers, particularly during pregnancy and maternity leave. CKS09 reported that following the birth of her first child, she took five months maternity leave. At that time in her career, she did not want to be overlooked for career opportunities, but she felt personally conflicted as she did not know what demands motherhood would place on her: 'I did not want to be counted out.'

During this time most of the male partners in her organisation had stay-at-home mothers as spouses while she was a single mother. When she had her second baby and went on maternity leave, she decided not to let go of the clients she had built up, so she took a shortened maternity leave period and returned to work within three months of giving birth.

4.7 Central African Career Experience

4.7.1 Defining Moments

4.7.1.1 International Assignments

The opportunity to proceed on international work assignments progressed the career journey of the respondents. Respondent BES07 said that her career had been significantly influenced by her line manager because she pushed the respondent to do more and sent her on an assignment for one year in the United States of America to further develop her skillset.

This allowed the respondent to operate independently while building teams and further developing her functional expertise through work-related projects.

4.7.1.2 Professional Qualifications

Another influence on the respondents' career progression was formal professional qualifications. This was demonstrated by respondent LYA28, whose education played a key role in her career. Her training in engineering and the knowledge she developed over time allowed her to take on greater responsibility in executive management roles, which was further supported by development opportunities in executive management training.

4.7.2 Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

4.7.2.1 Language Exclusion

Having gained career experience mostly outside her home country, respondent BES07 explained the impact of language exclusion. As a native French speaker, one of the key exclusionary practices she experienced was language, specifically in management meetings when teams conversed in their home language and ignored the use of English as the business language. Initially this annoyed her, as she was not able to understand or participate in the conversation, but over time, she learnt to approach the situation with humour to diffuse the situation and often the meeting members would apologise.

4.7.2.2 Male-Dominated Industries

Having qualified in professions that were male-dominated, as well as gaining experience in male-dominated industries, a key exclusionary practice that the respondents experienced was the impact of the 'boys' club'. Respondent LYA28 described her experience as a woman in male-dominated industries where it was important to be allowed into this "club", because this was permission, from her male counterparts, to participate in the industry.

She reflected on 'inner circles' that played a key role in her career progression, including participation in meetings and business exposure to create opportunities to meet with clients and establish credibility. All of these activities are important in business and therefore her male counterparts' dominance could affect business relationships and she had to be tactful on how to handle the situation.

4.7.2.3 Perceptions of Capabilities

Within the engineering industry, which is technically orientated and male-dominated, the perception on construction sites was that women were not able to perform certain physical activities such as climbing ladders. These perceptions had an impact on the respondents being able to advance their careers, despite their technical capabilities and competencies to perform certain roles, as reported by LYA28, 'when a project required the inspection of a physical structure you would hear comments like; Why don't we send John?', even though there were capable women available to perform the inspection".

4.7.3 Personal Impact

4.7.3.1 Recreational Time

The respondents agreed that a critical career development factor, especially when working outside their home countries, was the ability to lessen the impact through recreation respondent BES07 had to actively manage her time to create recreational opportunities, put aside more time for herself, and build effective personal relationships.

4.7.3.2 Internal Locus of Control

Some respondents managed the stress of their careers from a mental well-being perspective as LYA28 described herself as having an "internal locus of control" in that she would look at the situation from a positive perspective. It was her opinion that stress is self-imposed and sometimes it is important to realise that taking on additional responsibilities is not realistic. Now she considers her own choices, and seeks advice before taking action.

4.7.4 Sponsorship

4.7.4.1 Line Manager Sponsorship

Many respondents noted the importance of the role of the line manager. Respondent LYA28 described how one of her line managers, who was close to retirement age, helped her with her career by giving her exposure and sharing his knowledge which he had acquired over a 30 year period: 'he was nearing retirement and did not see me as threat' and he had confidence in her ability to perform.

4.7.4.2 Female Sponsorship

Unlike the South African respondents, respondent BES07 explained that throughout her career, most of her sponsors had been female. She recalled one specific sponsor who created exposure for her when she was working in Uganda, by allowing her to travel into villages and manage relevant budgets while working on developing her leadership and relational skills.

4.7.5 Management Practice

4.7.5.1 Performance Expectations

Respondents echoed the importance of setting clear performance expectations as a key management practice. In the experience of respondent BES07, line managers who contributed significantly to her career employed clear goal-setting and regular joint performance reviews. However, being micro-managed throughout the performance year left her feeling stifled, which negatively impacted her performance outcomes.

4.7.5.2 Limited Exposure

Respondents were generally ambitious to progress through the management ranks and demonstrated their capabilities by taking opportunities for exposure respondent LYA28 explained that a line manager hindered her career progress as he saw her as a competitor. Consequently, he stifled her exposure so she 'wouldn't get projects that would put her in the forefront', as he had the underlying fear that these high-profile projects would demonstrate her abilities. She attempted to negotiate this through addressing her concerns tactfully 'to be seen as nice person and not seen as a threat'.

4.7.6 Reward Practice

4.7.6.1 Reward and Relevant Experience

Respondent BES07 said that it is her opinion that remuneration is influenced by years of relevant experience and the critical skills required in the business, and is not necessarily gender-driven.

4.7.6.2 Perceived Income Equality

The experience of respondent LYA28 was that she had to negotiate her remuneration at the onset of a role: 'I don't consider the gender pay gap'. Consequently, she evaluated her compensation in relation to her male counterparts evaluating whether her remuneration were on par or above her peers which perpetuate the wage inequality however she did not perceive it as an issue in her career progression.

4.7.7 Peer-to-Peer Relationships

4.7.7.1 Peer Capabilities

Respondent LYA28's experience of peer-to-peer relationships within her specific industry, when operating as a specialist or expert, was 'once they notice your abilities you are kept in a particular role'. Her senior peers perceived her capabilities in relation to her age as a young professional, which led to her being excluded from projects as she was seen as inexperienced.

4.7.7.2 Peer Socialising

Respondent BES07 noted that there was a benefit of socialising outside of working hours and participating in the social networks of colleagues who shared similar interests, such as children attending the same schools. She believed that sharing knowledge and support is required from peers to navigate through the senior management ranks.

4.7.8 Spousal and Family Support

4.7.8.1 Supportive Husbands

The husband of respondent BES07 was her primary support in developing her career. She saw him as her cheerleader, as he supported her in pursuing her career goals while he took responsibility for household duties.

4.7.8.2 Family Support

Family played an important role in supporting respondent LYA28's career journey, because they would point out her blind spots and share their business experience with her, for example, her father and peers would advise her when she was assessing new career opportunities. In particular, her father played an instrumental role in her career journey and instilled in her the belief that 'once you set your mind, you can achieve anything'. This family advice supported her in developing as an engineer, changing career paths, and taking on new roles.

4.7.9 Mentorship

4.7.9.1 Professional Mentoring

Respondent BES07 actively pursued mentoring relationships and described how these sessions supported her and further developed her professional networks. She concluded that her career progress had been supported through developing a solid understanding of her area of expertise and demonstrating how the thorough and relevant analysis of data translated into business metrics.

4.7.9.2 Silent Manager

Respondent LYA28 described the role of a mentor as a silent manager. Her mentor shaped her career experience from both a leadership and technical perspective, guiding her towards taking advantage of opportunities. It has therefore been her experience that mentoring is important in career progression: 'It is important as you rise and when you hire people into management positions to put a system of mentoring in place' said respondent LYA28.

4.7.10 Motherhood

4.7.10.1 Career Sacrifice

Respondent LYA28 decided to take three years off from work to take care of her young children: 'If there is one thing I could change as a mother it is feeling the quandary between going back to work and how to handle opposing and important aspects of being a mother'. She was passionate about both her career and motherhood ambitions, and concluded that women often feel that they need to choose one or the other.

4.7.10.2 Structured Support

Married for 29 years with two children, respondent BES07's primary support has been her husband. She also ensured that when she was required to travel for business, her mother would come and stay over to support the family, in addition to domestic staff such as the driver who took the children to school.

4.8 East African Career Experience

4.8.1 Defining Moments

4.8.1.1 Executive Coaching Impact

Respondent DMK13 progressed into senior management as she was triggered to grow having spent over nine years in the private sector, moving rapidly from junior management into senior management. A career coach supported her by mapping out her career journey and the required actions. Of her board experience she recalled the importance of leveraging social capital to operate effectively as a board member.

4.8.1.2 International Professional Development

One of the key development actions for respondent DRU15 was being sent on a secondment opportunity in electrical engineering in Europe. During this time, she was in the process of completing her Master's in Business Administration; she described it as a 'monumental two years'.

4.8.1.3 Mission-driven Organisations

The defining moment for respondent JNS25 was when she joined an institution whose mission she passionately believed in supporting. This has shaped her career experiences since 1997. During this time, another defining moment was obtaining a scholarship to study abroad in England. This gave her international exposure and development opportunities as she worked in multinational professional firms. Finally, the decision to have children was a defining moment. She described this as a personal change that allowed her to sit back and reflect upon what she wanted to do with her life.

4.8.2 Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

4.8.2.1 Childbearing Impact

The impact of maternity leave was profound for respondent DRU15, just as previous respondents reported. This was due to the balance required between her family responsibilities and those of her corporate career. As you can't physically change the requirements of childbearing, she had to find practical ways to work around this said respondent DRU15. In her experience, the difficulty of pursuing a career and motherhood is connected to the cultural feedback relating to the role of women in society, which leads to women questioning their own competence.

4.8.2.2 Men's Networks

Respondent JNS25 described more overt experiences of exclusionary practices in developing business relationships. In her view, men do business with men. As an illustration, she described a time when working with government ministers, who were mostly men, she was consciously excluded from conversations. Sometime this was done by men telling jokes to deliberately exclude her, although the difficulty was in challenging exclusionary practices that were subtle. It was therefore her view that you challenge where you can.

4.8.2.3 Perception of Capabilities

Respondent DMK13's career accelerated into senior management in her mid-30s. She recalled being referred to by the CEO at the time of her appointment to the company board as a pretty face. This comment made her feel that she should strive to work harder. The organisation was funded by international sponsors and her experience of promotional opportunities was that preference would be given to candidates who had obtained their academic qualifications from institutions in the UK or USA. This excluded African candidates, even though they had relevant experience and were

operationally astute, to the extent that a white male expatriate was appointed. She constantly felt that she had to prove her capabilities.

4.8.3 Personal Impact

4.8.3.1 Restructuring Impact

Respondent JNS25 relocated to South Africa to restructure the company and manage the office move. This was a particularly stressful time as she was appointed to acting position of her superior. During this time, she decided to place her children into boarding school and the resultant stress from this led her to decide not to apply for the position when it was advertised. Her experience of acting in the role was that 'it was a very draining experience' and she suffered emotional and physical strain.

4.8.3.2 Terrorist Attack

Respondent DMK13 suffered a personal life trauma. She described her experience of being rescued after being stranded for 12 hours at the office during a terrorist bomb attack. The impact of this on the infrastructure and how it unsettled society led to weeks of work not being completed, and the strain eventually led to her burnout.

4.8.3.3 Personal Practices

In order to deal with personal and career-related trauma and stress, respondents took on practices to mitigate the physical impact and mental well-being. Two examples illustrate these personal practices:

- Respondent JNS25 managed the negative impact of work-life integration through maintaining transparency and visibility within her networks. She tries to be transparent in terms of what she is able to deliver as it relates to her performance in her role.

  It has been her experience that networks can have a negative impact on one's career progression, therefore one should manage career progression with discretion and aim for a balancing act in deciding to be transparent in career performance.
- Respondent DMK13 lessened the impact caused by work strain and the terrorist attack by becoming intentional about listening to her body through exercise. She came to realise that as a career woman, she had to accept that she would not always be available for her children and had to rely on extended family when required.

4.8.4 Sponsorship

Respondent JNS25 benefited from professional sponsorship during her three-year tenure at a professional service firm, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, where she was afforded world class development opportunities and enjoyed working with professionals who had a strong work ethic with a focus on getting results. Respondent DMK13 attributed her career progression to a key sponsor who supported her in that he took me under his wing. This enabled her to develop her competence in business and relational-building skills.

4.8.5 Management Practice

4.8.5.1 Mobility

Mobility played a key role in the career journey of respondent DRU15, who was offered a role in another country but she could not relocate as she had two babies. Her line manager at the time was understanding of her personal circumstances, but the line manager who followed was much less so, which hindered her career progress. This was evident during her maternity leave when her line manager disregarded her absence when managing her performance. She confronted this by having real conversations with her line manager.

4.8.5.2 Supportive Line Managers

Respondent JNS25 recalled a few line managers who shaped her career experience because they took the time to sit down and explain the business. When she transferred within the organisation into a new role, she recalled her line manager at the time explicitly saying, 'I'm here to protect you and guide you as your manager'. This helped her get the work done and supported her work-life demands. A line manager who significantly helped respondent DMK13's progress encouraged her to pursue roles that had direct business influence – where the action is – and not to go for roles that had less impact.

4.8.5.3 Female Line Managers

Respondent DMK13 reported to a female line manager, which proved to be challenging as her leadership skills and professionalism were poor. This created strife between her line manager and the board, eventually leading to her dismissal. The dismissal created an opportunity for the respondent to take on the role in an acting capacity, however.

4.8.5.4 Stifled Career Progression

Respondent JNS25 reported that her line manager wanted to stand in her way of a promotion, even though she had gone through the recruitment selection process, her line manager did not support the promotion she had to put her foot down and make it clear that she was not going to accept that behaviour.

4.8.5.5 Managing Performance in Development Organisations

Reflecting on the impact of performance management systems on her career, respondent JNS25 said it was difficult in a development organisation this changed when she moved to a professional firm where accountability was clearly structured. However, as it was based on a compliance business model, given the nature of her role, her experience was that managing performance in that context was challenging. One therefore needed to manage one's own performance into management levels. Similarly, respondent DMK13, who had worked in project-driven organisations such as non-profits, found setting specific metrics related to quantifiable targets was more challenging when assessing performance.

4.8.6 Reward Practice

4.8.6.1 Maternity Leave Impact

Respondent DRU15's experience of reward practice was that she had to negotiate her salary at the onset of a role, however this was negatively impacted when she was on maternity leave and the gender pay gap became apparent. She addressed this with her line manager to close the gap.

4.8.6.2 Structured Salary Ranges

Working in development organisations, the implementation of strict remuneration policies did not expose respondent JNS25 to the gender pay gap. In her experience, the salary ranges were well-known throughout the organisation, and she therefore had direct access to pay information which was strictly adhered to.

4.8.6.3 Societal Perceptions Impact

Managerial perceptions in respondent DMK13's social context negatively impacted her remuneration. The assumption was that, as a result of her being single, her age and gender, she had fewer financial needs in relation to her more experienced male counterparts in similar roles.

She took this up with HR and had conversations to close the pay gap, which she had to negotiate based on her performance in going the extra mile in her role.

4.8.7 Peer-to-Peer Relationships

4.8.7.1 Peer Incompetence

When reflecting on her professional peer-to-peer relationships, respondent JNS25 noted that people were not doing their pre-work when commencing a meeting, therefore the quality of deliverables was affected and productivity went down. The respondent had participated in project teams and reassured the team of her ability, even though she had children. Her perspective was that, 'she had an excuse as she was childbearing, but she still remained effective in delivering'.

4.8.7.2 Supportive Peers

Peer support during onboarding advanced the career of respondent DRU15. When she was appointed to her current role, her peer, who had occupied the role prior to her, was very supportive in onboarding her into the role and mentoring her through the transition. Similarly, respondent DMK13 described the career importance of building cross-functional relationships with peers.

4.8.8 Spousal and Family Support

4.8.8.1 Supportive Husbands

The husband of respondent DRU15 was her primary personal support in her career journey. He took care of their children as she had to travel on business because he was an entrepreneur and therefore had more flexibility in terms of work commitments. Respondent DMK13's experience was that her husband was also her initial primary support, as her role required her to travel on occasion.

4.8.8.2 Domestic Support Structures

Living outside the country, respondent JNS25 had to rely on the support of female friends. She could depend on their 100% support whenever required while she pursued career opportunities. Respondent DMK13 described her domestic support structure as, her home operate like a small business, referring to what was required to manage her family responsibilities and grow her career.

4.8.9 Mentorship

Mentorship was vital in supporting the development of the career paths of the respondents. Respondent DRU15 commented that mentor pairing was important; she actively pursued a professional mentoring relationship which helped her review her career progress and guided her on ‘how to show up at work’. The mentoring relationship empowered and motivated her career progression.

4.8.10 Motherhood

4.8.10.1 Birth Complications

In 2013, respondent DRU15 gave birth to a son who suffered various medical complications she recalled that she were in and out of hospital. Sadly, her son passed away in 2014. During this time, she was fully supported by the management team who granted her seven months of compassionate leave. She was also provided with a coach to support her and help her keep her career progress on track, which had a very big impact. Finally, her family provided her with moral support during this time.

4.8.10.2 Promotability Impact

Although her career continued to progress while she was having her children, in the view of respondent DMK13, becoming a mother affected her promotability. She had to consistently prove herself to sponsors and funders and demonstrate her competence to perform the role. During her pregnancy and maternity leave, her line manager’s response was, ‘How do you expect being promoted while you are taking advantage of the company time asking for flexi-time’, and she decided to return to work sooner as the company went through a merger. Respondent JNS25 thought that practices that create an environment that combines the management of women’s careers, motherhood and professionalism are required.

4.9 West African Career Experience

4.9.1 Defining Moments

4.9.1.1 International Mobility

Career mobility was instrumental in developing the path into executive management for respondent DTA12. During her career she took on roles in Africa, the United States of America and Canada, which was not easy as she had to settle her family and adapt to these various locations.

Respondent IDI20 similarly gained international experience through roles she held in Paris in the financial services sector. A defining moment was changing careers from the private sector and returning to the Ivory Coast to take on a role in the public sector. This change was driven by her ambition to use her knowledge and skills to make a difference. Reflecting on her career journey, respondent NFI34 also commented on the importance of mobility, as accepting steps to work abroad gave her career exposure.

4.9.1.2 Entrepreneurship

A defining moment in the professional career journey of respondent DAE14 was when she decided to start her own business and provide her human resources skills as a service in the developing sector. She did not have identifiable sponsors along her career path, but mentorship played a key role in her progression.

4.9.1.3 Multiple Role Changes

When reflecting on defining moments in her career, respondent VAG37 identified job changes as being significant. Specifically, she recalled taking on at least four different roles in the big four audit firms. Another defining moment was when she was appointed assistant manager as well as moving to France to take on a role. When she moved to a bank she found her pay and advancement did not align. She had to change perspectives and switched companies to develop skills and technical capabilities with greater access to resources and opportunities. Respondent MEM32 claimed she 'was ok to play in the shadows', however in her new role, her line manager gave her the opportunity to execute decisions, which was one of her strengths. She was then afforded a role that was rich and varied and she jumped at the challenge to take on the position.

Respondent VDS39 took on multiple roles in one organisation shortly after she started her career in France. Her career soon accelerated into various functional managerial roles, and she was promoted onto the executive management committee to drive change in the biggest group of an old fashioned logistics company. Her role entailed restructuring and involved location changes as well as the introduction of tools and automation. This project became a flagship in the company and was a defining moment for her career in which she learnt that networks are key.

VDS39 then joined her current employer in France and progressed through various roles in Norway, India and South Africa. Her career experience in Norway was that work life balance came into perspective as that was part of the Nordic culture. Following this she located to Johannesburg to take on the development of African talent due to the lack of talent development in Africa. She focussed on building the employer brand in Africa with specific content and developing networks from a political and economic perspective. It was her ambition to make an impact on the continent, therefore she had to focus on building relationships with key decision-makers through networking and accessing platforms in developing knowledge.

4.9.2 Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

4.9.2.1 Organisational Politics

The career experience of respondent DTA12 was that she was excluded from social networks by ongoing organisational politics. She forcefully took this on by involving herself in meetings that had an impact on her role or on her outcomes. On reflecting on the effect of being forced to be included, she stated that it made her feel like that she was not wanted. However, she did not personalise this exclusion as she realised at some stage in the business process that her input would be required, and given the organisational structure, they could only ignore her so much. This exclusionary practice also emerged in the career experience of respondent VDS39. She had executive sponsorship in France and, as she described it, as the business fighting for her, but when a female director was appointed as her line manager, she realised that her new line manager was all into corporate politics. She was described her line manager as an insecure executive, which led to her to becoming a micro-manager and demonstrating petty behaviours. VDS39 was later made aware that her line manager was working on a process to get her out. Her response to this was that she focussed on being very well prepared for meetings and had her facts in order. This conflictual relationship eventually impacted her performance rating and she moved into another role, as ‘at some point the battle had to end’ said respondent VDS39.

4.9.2.2 Business Meeting Exclusion

Respondent DAE14 would frequently be excluded from meetings that affected her function or department. In those instances, she would invite herself to the meetings as she had to learn to put her hand up. It was her opinion that the exclusionary practices were not blatant; she attributed this attitude to her 'PMA' or positive mental attitude in her approach to her life. Despite this, as she does not drink alcohol, she was precluded from attending certain social activities which would often happen in the workplace.

Respondent NFI34 similarly had to impose herself to be given opportunity to be included. It was her opinion that you need to 'fight for opportunities as some women are their own enemies', a view based on her experience that women have intimate affairs in the workplace because they succumb to power-abuse by those in senior roles as an attempt to accelerate their careers. These exclusionary practices had an impact on her performance as hard work was key to her and she concentrated on doing well in her role.

4.9.2.3 Perceptions of Capabilities

Respondent IDI20 experienced exclusionary practices while working in the public service sector in key government departments. She thought the perception was that she was too young for the level of seniority of the role she held. This resulted in her being left off a distribution list which hindered her ability to perform her role. The impact of this exclusionary practice became evident during meetings. When IDI20 took the opportunity to contribute, her input would be undermined; she described this as 'mansplaining in that a male colleague would explain exactly what she did, and it would be accepted'. The result was that her contribution was silenced.

4.9.2.4 Men's Networks

In male-dominated industries such as mining, access to the boys' club is at the discretion of the men in those networks. Respondent NFI34's most recent experience of the Mining Indaba was that it has always been a boys' club, there is a natural bias in these industries towards men to the exclusion of women, and those women allowed access are handpicked women as a guineapig. She concluded that she still needs to fight against those practices.

4.9.2.5 Gendered Role Perceptions

Respondent VAG37 grew up with a mother who was an executive and in a country where at one time they had an interim female president as well as many female ministers. She was therefore not prepared for the gender bias she experienced in her role. At her first board appointment she was assisting her line manager and discussing their ways of work, but when people entered the meeting room, they assumed she was the secretary and proceeded to make jokes about women with an aggressive demeanour. It was VAG37's opinion that women are not given a voice and feel threatened as some women don't feel confident to speak to audience with the same confidence as their male counterparts therefore, men do not believe women can speak up.

4.9.2.6 Intercultural Bias

On assignment in India, respondent VDS39 had to turn around a retail business with different managers and management styles of delivery that drove different results. Being a black African woman managing Indian nationals was challenging because they did not recognise her as the leader. On reflection this was one of her defining career moments, which accelerated her career because the business element gave her a key advantage in her functional discipline. She realised that 'sometimes the competition is not outside the organisation, the competition is within'.

4.9.3 Personal Impact

4.9.3.1 Hospitalisation

The strain of developing their careers often caused severe stress-related health conditions respondent DTA12 explained that during a strenuous time in her career of respondent, she was hospitalised for two weeks when the health professionals could not determine the cause of her deteriorating health. Her priority thereafter was to take care of her overall well-being and she learnt to ask for help by surrounding herself with strong people that were able to support her. DTA12 has been more deliberate since then, taking occasional breaks, resting, swimming and just being still to reflect and gather her thoughts.

After qualifying, respondent VAG37 focussed on becoming a partner when she was newly married. Becoming a married women triggered the decision to evaluate her salary at a time when she was experiencing difficulties in her personal life. However, she remained committed and dedicated to her work.

4.9.3.2 Mental Health Impact

Continuous stress and experiences of perpetual exclusionary practices resulted in respondent IDI20 suffering back pain. This was further aggravated by stress brought on by career pressures. She then decided to actively take care of her health by making time for physical exercise, seeking out an executive coach to support her career journey, and building effective mentoring relationships through professional women's networks.

Respondent VAG37 did not have the frustration outlet of psychotherapy, and said that at times the strain of her career created so much tension that she would go into the bathroom, put toilet paper in her mouth and just scream.

4.9.3.3 Setting Boundaries

Given the nature of the respondents' careers, business travel is often a requirement. Respondent NFI34 reported that the cumulative effect of travel created personal difficulties which led to burnout, so she had to take time to adjust her approach in order to manage the negative effects of her stress. She took on meditation and breathing and had to learn to say no, as she learnt that when you say 'No to others you are saying Yes' to yourself.

These measures included taking up exercise, eating better and sleeping better. As she suffered from a lack of sleep this was supported by a nutritional coach and taking a break every three weeks to detox as she followed a holistic approach to wellness. Similarly, respondent MEM32's approach to dealing with the effects of work-life on her well-being is through having key dates that are agreed and worked towards. She also believes in having open and transparent conversations with those around her.

4.9.4 Sponsorship

4.9.4.1 Seniority in the Management Ranks

The role of a key sponsor in her career journey was described by respondent DTA12. Her sponsor was one of the senior executives in her firm and was instrumental in the roles she was afforded and the support she received to execute her operational deliverables. The theme of executive sponsorship was further raised by respondent VDS39, who throughout her career had a sponsor in the Vice President. He provided her with challenging career experiences so that she had five positions in ten years, as they both agreed on taking risks and pushing her.

4.9.4.2 Opportunities for Exposure

Respondent VAG37 had professional sponsors throughout her career, who helped advance her professionally because they gave her exposure by inviting her to attend executive level meetings. On reflection, her opinion was that this type of exposure prepared her and helped guiding her on how people saw her in order to manage her career more effectively. One such sponsor VAG37 experienced didn't see limits and was amazing at networking on many levels; he would put her in contact with key people to progress her career and supported her to take on a board appointment.

4.9.5 Management Practice

4.9.5.1 Apathetic Line Managers

One of the key factors raised by respondents was the experience of apathetic line managers. In her career, respondent DTA12 has mostly been approached by line managers to take on roles, therefore she had their support to perform and progress. However, she recalled having a line manager who questioned her experience and as she progressed to another role his response was, 'If you fail don't come back begging for a role'.

Respondent VAG37's experience of apathetic line managers was when she announced that she was getting engaged. Her line manager said, 'Oh my god, dammit', and told her, 'Marriage is not all that it is made out to be'. She interpreted his response as, 'Why are doing this?'. Finally, respondent NFI34 reported that 19 years ago, when she was pregnant, a line manager impeded her career progress because he did not support her. When she became Sales and Marketing Director, the Managing Director wanted to push her to capacity and to move her, which she declined as she felt unfairly treated. The manner in which they handled her at the time has caused reputational damage, in her opinion.

4.9.5.2 Performance Management

Among the performance management practices that influenced the career of respondent DTA12 were behavioural and financial aspects. She evaluated these in order to assess and plan her next career steps and identify development opportunities to prepare her for her next role. Respondent IDI20 had a micro-managing female line manager who put her under pressure and hindered her career progress, which subsequently stifled her growth. Her view of a performance management system was that 360-degree feedback should be obtained to give a balanced view of a person's performance.

Industry-related practices have influenced the performance management experience of some respondents. Working in the telecommunications industry, respondent MEM32 explained that performance management is based on a standardised performance management approach applicable to the industry.

4.9.5.3 Managerial-led Development

The influence of line managers who took a development approach was described by respondent IDI20. Her career progression was influenced by a line manager who mentored her and pushed her to complete her professional training. He also sponsored her by creating opportunities, leading to a role that challenged her.

In the case of respondent MEM32, she was afforded opportunities for lateral moves. She described her line manager as knowledgeable and providing her with regular feedback. Respondent NFI34 similarly described her line manager as giving her the opportunity to bloom and blossom, which progressed her career significantly.

4.9.5.4 Role-Based Exclusion

Industry-specific themes emerged in relation to the seniority of the roles the respondents held. In the experience of NFI34, in the telecommunications industry there were very few women directors as heads of departments. Additionally, women with expatriate status in the organisation was very rare due to the sales focus of these roles, which were mostly held by men. In conclusion, she believes that 'you should hire women to grow them' throughout the organisation. Regionally, the experience of respondent VDS39 was that African talent was not appointed to key decision-making roles in the multinational sector, and it was her observation that they don't trust black talent, which made her feel uncomfortable.

4.9.6 Reward Practice

4.9.6.1 Gendered Pay

During her career, respondent DTA12 has been directly affected by the gender pay gap. Her promotional increments had to be adjusted over a period of months as she took on more responsibility. Failure to negotiate pay influenced respondent MEM32 as she looked at the opportunity to move roles and make an impact. In retrospect, she deemed the pay difficulties as an excuse not to negotiate her compensation, which directly exposed her to the effects of the gender pay gap.

4.9.6.2 Equality of Pay Perception

Respondent NFI34's experience of the gender pay gap was that she had not been directly impacted as she didn't let people get away with things because she would fight and stand up for women in order for them to enjoy these positions as well. Respondent VDS39 was affected by the gender pay gap, as in the early stage of her career her compensation was lower. However, as her career progressed in the organisation she became part of the top 200 leaders so her compensation was well-positioned.

4.9.7 Peer-to-Peer Relationships

4.9.7.1 Peer Collaboration

Peer-to-peer relationships shaped the career experiences of respondent DTA12. Transparency was key in developing trust and collaboration among peers, which helped her succeed in her roles. The importance of professional peer-to-peer relationships was described by respondent IDI20 as creating opportunities for cross-functional learning and collaboration on business opportunities to build up connections in the market.

4.9.7.2 Competitive Peers

While she was on a cross-functional assignment, respondent VDS3's were not supportive and she later realised that her peers were in competition with her.

4.9.8 Spousal and Family Support

4.9.8.1 Family and Friends Support

The primary support for respondent IDI20 came from close friends and her sister. One of her friends was a lawyer from whom she sought advice before resigning from a role. Tapping into this professional expertise helped her plan her career journey. Parental support was vital as well.

Throughout her career, the primary personal support for respondent NFI34 was her mother, she described her as a strong woman who gave her emotional support as she had to fight for herself and supported her with anything, she described her mother as her 'backbone'.

Similarly, respondent VAG37 reported that her mother was her primary personal support, backed up by her extended family, when making quick decisions about career opportunities. She was often asked, whether as a woman she was able to manage her family respondents, so she started organising her life.

VAG37 reflected that 'the former president of Morocco was married with children', i.e., it can be done successfully. The death of her mother was very significant as she felt that there was no support from her organisation, so she resigned. Finally, respondent VDS39 noted that her parents were her primary personal support who instilled a work ethic in her. Her Mom worked as a teacher at a school and she was surrounded by women leaders as she grew up. Her father challenged her to progress her career, saying that she should always remember that 'people want your job, therefore, talk to your boss about your accomplishments'.

4.9.8.2 Unsupportive Husbands and Divorce

In describing her experience along her career path, respondent VDS39 stated that her husband was a problem. They had a difficult marriage and eventually lived apart as he complained about her career pursuits, while she was in full support of his career and pushed him to go for the international assignment. This eventually led to the breakdown of their marriage, exacerbated by her mother-in-law's views on the role of women and her lack of support. Likewise, respondent DTA12 experienced a change in primary personal support; although initially her husband played a supportive role, they since divorced. Throughout her career, DTA12's extended family and sisters were her key support system, which allowed her to be fully present in her career when required and fully present with her family when not at work.

4.9.8.3 Domestic Structured Support

Balancing career aspirations and personal commitments have been reported as a key challenge. Respondent VAG37 recalled an occasion when her in-laws said to her, 'You are always working'. At that time, she decided to resign from her role as the company was not respectful of her personal life and values, and undermined her performance, but she persevered with her career and set up a structured support system. She hired two assistants and has people around her that she trusts for support; she can drop her kids with them or she can work from home. This flexibility was instilled in her as she was raised by a working mother.

4.9.9 Mentorship

4.9.9.1 Social Networks

Building informal mentoring relationships through extended social networks provided respondent DTA12 with the necessary contacts to reach out for support depending on where she was in her career. Respondent DAE14 reinforced the idea that mentoring should be based on relationships and not approached deliberately as a search. In her experience, women shouldn't be afraid to have conversations with people to determine opportunities to be aligned. Finally, respondent NFI34's experience of mentorship in the early part of her career was that it was not as structured as it now. Her friend supported her career as a mentor by giving her advice and she was only formally mentored in a role later in her career as part of the organisation's mentoring programme.

4.9.9.2 Formal Mentorship

Throughout their careers, the respondents found that the role and benefits of actively seeking mentorships supported their career progression as demonstrated by respondent IDI20 who pursued mentoring relationships from professionals outside of her field of expertise. Her reflection on this was that you need to ask and go for it.

Respondent VDS39 described her mentoring relationships as validating her and she felt supported, while respondent MEM32 said that her mentoring relationship did not really support her in thinking through a problem, but it did prompt her to just dig deeper and to reflect.

Based on how she had benefited from mentoring, respondent DAE14 introduced a mentoring programme in her organisation that took off, and the CEO was so impressed. As a result, she was promoted and given greater responsibilities.

4.9.10 Motherhood

The majority of the West African respondents had children and the impact that motherhood had on their careers was evident. Respondent NFI34 reported that her experience of exclusionary practices was limited to when she was pregnant and the manner in which her line manager responded and stifled her career progress, as well as the impact on her compensation.

Giving birth while on a work assignment outside her home country had detrimental consequences for respondent VAG37; having a baby abroad almost caused her to lose her firm. She realised that she had to prioritise her wellbeing not work such long hours and try to balance the situation by working from home and not working when there are no issues to resolve.

The second influencing factor in the career progression of women is how their availability to the business is perceived. Respondent MEM32 reported that what stands out for her is time and her perception that you cannot make it. This thinking led to her being excluded: 'they continue without you as you're perceived as restricted'. This made her feel marginalised and angry, which she addressed going forward through proactively communicating a lot.

4.10 International Career Experience

4.10.1 Defining Moments

4.10.1.1 Multinational Career Experience

Respondent AHU03 spent the early years of her career in the United Kingdom having lived and studied there, however she wanted to challenge herself beyond the familiar and took on a role in the United Arab Emirates and relocated with her family. Her international experience was further developed when she took on the role as an area director in Egypt. She described her role in the multinational operating context as prescriptive and cyclical.

4.10.1.2 Childbearing Impact

A defining moment for respondent JON21, who was married with two children and qualified with a PhD in Computer Science, was when she returned to work from maternity leave after the birth of her first child. The demands of motherhood while she tried to pursue her career were difficult to manage; she felt like she had an identity crisis. She was determined to get it done and to make it work both professionally and personally, to the extent that she was promoted and relocated. However, she recognised that giving birth and the impact of her workplace absences influenced the underrepresentation of women in management roles.

4.10.2 Experiencing Exclusionary Practices

4.10.2.1 Social and Cultural Context

The social context significantly influenced the exclusionary practices that respondent AHU03 experienced. She was the only woman in the management team in Saudi Arabia and was seen as a pretty girl. In the Middle East the business world is largely dominated by men, therefore she had to adapt her European upbringing and background when she came to the realisation that she was playing someone else's ball game.

Men in that business context were not used to being led by a woman but she believes that building relationships in any business context is key, therefore she was able to navigate that social context by respecting their social norms. This involved, for example, knowing her place when meeting someone; she was made aware that men do not shake hands with a woman and that she should avoid eye contact. She had to take a male Arab colleague along with her to business meetings even though in the organisational hierarchy she was the area director. During those meetings her colleagues would switch into Arabic, although the business language was English, and this automatically excluded her as she could not understand or follow the conversation.

4.10.2.2 Perception of Capabilities

Respondent JON21 was explicitly excluded from meetings, which had a direct impact on her ability to execute her role. She addressed this directly by calling it out as favouritism. She believed that exclusionary practices have not impacted her as she speaks up when she is made aware of them. In her opinion, being seen as a capable manager is important as it affects career opportunities. Women in her industry tend to spend more time demonstrating their competence, while their male counterparts spend more time socialising, the latter in the boys' clubs frequented by key decision-makers.

4.10.3 Personal Impact

4.10.3.1 Physical Effects

The impact of returning to work after her maternity leave caused respondent JON21 to suffer severe stress during that first year. She found herself running between work and family commitments and experienced personal guilt for not spending enough time with her family; there would be no time to cook quality food, at times she would feed her son hummus and breadsticks. This made her feel inadequate, as when she was a child her mother would make homecooked meals. As she adjusted to this first year, she felt consistently tired and on edge which led to drastic weight loss – she had to take a step back and ask for help – so she prioritised her health; and stopped worrying about preparing warm meals.

4.10.3.2 Domestic Support

On international assignment in the Middle East, respondent AHU03, as a mother and executive, initially wanted to take care of the household while continuing her career. This led to a lack of sleep and feelings of guilt and inadequacy when she could not spend time with her children. She therefore she appointed domestic help to assist with raising the children and preparing meals.

4.10.4 Sponsorship

Respondent AHU03 attributed her functional career progression to the cluster Human Resources Director, who identified her potential for leadership. Initially she wanted to focus on her experience as a trainer delivering companywide training and her sponsor spent a lot of time with her and played a mentoring role by providing guidance and assistance when required.

4.10.5 Management Practice

4.10.5.1 Opportunities to Perform

A line manager who significantly helped respondent AHU03 with her career set high standards of performance; she was quite tough on her. In retrospect, this focus on performance from her line manager was the driving force that moved her career forward. Similarly, respondent JON21's line manager identified her potential and created opportunities for her to perform, thereby developing her potential.

4.10.5.2 Recognition and Relationship-Building

Conversely, a line manager impeded respondent AHU03's career progress because she was quite disorganised, she took credit for the respondent's outputs and would not allow her to shine and be recognised for her contributions. On reflection, she sees this line management relationship as a good learning as she was aware of not repeating similar behaviours in her own experience as a line manager. Respondent JON21 described a line manager who stifled her career by excluding her from socialising and building relationships: rapport-building happens in bars. As a mother to a young family, she could not participate because of her family commitments.

4.10.5.3 Performance Management Systems

The performance management systems that hindered respondent JON21's career progress were ad hoc yet stringent in their measures, and did not take into consideration all the elements contributing to performance, i.e., it was not a balanced scorecard. Throughout respondent AHU03's career experiences, her performance was managed in the traditional terms of performance management, including goal setting and mid-year and annual performance reviews. This progressed her career as the process helped her keep her career goals on track.

4.10.6 Reward Practice

Respondent AHU03 was aware of the income differentials because she had a role in the payroll administration function, so remuneration was within her ambit of responsibility. She acknowledged that within her firm, pay levels were related to the breadth of the roles in a pay for the job formula. Respondent JON21, however, was not aware of being directly impacted by the gender pay gap in relation to the earnings of her male counterparts; her view was don't bother yourself with it, it is what it is and will eventually be addressed.

4.10.7 Peer-to-Peer Relationships

Peer-to-peer relationships influenced respondent AHU03's career, as evidenced by her peer relationship with the Vice President for Finance. This relationship extended beyond professional support into supporting her work-life-balance, such as taking time out to do social activities and going for lunch once a month. Similarly, JON21 focussed on building good relationships with her peers, who helped her identify her blind spots as they related to how she managed her career.

4.10.8 Spousal and Family Support

4.10.8.1 Supportive Friendships

Respondent AHU03's primary personal support throughout her career was her best friend, who lives in her home country of Britain. This friend was a sounding board as her sense check and helped her focus her attention on what matters. They remain in contact on a daily basis.

4.10.8.2 Supportive Husbands

One of the key components for respondent JON21 was her spousal support. She described her husband as her voice of reason. He understood that her child was her priority and advised that she look at your career as a job and prioritise the needs of her family. Respondent AHU03 described her husband as secondary support in relation to her career progress in that he is very supportive. He has more flexibility in his career therefore she is able to travel extensively for business, while he is able to take care of their children. This flexibility enabled her to accelerate her progression into senior management and she was appointed as a director earlier on her career.

4.10.8.3 Social Context

In addition to her husband's support, respondent JON21 reported that their extended family helped her with childcare, particularly when they were on assignment in Nigeria. In England there was limited extended family support, so they relied more on childcare service providers. Her husband played a supportive role during her business travels, but she often had feelings of guilt and would bring gifts for them on her return home from business travels.

4.10.9 Mentorship

When respondent AHU03 gave birth to her son, the chief Human Resources Officer for the United States of America within the organisation played a supportive role. During this time, she made arrangements to work from home as she was working on a key project, and she was consequently promoted to Senior Director shortly after returning from maternity leave. This relationship also assisted her in developing her strategic insights and provided her with a sense checking mechanism as she progressed through the organisation into senior management roles

4.10.10 Motherhood

Both of the international respondents reported their desire to perform childcare responsibilities and satisfy their career ambitions. However, in practice, the sense of inadequacy and guilt that followed once they realised this approach was not possible led respondent AHU03 to appoint domestic staff to assist, while JON21 relied on extended family. When a location change made this impossible, JON21 had to adjust her work schedule to fit in with childcare services operating times. She concluded that childbearing creates a significant strain in the career development of women, therefore organisations should consider a 'Women Come Back to Work Programme', drawing on practical knowledge and shared experiences.

4.11 Respondents Concluding Insights

This section concludes with insights from the respondents on their opinions and observations of the phenomenon.

4.11.1.1 Personal Attributes

The respondents provided their perspectives on the attributes women require to progress their careers, including respondent AAS04, who believed that women need to speak up.

She recalled that she was hardworking and ambitious but did not articulate this, so they were surprised to hear I wanted to become a partner. Women therefore need to articulate career goals and get input or agreement from those who are able to influence it.

In an African context, respondent AHU03 asserted that women should be more self-confident and know how to sit in a boardroom and get your point across. Respondent DTA12 echoed respondent AAS04 in her opinion that women become their own enemies when progressing into senior management by not proactively making their presence and competence known: 'women are sitting at the back, this is not the village', this behaviour, frustrated her as she described as it, 'makes me lose it'.

Respondent MMS30 believed that women should be the masters of their own destiny, and should never wait but rather be deliberate about driving their own career journeys by articulating their career goals and sharing their accomplishments. They should refrain from being the victim and rather change the narrative by influencing the context; women should take up space in society.

It has been the experience of respondent BGS06 that women should develop resilience and remain tenacious in progressing their careers to senior management. This was supported by respondent CKS09, who said women who make it tend to have a 'can do' attitude and consciously decide to manage their careers and their personal lives. Similarly, the opinion of respondent DAE14 was that the underrepresentation of women in senior management is perpetuated when women subscribe to an 'I can't' mindset'. She succeeded in roles that she pursued as she had a positive mental attitude and she focussed more on how her expectations could happen. Finally, she never considered a trade-off between her family and career, and she took the risk of putting her family commitments first.

Respondent JNS25, however, dealt with the exclusionary practices she experienced through focussing on delivering the required results: 'you have to work to prove yourself'. Prioritising delivery and performance were key, as it was her experience that 'you can get a role in politicking'. Delivery in her opinion requires networks; 'you have to work extra hard' to progress.

Finally, respondent CCS10 argued that women should not step back but be energised to make the change and get the results. In her opinion, the gender imbalance in top management, as well as the lack of racial diversity in South Africa, remain because these roles are dominated by white men. This further perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management.

4.11.1.2 Risk Tolerance

In her experiences of practices of exclusion that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in senior management, respondent DMK13 stated that women are perceived as having a low-risk appetite. While they would therefore be thorough in applying themselves to their roles, some company boards expect a higher risk appetite from senior leadership. Women need to challenge themselves, as described by VAG37. She decided to get out of her comfort zone when she found herself in a career that was not advancing, which led her to take a pay cut and pursue a role that was in line with her career ambitions. Respondent LMS29's opinion was that women should do something that makes them uncomfortable and explained that the moved from a consulting firm to roles in the water industry and nuclear industry as these changes grew her career experience.

4.11.1.3 Female Support Dynamics

Respondent DTA12 posed this question to the researcher: 'What are we doing as women to help each other?' In her view, the underrepresentation of women in senior management continues because women do not share their career experiences and fail to build succession pipelines of women to take over from them. Further to this, women already in senior management roles are not wielding their influence to advocate for younger women; you have to push. Women should build their networks across geographies and look for opportunities to contribute to changing the narrative. Respondent MMS30 echoed this sentiment, saying that, much as we blame men, women are their own greatest obstacles. It has been her experience that women do not open doors for each other as they are often intimidated by younger women, while there is a need from younger women to be affirmed: they should not feel that they need to sleep their way to the top or feel the pressure to take bribes.

Respondent GLS18 agreed that support through formal coaching and mentoring are required for young professionals; this is key to their career development because they are able to learn from the experience of others and draw on this when facing challenges. In her experience, top performers at a young age often lack wisdom due to their inexperience in the world of work.

Respondent VDS39 was explicit that black African women are capable and should be competitive and happy to shine and see other women shining; this requires women to support each other and not 'bitch between' themselves.

Respondent HHS19, whose career was in a male-dominated function and industry, agreed that women should support other women on their career journeys. This is important because women were never one of the boys. Initially she thought that being excluded doesn't matter, but as her career progressed, she realised the need to build relationships with the key decision-makers. In her experience, the personality of the leadership of the organisation has a significant impact on exclusionary practices.

However, respondent MMS30 mentioned that women are as bad as men in perpetuating exclusionary practices as women do not do each other favours, they don't fight for each other. In the experience of respondent MMS30, women drain her with negative energy and often operate within their own small close groups closed off to others. With men, her experience has been that she doesn't have to dumb it down, she can be herself, her view is that strong businesswomen who are single find it very difficult to find love and build meaningful relationships with men and are often faced with rejection.

The Queen Bee effect has been a hinderance in the progression of women into senior management. In the experience of respondent AAS04, successful women should look at who is coming up behind her and support their development. Respondent ACS05 observed that strong female role models are required to provide guidance and inspiration. Women need to support each other to make things easier, especially for those women who want to break into careers that are male-dominated. Once women do break through into male-dominated industries, said LYA28, developing a career in that environment can give women an advantage to progress their careers and to rise up based on meritocracy.

4.11.2 Organisational Factors

4.11.2.1 Gendered Work Ethic

Respondent AHU03 commented on the differences in work ethic and practices between male and female counterparts. It was her opinion that women in business are still largely excluded from the boys' club, as men will typically prioritise social interactions while women are task-focussed.

4.11.2.2 Gendered Recruitment Practice

The influence of recruitment and selection processes perpetuate the underrepresentation of women, explained respondent IDI20. She noted that women are not hired into key roles, which extends into board roles as there are few female chairman on boards. Therefore, women need to put themselves out there.

Respondent JJS23 supported the participation of women in the upper echelons of management and asserted that corporates should allow women to serve on different boards: she had to negotiate to sit on more than one board as the bank put a moratorium on board membership. Being on a range of boards helps women gain necessary experience, she added. Respondent NFI34 asserted that women should push themselves as women don't apply for roles. Women therefore auto sensor the process and automatically exclude themselves from the recruitment process because they underestimate their capabilities. She concluded that women need to learn to take the bull by the horns.

4.11.2.3 Perceptions of Personal Circumstances

The perception of women as a result of socialisation is that it is almost offensive for a woman to break out of the mould. In respondent CKS09's experience, when others make decisions on behalf of women based on perceptions of their personal circumstances, their career progress is curtailed, yet when women get things done, the perception is that they are too aggressive in relation to the expected social behaviour.

These perceptions are influenced by the maturity of the leaders in the organisation. Respondent CRS08 observed that leaders' maturity is important for women's career progression, which is particularly important in terms of understanding the pressures of raising families and giving practical consideration to women who go on maternity leave, as during this time their careers often slow down in relation to those of their male counterparts.

Leadership behaviour is influenced by organisational culture, so, respondent GLS18 concluded, organisational culture influences the behaviour of leaders. The values of those leaders at the top set the tone which leaders further down in the management ranks can follow, often in one of two categories: leaders that are family-orientated in relation to leaders that are work-orientated. Therefore, one should pay attention to the behaviour of leaders to understand their impact on work-life integration.

4.11.2.4 Motherhood Support

Childbearing creates a significant strain in the career development of women. Without practical support measures in place at work, in the experience of respondent ENS17, women exit the workforce when they have children. Organisations should review implementing support structures such as feeding rooms or day-care as it is the right thing to do, instead of just relying on legislation as it relates to women in the workplace. This should not be seen as a checklist; it should be seen as the best way to do business.

The impact of her childbearing years and getting back to work after having a baby as a young mom had an impact on respondent VSS38's career confidence and set her career back four years. She had two children during this period but the company counted her out in that there was no discussion about performance or career development opportunities. The company went through a major restructuring while she was on maternity leave, therefore things were dramatically different on her return. In conclusion, it was her belief that reintegrating women back into the workplace after childbearing should be more flexible. In addition, contact should be maintained with women during maternity leave, as keeping them informed of organisational developments will provide a better transition back into the workplace. Mentoring and counselling can help, with particular attention paid to postnatal depression and guidance on how to manage it. Becoming a mother, in this respondent's opinion, is an entire life change and leaders need to understand that it often involves lack of sleep that impacts performance in the workplace. Her concluding comment was, that she loves being a mom, but it comes although it comes with sacrifices, therefore career mothers requires support.

4.11.3 Social Factors

4.11.3.1 Career Mothers

Socially women are making strides in business, although at a very slow pace. Women are rising through the management ranks into senior positions and being appointed to company boards, even if not with unqualified success. Respondent ADS02 observed that women are achieving their professional pursuits and doing great things, which are not celebrated enough, however women should support each other and avoid a sense of self-entitlement. She surrounds herself with women worthy of her support as she believed that she is only as good as those she surround herself with, it has been her experience, that women can damage one another's reputation however she recognises that progress is being made: 'women are raising their children and having thriving careers', which is a reality that should be increasingly visible in senior management.

Societal norms have a significant impact on women in the workplace as these relate to women's roles as spouses and mothers. Respondent CSZ11 asserted that this narrative needs to be interrogated for the next generation of women and changed so that women can succeed at both having a family and realising their career goals.

Finally, women should demonstrate confidence in each other's potential as they develop their career through the management ranks. This can take the form of further development, as reported by respondent CCS10. Women should be afforded further opportunities to fast track their careers. Furthermore, the impact of maternal demands on women needs to be better understood in the workplace by challenging the gender-based roles society ascribes to them.

4.11.3.2 Developing Networks

Beyond professional networking, it was respondent IDI20's opinion that women need to actively develop their professional networks, as this is often where career opportunities are discovered. Women should also be actively involved in setting up these networks. She set up a women's investment club and served on a local advisory board, as these networks, beyond relationship development, provide emotional support. IDI20 found felt humbled to be part of a community, which was critical at the time she moved from the private sector into public service.

In the experience of respondent USS36, women of colour need to focus on better networking in relation to their white female counterparts, even though female executives are rare as hen's teeth in her opinion. However, respondent JJS23's thoughts were that many of these women's organisations meetings are preaching to the converted, therefore a deeper understanding is required of what needs to change and what is required to enable these changes. It was her opinion that the audience on driving change should be broadened and should be part of addressing frustrations.

4.11.3.3 Systemic Exclusion

Women's experience of exclusionary practices is still socially systemic, as described by respondent JPS24 she attended a meeting and one of her male counterparts said, '*bokkie,* make me a cup of rooibos tea'. That shook her as the unconscious bias went unnoticed, because socially women are seen as having a need to nurture and help, so they should take on roles that reinforce these stereotypes.

It is her opinion in navigating these practices that women should be deliberate about taking on alternative career paths, participate as board members and articulate their choices. Role-modelling and getting support for other women are also important: 'We don't tell our stories; we should take others along.'

In the African context, men are still threatened by career women, as explained by respondent JNS25, there is no doubt that a woman can be flying high with a husband celebrating you, however there will be situations at a societal level where women are not meant to be ahead of men and not allowed to take the lead. JNS25 commented that women are given options now to not have children and women with grown children can be labelled as tough and courageous. In conclusion, it was her opinion that we require a society that is dynamic in order to operate relevant conversations, in order to move to a social dynamic that is inclusive to get into the circle.

4.11.3.4 Intersection of Race and Gender on International Assignments

Respondents on international assignments living and working in various locations reported the diverse experiences of exclusionary practices linked to their race and gender, as described by VDS39. Her experience of being an African in India was related to racism, an overtly exclusionary practice, in contrast to her experience in Norway where there was no overt racism. In South Africa she identified black female role models in business based on their resilience in that they had to fight to succeed and not focus on blaming others.

4.11.3.5 Legislative Transformation

International organisations such as the ILO and the UN have been creating societal pressure for legislative reforms in countries to promote gender equality. Respondent LYA28 worked in Germany, where the government introduced quotas to increase the participation of women on boards. This was the catalyst needed to put mechanisms in place to drive the change required, because it was imposed by government.

4.11.3.6 Respondents' Concluding Insights

Respondents reported various experiences and observations on understanding the underrepresentation of women in senior management. Below are a few examples:

4.11.3.6.1 ***Career and Family***

Respondent JNS25 stated that practices related to creating an environment that combines the management of women's careers, motherhood and professionalism are required. It was the opinion of respondent BES07 that more expertise is required to understand the underrepresentation of women in senior management, as a lack of knowledge inadvertently perpetuates this phenomenon. To help manage family pressures, she noted that it is important to be fully present and have a strong support system in place so that when you are at work you are fully present as men are perceived to be always available.

4.11.3.6.2 ***Succession Planning and Career Development***

Throughout her career, respondent BGS06 observed and experienced a multiplicity of exclusionary practices, saying that one needs to be comfortable to have the courage to speak up when excluded. Women remain underrepresented in the succession planning processes in organisations, she noted, which is not only exclusionary but perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management. Respondent ESS16's opinion was that women's career progress is constrained by unfair weights on their ankles which she describe as expectations placed on women in the workplace and also in their roles at home and society at large.

It was the opinion of respondent USS36 that rotation in roles is a good mechanism to develop business acumen to enrich the careers of women in business. This career mobility pattern she described as a jungle gym, in that it's not always upward movement, but vertical movements and at times downward movement. In relaying this analogy, she recalled taking a downward move at one time and in retrospect that role positioned her to grow her career, which resulted in her career being accelerated three levels ahead.

4.11.3.6.3 ***Diversity Statistics and Realities of C-Suites***

On the topic of reporting diversity statistics, respondent NES35 said that corporates should take responsibility beyond metrics and focus on understanding the expectations of women of colour, as they are different and should be considered as such. Respondent

VSS38 said that the C-Suite is a different space for women because they have to get into CFO or CEO roles to be considered strategic decision-makers therefore, younger women have to navigate their career path and develop stronger negotiation skills.

4.11.3.6.4 ***COVID-19 Impact and Women's Voices***

Data for this research were collected at the beginning of the national lockdown in South Africa during the Covid-19 global pandemic. Respondent BGS06 reflected on this, saying that, the world needs to reset itself. She added that it is the time for women to take up their rightful place in society, acknowledging that, 'This is not working, let's reset, let's rethink, let's reshape, so that we can have a healthier society in general and have humanity in a healthier state'. Respondent JMZ22 believed that women need to tell their own stories in sharing their career experiences in that it will continue to build understanding of this phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in senior management.

4.12 Summary of Findings

Drawing on this review of the collective lived experiences of all respondents, Figure 5 illustrates the multi-layered identities in context of the literature reviewed. Three overarching themes emerged:

- Organisational factors that perpetuated practices of exclusion from management and practices that enabled the progression of the respondents' career trajectories.
- Personal factors as they related to the individual paradigms and attributes that either progressed or hindered the respondents' careers.
- Social factors that systemically perpetuated exclusion, identified in the lived experiences of women across various nationalities and based in various locations in Africa or internationally.

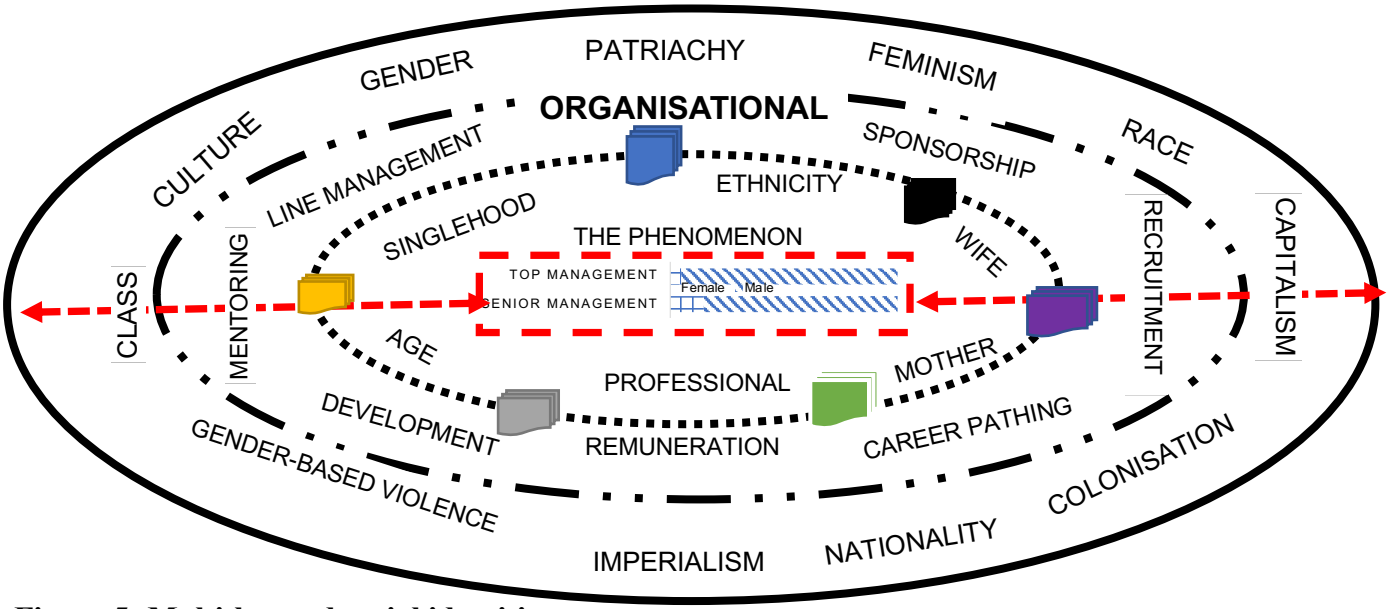


Figure 5: Multi-layered social identities

Figure Legend:

: Societal Factors identified in reviewed

: Organisational Factors identified in reviewed literature

: Personal Factors

: Multi-Layered Social Identities

: Intersectionality and Simultaneity

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The literature review investigated themes related to the research question and the intersection of a number of categories such as race, class, and gender on the lived experiences of exclusionary practices (Nkomo, 2015). There was a paucity in the literature on multi-layered identities and simultaneity of African women in management, which confirms the gap in the knowledge produced and therefore the purpose of this study (Nkomo, 2017).

This chapter discusses the relevant literature based on the research question. Applying a phenomenological and intersectionality approach to this qualitative study allowed the researcher to uncover findings that would have been overlooked by looking at a single attribute or using a different method. Intersectionality eliminated the possibility of downgrading traits and actions merely to one attribute, such as gender, which would have emphasised the genderisation and stereotypification of leaders (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

The data gathered indicated that these exclusionary practices are not just subtle but also overt and multi-faceted. They are varied and perpetuated across contexts, industries and geographies. In their subtlety, these practices isolate minorities and reinforce the systemic exclusion of women in management (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016).

Following a phenomenological and intersectional approach to this study allowed the researcher to avoid the common pitfall of articulating a meta-narrative through attributing the lived experiences of exclusionary practices exclusively to gender (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to understand how practices of exclusion in the management ranks persistently perpetuate the underrepresentation of women executives in corporations. Figure 6 below incorporates the key findings of the reviewed literature and the multi-layered, socially constructed identities of the women respondents. It illustrates the simultaneous effects of various exclusionary practices within the context of societal norms and expectations, all of which reinforce the systemic underrepresentation of women, and which manifest in the workplace as barriers to the advancement of women into senior management positions. The rest of the chapter will discuss the significance of the study in the context of the contribution of extant literature.

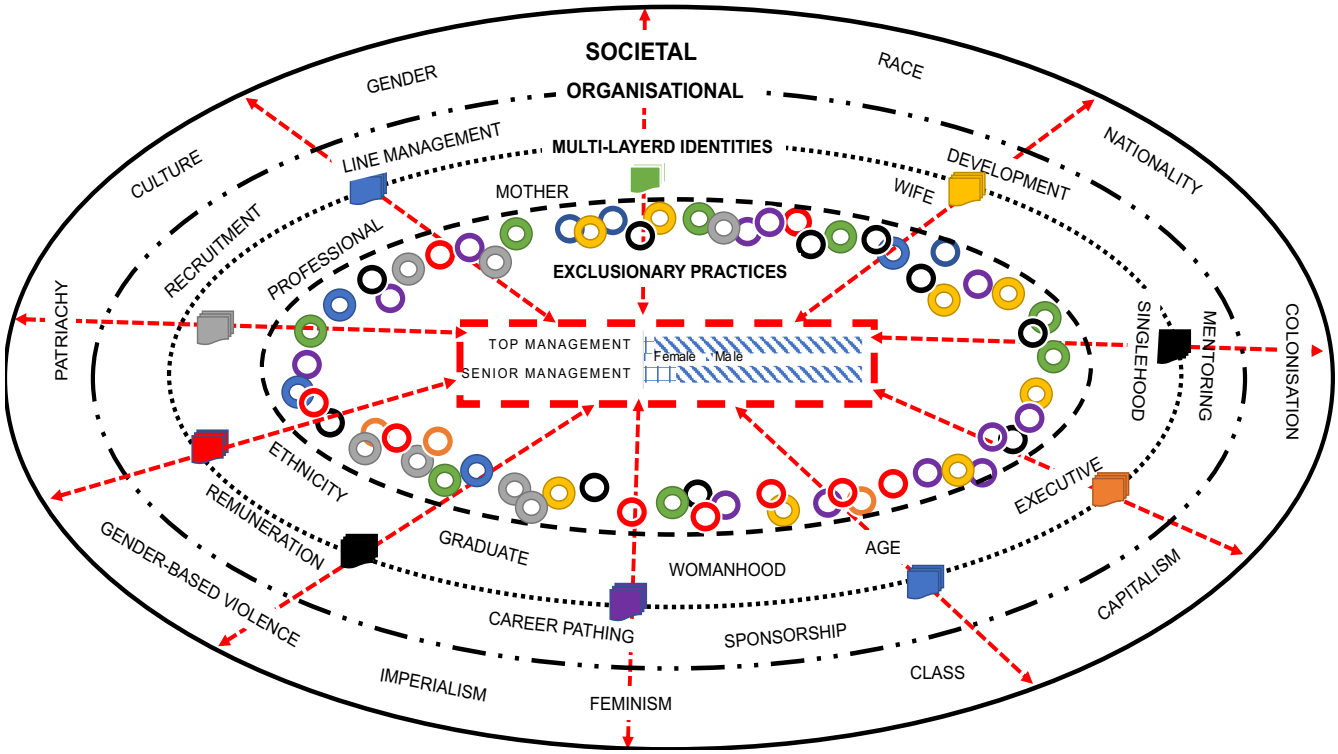
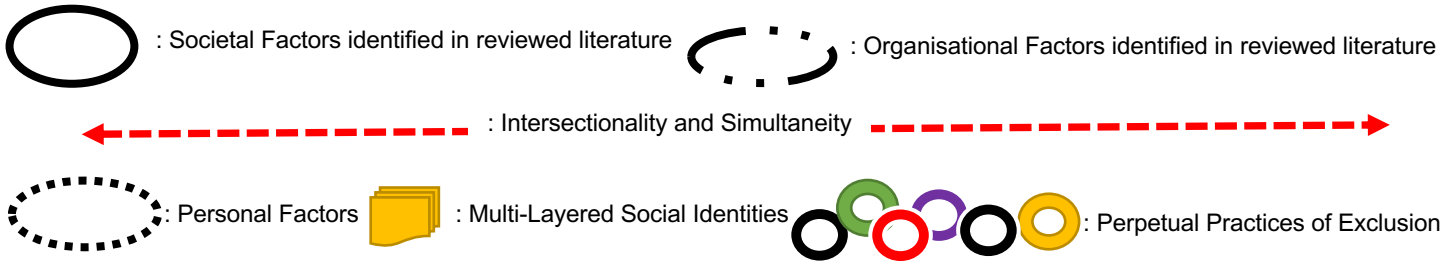


Figure 6: Intersection of multi-layered identities and perpetual practices of exclusion

Figure Legend:



5.2 Societal Factors

5.2.1 Socio-Economic Impact

When discussing the experiences of women in the management ranks, the societal context should be recognised, as the perpetual exclusionary practices that they have had to endure in their careers are reinforced socially. Within the African context, the impact of colonisation, the effects of liberation struggles and the multiplicity of cultures create complexity in producing knowledge on the phenomenon on which this study focussed (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004; Goredema, 2010).

The socio-economic consequence is that the findings demonstrate a large divergence in standards of living among the respondents, as illustrated in Table 1. These conditions are further influenced by regional cultures, adding to the complexity and multi-layered identities of women in Africa in the management ranks.The business world is largely male-dominated, with men typically prioritising social interactions while women are task-focussed and prioritise family commitments. Networking events often involve sports such as rugby or cricket and after work social activities, such as going for cocktails at pubs, which automatically exclude women with family commitments. This exclusion has a negative impact on career opportunities, as it reinforces the perception that woman prioritise family responsibilities at the expense of their career development. Socialising outside of working hours and within the social networks of colleagues who share similar interests often perpetuates this intricate social context and exclusionary practices (Carrim, 2018).

Beyond social experiences, in the management context, class also operates as an exclusionary practice. Those executives who come from privileged backgrounds easily relate to colleagues from the same class and background. Respondents shared experiences of conversations about international family vacations which excluded those who grew up in marginalised, impoverished backgrounds and did not have access to similar experiences. In a social context, the variables are different and certainly not equal when peers in the management ranks are from third generation wealth and those experiencing exclusionary practices are the first generation to progress into executive management as qualified professionals. This exclusionary practice impacts on personal confidence, creating feelings of inadequacy because of the disadvantages felt by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016).

5.2.2 Unforgiving Industries

In male-dominated industries such as engineering, constructing and manufacturing, women have experienced restricted opportunities because of male-dominated management teams, inner circle decision-making and stereotyping linked to race, ethnicity and gender as explained by respondent JMZ22 ‘Telecoms, like I said, is very unforgiving, especially in a market like Zambia, where, you know, there’s very little work life balance. Literally, you’re responding, you’re on calls, you’re responding to emails at midnight. At that time, I got fatigued. I thought, “You know what? This is not what I want”. This is not the trajectory I wanted my life to go.’ The result has been high numbers of women resigning as the pressure of not conforming, nor even transforming, to male-dominated industries stifled their career progress.

This has been exacerbated by line management practices including not providing career guidance and unprofessional workplace behaviours such as shouting, screaming and using foul language. Under these conditions, the line management relationships tend to break down and women exit organisations, further perpetuating the underrepresentation of women (Amos-Wilson, 1999).Social context, therefore, influences the exclusionary practices that woman experience, which is upheld institutionally. As men are in the majority in management ranks, social activities tend to involve going to have drinks with the guys, explicitly excluding women. This becomes more pronounced when developing business relationships, as the trend that men do business with men excludes women.

Women are also often consciously excluded from conversations, for example when jokes are told to deliberately alienate them. Industry forums in technical fields such as mining and engineering have a historic bias towards only including men in key decision-making (Lauwo, 2018). Even though in recent years more women have entered these fields, the natural bias to include men is perpetuated; as experienced by respondent NFI34 'There are some areas and some fields where you have so very few women. I'm currently at a mining indaba, right, and I see all the panels, directors. It's always like a boys' club, where men feel like maybe women are not qualified or not enough or the fact of being a woman is not compatible with some kinds of risk. There is that mental bias that still exists in in the collective mind, you know, of the society and of men and also management that exclude women in a certain way. And I think, we're talking about inclusion, diversity, sometimes I just feel that they can pick a woman just to have the woman there. Like, you know, they are guinea pig women on board. So, we still need to fight against those practices and to really show that women can also be managing a company and occupy some type of position.'

5.3 Organisational Factors

5.3.1 Business Language

In the workplace, exclusionary practices are perpetuated during meetings, for example, colleagues switch over into a non-business language and those not conversant are automatically excluded (Rosette, Ponce de Leon, Koval, & Harrison, 2018). In South Africa, the reasonable expectation is that most business activities will be conducted in English, however some Afrikaans organisations still conduct business in that language. Similarly, respondents whose careers have taken them from their home countries have experienced exclusion when meetings are run in the local language, which excludes those who are only conversant in the business language of English.

Figure 7 illustrates how business language deviation from business language in country of work by nationality in that it hindered respondents from participating in meetings and influencing key decision making. has differentiated the experiences of the respondents from those of key decision-makers.

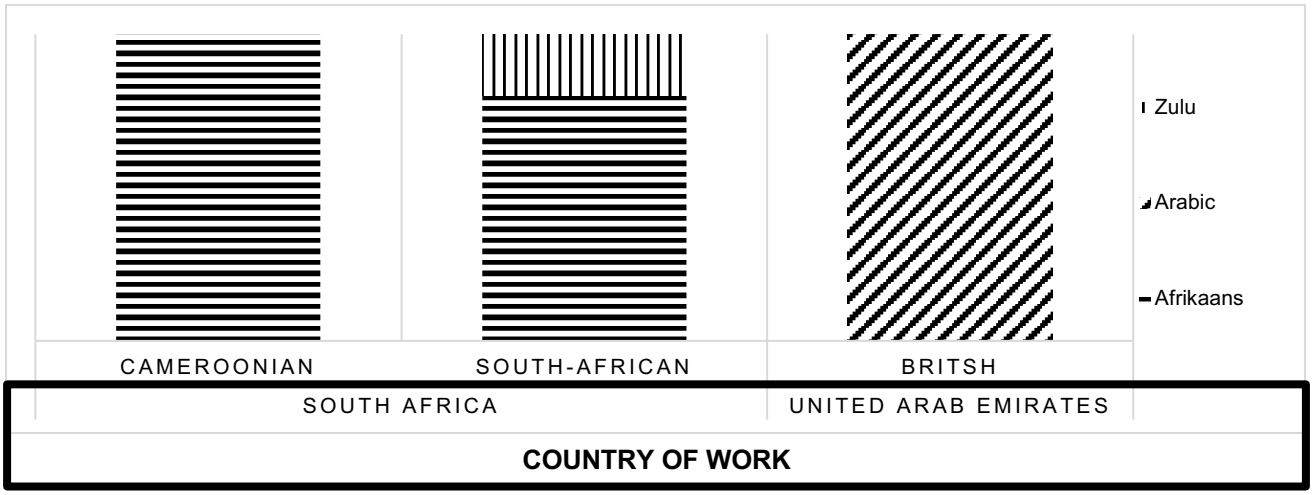


Figure 7: Language exclusion, ethnicity and country of work

This exclusionary practice frustrates progress as one cannot contribute to a narrative one is not able to comprehend. Beyond overcoming language exclusion, when women do participate, their contributions may be undermined by their senior male colleagues in a condescending manner.

5.3.2 Muted Participation

Woman's voices are often muted in management as their contributions are undermined or their outputs are substituted with no recognition given. This is exacerbated in the organisational context when industry-specific business jargon, terms and anecdotes are used in meetings as an exertion of power to deliberately exclude those with limited industry knowledge. Such discrimination is further reinforced when organisational politics continue to exclude women from organisational social networks, all of which negatively impacts their career progression (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016).

Further to this, it has been of respondent DTA12 that women who are already in senior management roles do not wield their influence in meetings sufficiently to advocate for younger women and push for opportunities for other women. DTA12 further stated that women should thus build their networks across geographies and look for opportunities to contribute to changing this narrative as building relationships in any business context is key and navigating social contexts through respecting social norms as a leader means taking time to build the relationships and to role model the expected

behaviour. Respondent IDI20 stated that women need to actively seek out and develop professional networks for their voices to be heard, as this is often where career opportunities are discovered. Beyond the professional opportunities in these networks, respondent IDI 20 stated that these relationships provide emotional support in that she found to be part of the community she found strength and inspiration.

5.3.3 Recruitment

The recruitment processes for senior roles are predisposed to favour male candidates (Rosette, Ponce de Leon, Koval, & Harrison, 2018), as most search firms and selection panels for these senior roles are constituted by men and supported by policies and regulations that perpetuate the phenomenon. Furthermore, when recruitment is done under pressure due to time constraints, it then becomes easier to select the obvious candidate who understands the business demands. Therefore, to get a gender balanced pool of candidates to select from, firms need to take a different approach to mitigate exclusionary practices being perpetuated.

5.3.4 Role Modelling

The lack of female role models in senior management further perpetuates the phenomenon of underrepresentation (Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). Younger women with ambitions to grow their careers require guidance and inspiration, especially those who intend on breaking into male-dominated industries and who require sponsorship to create the necessary opportunities for their progress. The lack of female role models means that women are perpetually underrepresented in the succession planning processes in organisations. Their opportunities to be identified for succession and progression in the management ranks are therefore restricted as explained by respondent AAS04 ‘Lack of role models. I saw what an incredible difference it makes. You know what? I must actually show you Ramasela Ganda when she won Public Sector CFO of the Year award. There was a whole article that she did and in that article she referred to me. I mean, I had forgotten it, but she remembers what a difference it made in her life. She said people used to envy her, because they saw the opportunities I created for her, and I think a role model and sponsor. It’s hard to go somewhere often if you don’t know what it looks like.’

5.3.5 Development Opportunities

To develop their careers, women need access to development opportunities – either through formal training and education or through workplace experiences (Erwee, 1992). Restricted development opportunities include a lack of secondment opportunities to develop business or functional competencies, not being selected for prestigious management development programmes, and a lack of promotional opportunities due to the extended tenure of male counterparts in these roles. These factors interact and prevent women from developing the strategic and business insights they need to demonstrate the business knowledge necessary to be considered for opportunities. The constraints also affect whether women are considered in the succession planning pipeline, which further restricts their opportunities to progress through the management ranks at all levels.

5.3.6 Gender Pay Gap

In exploring the gender pay gap, respondent CRS08 said, 'Pay in and of itself is a power game; and how it has been awarded, especially when it is veiled in secrecy'. Most respondents did not have knowledge of the direct impact of the gender pay gap on their compensation, except for those in functional disciplines such as Human Resources or Finance. Other themes connected with women earning lower salaries in relation to their male counterparts were identified (Bosch, 2015).

These involved their age, their functional discipline and tenure in the workplace, lower entry level pay offered to women at the onset of their careers, and the effect of workplace sabbaticals linked to either following their husband's careers or voluntary absences due to childbearing. This income differential is then legitimised through performance management systems that recognise and reward masculine behaviours and are reinforced by influence from members of the old boys' club during men's networking activities.

5.3.7 Queen Bee Effect

The underrepresentation of women in the management ranks is further exacerbated when women become their own enemies and perpetuate the Queen Bee effect (Mavin, 2008). Figure 8 illustrates the respondents who had direct experience of a female line manager hindering their progression. The intersection of race and the Queen Bee effect indicates that it is more pronounced amongst black and coloured respondents compared with their white and Indian counterparts.

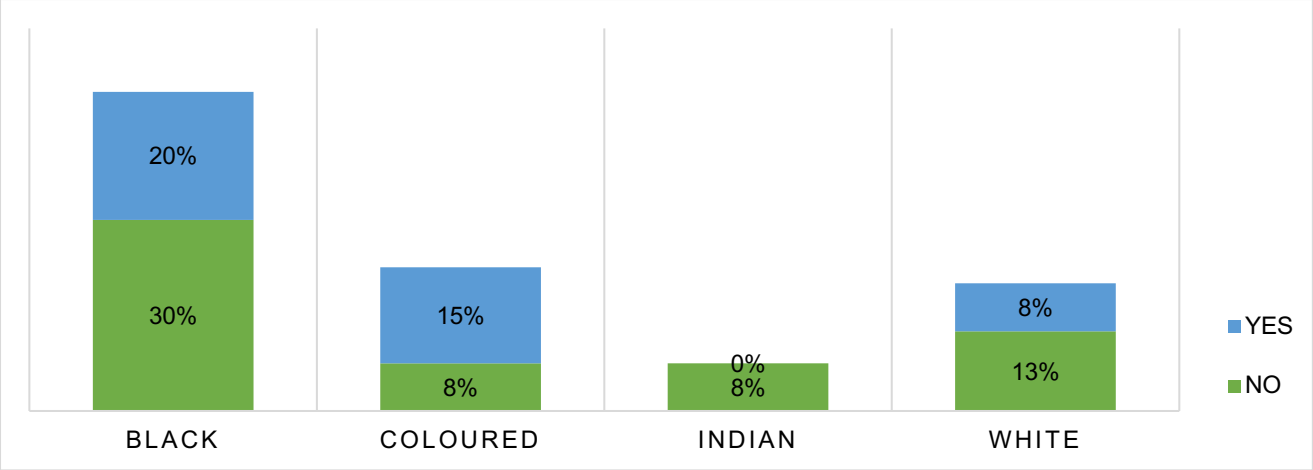


Figure 8: Queen bee effect by race

These negative relationships put a strain on the respondents' careers because they experienced a lack of support and restricted development opportunities, and they suffered psychologically from a loss of self-confidence (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). Eventually, all these factors affected their performance which constrained their career growth. The Queen Bee is characterised as an accomplished woman who does not share her career experiences and support the development of other women; as described by respondent ENS17 'So, there's a problem where they say a woman gets to the top, because of standing on other women. I'm sure you've heard it. So, I know for example at one of the places, the woman's very senior and everybody hates her.'Queen Bees are often micro-managers with poor professionalism and a lack of leadership skills. They may deliberately fail to advocate for women in succession planning and show a lack of support for other women. Contributing to the experience of the Queen Bee effect is that women in leadership roles face higher scrutiny in terms of their leadership skills in the context of societal norms and expectations. This is particularly the case when they have to make tough business decisions (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

The Queen Bee effect goes beyond organisations into women's business networking. Respondent MMS30 noted that women can drain others with negative energy and often operate within their own small close groups, which are closed off to others and stifle their business growth. This perpetuates the perception that women cannot manage women, as the conflictual relationship eventually leads to women moving roles or resigning. The perception further legitimises promoting men into leadership roles, as described by respondent JNS25: 'if women are not voting for other women, why should men vote for you?' It also reinforces societal expectations that women are characterised as gentle, kind and understanding.

5.4 Multi-Layered Social Identities

5.4.1 Identifying Factors

The findings indicated that the universal concepts of race, class and gender oversimplify the complex social and individual factors that interact with practices of exclusion in management ranks which negatively affects the representation of women in senior management ranks. Figure 9 below illustrates demographics such as nationality, race, educational qualification, family and marital status that constitute the respondents' multi-layered social identities.

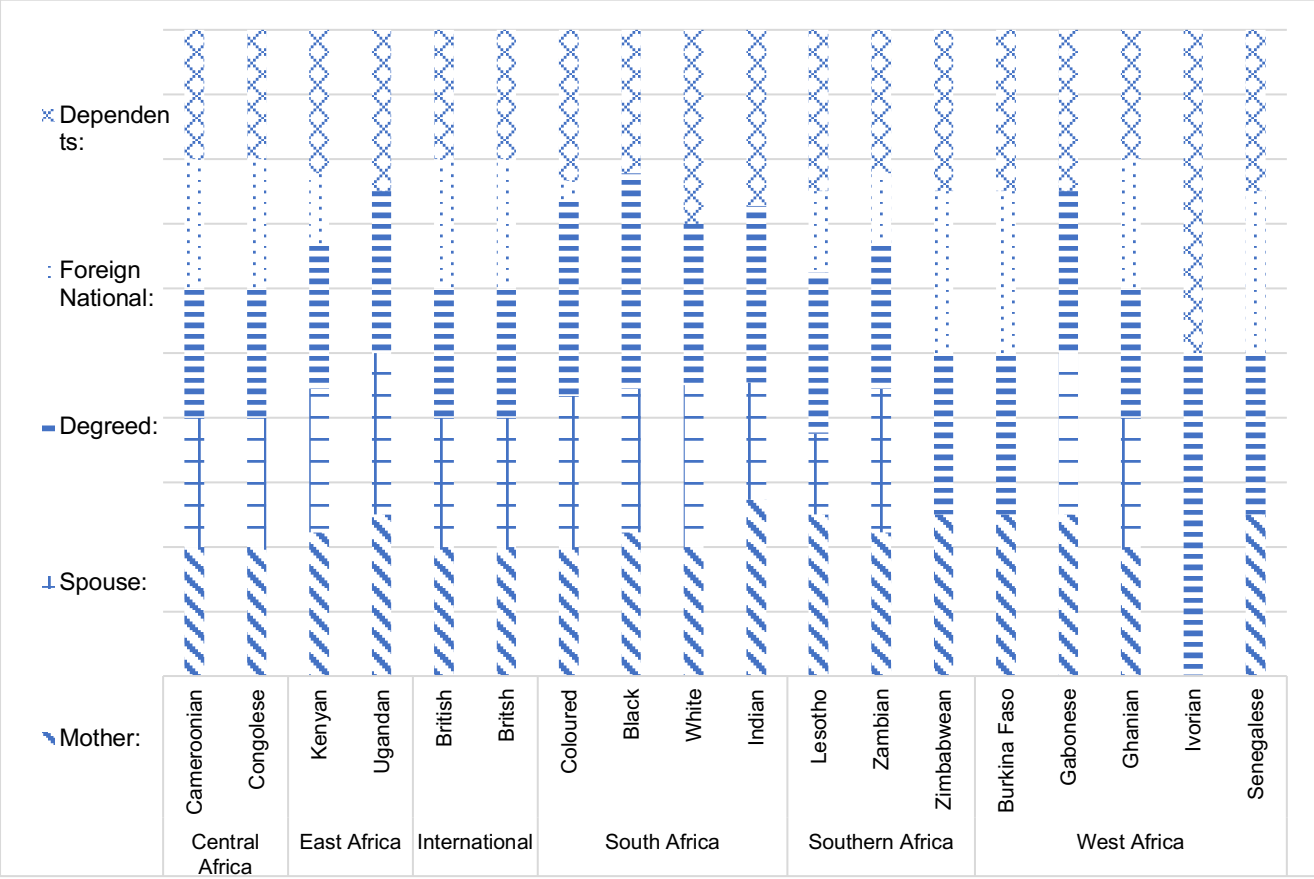


Figure 9: Multi-layered social identities

5.4.2 Personal Factors

The perception of women is that it is almost offensive for a woman to break out of the mould, especially when others (usually men) are making decisions on behalf of them based on perceptions of the women's personal circumstances. When women progress, the perception then is that they are too aggressive in relation to the expected behaviour. Women are also perceived as having a low-risk appetite. While they are expected to be conscientious when applying themselves to their roles, senior leaders and board members may expect a higher risk appetite when women attain leadership positions (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

5.4.3 Personal Impact

To deal with the personal impact of exclusionary practices, the respondents developed resilience through having an internal locus of control. They were determined in their approach to career progress, pragmatic yet hopeful, and upheld their personal values with a fearless tenacity. However, the effect of the perpetuated exposure to, and interaction with, these multi-faced exclusionary practices, is that women in management can lose self-confidence and are therefore not intentional in pursuing their own development. Conversely, if they are self-confident, their career-advancing behaviour can be seen as aggression. Having to deal with consistent exclusionary practices in management creates a sense of alienation, so many women learn to adapt their behaviour to operate within an oppressive system. If this does not work, women eventually resign, thus perpetuating their underrepresentation in the management ranks. Figure 10 below illustrates some of the comments the respondents had to endure in the face of adversity.

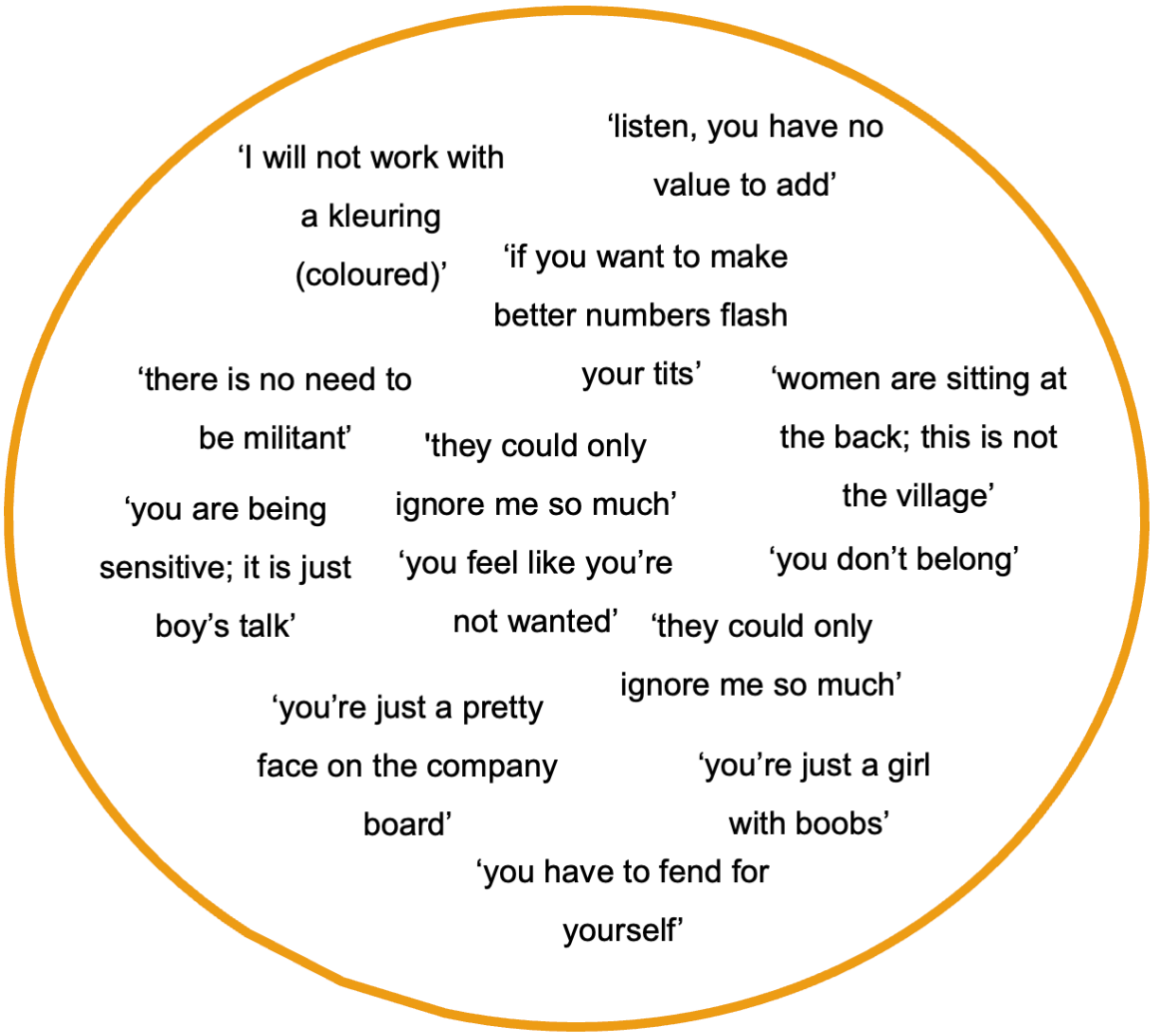


Figure 10: Exclusionary comments

The tremendous stress experienced by respondents that negatively impacted their overall well-being resulted in them having to develop a range of coping mechanisms. The respondents reflected on the strain of building their character through gaining insights and being determined to overcome difficulties so that they could progress in their careers.

Respondent LYA28 said 'Look at it at least from a positive perspective. And I think being somewhat demanding with myself or at least putting the bar somewhat higher and self-imposing myself with certain things which cause stress. I look at it mostly as a self-imposed stress or self-imposed challenges, which, sometimes, I realise later on that were not realistic. So, I would say it's, I tend to look at all the challenges that I face as a result of my own decisions and my own choice and to be less, not too much looking at it as pointing the finger at somebody being the cause or the reason of any failure in my, in my particular personal career experience.'

Despite developing coping mechanisms, the negative impact led to women suffering mental strain, especially when faced with making tough business decisions. Others suffered physically with stress-related illnesses that required medical treatment, and for some, hospitalisation. In response to this, the women adopted personal practices to help them manage the stress and continue their professional lives. Figure 11 below illustrates these practices, from physical and career practices to social and psychological ones.

DIAGRAM LEGEND			
PHYSICAL PRACTICES	CAREER PRACTICES	SOCIAL PRACTICES	PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTICES

yoga	reflexology	cooking	humour
exercise	running	friendships	psychotherapy
diet	sleep	personal travel	spirituality
swimming	time management	family vacations	meditation
massage therapy	executive coach	church	reading
fasting	personal time-off	date night	introspection
homeopathy	flexible working	book clubs	journaling
spa	self-help literature	family quality time	neurolinguistics
health detox	wellness programmes	sense of community	resilience

Figure 11: Mitigating personal impact practices

5.4.4 The Firsts

The concept of ‘first minority’ includes the first woman, first mother or first ethnic minority appointed to a role. An unintended consequence of being the first is the lack of role models to support these women when they face adversity as they transition into new positions. Respondent CK09 said ‘I qualified quite early in my career, but I've also then, always had people who've really taken almost a personal ownership of my career. So, I would say, a couple of inflection points.

The first was a long-time mentor of mine who used to be the finance director I reported to in my very first job outside of articles and who took a personal interest in my career. And his view, and when I went back into audit, was, “If you're going to stay in audit, then you've got to make partnership, otherwise why are you there?” And he was very encouraging, and he was very pushy about it, but he was very encouraging, and I think that was, kind of, one of the first aha moments of, but “Yes, you're right. Why shouldn't I aspire to this, you know? And why can't I make it, right?” And I must just put in context that I was at a firm where there weren’t many female partners. And, actually, when I made partner, I was the first African black female partner they had promoted. So, that was one inflection point. And I think, so that voice of encouragement.’

The lack of formal mentorship means there is little support to guide these ‘first’ women on how to on navigate organisational politics or break into the inner circle of decision-makers. Further contributors to this phenomenon are an interaction of various restricting factors such as: limited opportunities for women to develop critical competencies in leadership; limited exposure to cross-functional projects; limited opportunities to engage with external stakeholders in a business environment; and company cultures that do not embrace diversity. All of these are reinforced by a lack of consequences for organisations that do not transform.

5.5 Exclusionary Practices

Exclusionary practices in the management ranks are subtle and context-specific. A key finding from the analysis of the interaction of these factors is the multiplicity of practices experienced by women, as set out below:

- Multiplicity of exclusionary practices
- Most prominent exclusions women face
- Exclusionary practices by race and gender

5.5.1 Multiplicity of Exclusionary Practices

Women experience a multiplicity of exclusionary practices throughout their career journeys, the interaction of which is simultaneously overt and intricate. Figure 12 demonstrates the multiplicity of the exclusionary practices by race and gender.

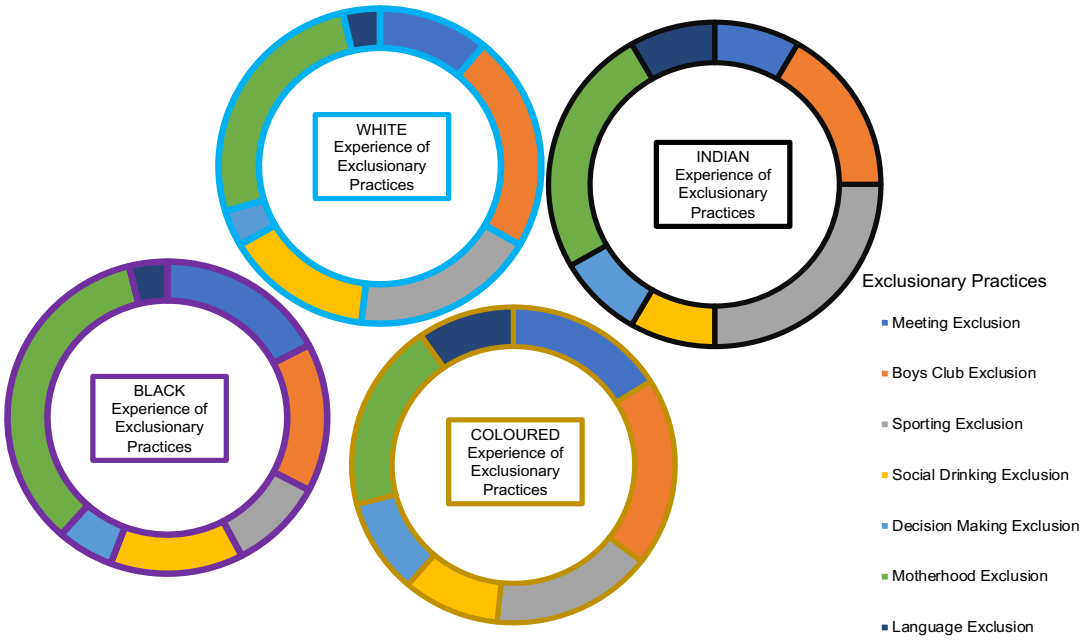


Figure 12: Multiplicity of exclusionary practices by race

Exclusionary practices are often socially nuanced in the traditional concept of the 'old boys' club' (Davies-Netzley, 1998). The tendency is that those from privileged backgrounds had exposure to certain lifestyles and elite activities. In conversation, reference is made to these which excludes those not able to participate in the narratives. In Africa specifically, this concept extends into a distinct exclusionary practice when after hours meetings are set up at gentlemen's only clubs. These invitations are extended to male colleagues and clients, and effectively prohibit women from participating.

Organisationally, exclusion is perpetuated through organisational practices such as meeting exclusion, language exclusion, decision-making exclusion, and the perception that motherhood affects a woman's commitment to the goals of the organisation. Although white respondents experienced exclusion from meetings and decision-making to a lesser extent than their other racial counterparts, the most frequently encountered exclusion across all racial groupings was the social exclusion set up by the 'boys' club' and the social drinking and sporting activities involved.

5.5.2 Most Prominent Exclusionary Practice Women Face: Motherhood

The data indicate that the most prominent exclusionary practice across all racial categories is motherhood and the perceptions associated with it. Without workplace understanding, the pressures of various life stages and the demands of family responsibilities prevent those who lack personal support structures from progressing into senior management roles. Pregnancy, maternity leave and motherhood place personal demands on women trying to pursue career opportunities while integrating family demands.

More flexible working arrangements are thus required to manage the complexity of the professional working mother's position. Davies-Netzley (1998) found that some women make the deliberate choice not to have children in order to meet the demands of senior management roles. Those who decide to have children have to reconcile family responsibilities and career demands. Some have to assume both the breadwinner and homemaker roles, rationalising and tolerating the strain with the monetary rewards that the positions provided.

5.5.2.1 Career Mobility and Motherhood

Career mobility in this context is described as opportunities related to international or regional mobility. This interacts with exclusionary practices related to managerial perceptions of a woman's role in the family. Career mobility also involves family support related to childcare and flexible working arrangements, but the legacy of male-dominated decision-making management teams means that international mobility opportunities are predominantly given to men.

Figure 13 illustrates that 83% of the respondents were mothers with family responsibilities, of which 58% went on international assignments with their families. Some made the decision to send their teenage children to boarding school, while those without spousal support relied on support structures by appointing domestic staff. Overall, most of the women relied on parental and family support.

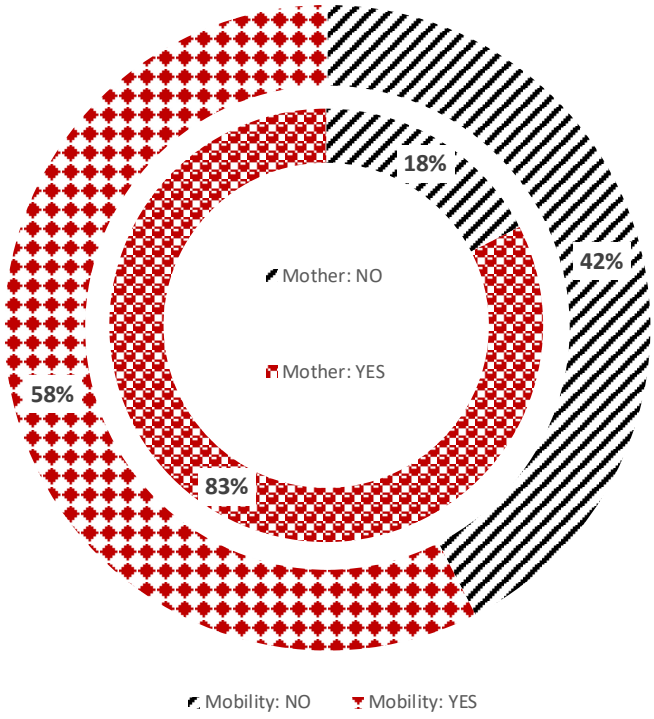


Figure 13: Motherhood and career mobility

5.5.2.2 Motherhood in the Management Ranks

Societal norms have a significant impact on women in the workplace as these relate to a woman's role as a spouse and mother. The narrative for the next generation of women needs to be interrogated and changed in terms of being able to succeed at having a family and to also realise career goals. Figure 14 below illustrates the intersection of race and the childcare profile: school-going children, special needs children and young children. There is little literature on childcare needs within the categories below.

The data indicate that different demands and support are required for the various categories, e.g., a pre-school child has different childcare needs from those who are of school-going age, and the demands increase significantly when a working mother has a child with special needs. Therefore, children as a category are oversimplified in relation to the varying childcare needs and of childcare with family responsibilities and the adversity women face, which is described in literature as the motherhood penalty (Rosette, Ponce de Leon, Koval, & Harrison, 2018).

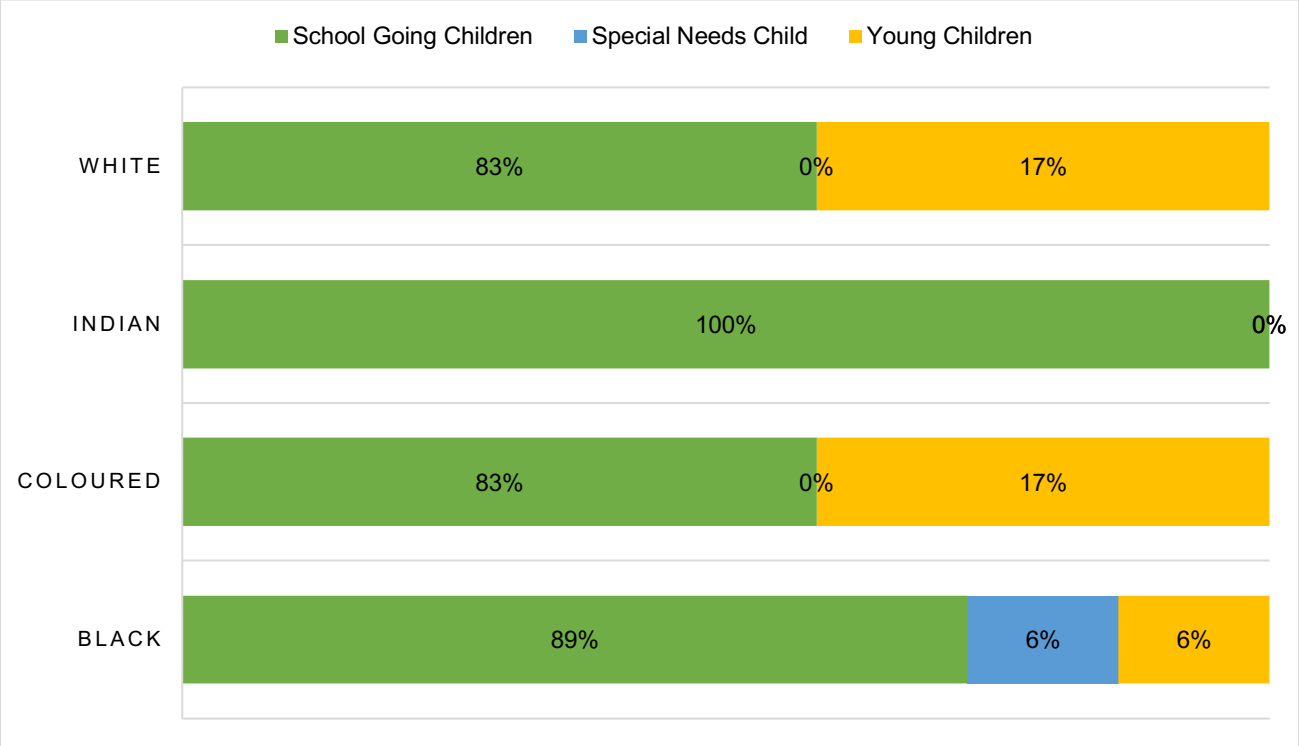


Figure 14: Motherhood and childcare by race

5.5.2.3 Spousal Support and Ethnicity

Spousal support extends beyond childcare to include support for business travel and other business requirements. The subtle pressure placed on women and their role in the household in relation to pursuing their career aspirations is linked to the societal paradigm that women are the primary caregivers. Many experience the scrutiny of their male counterparts while on business travels with male colleagues. Respondent CRS03 stated that many people would ask her who is watching her children whenever she is travelling on business or working late at the office late a question her male counterparts were unlikely to encounter.

Figure 15 below depicts how personal support intersects with childcare and management tenure. Among the respondents, husbands provided the primary support for women with fewer than 10 years' experience. The vast majority of women indicated that they had school-going children in this period. The next pivotal support came from family; those who did not have this support relied on childcare facilities or domestic support staff. The demands for childcare reduced for those with management tenure from 10 years to more than 20 years – the data indicates that parental support from husbands in relation to childcare during this time reduces. The literature identified the role of stay-at-home fathers and the demand for childcare as a category, but the data from this study indicate that the requirements based on childcare and the management tenure of women have an inverse effect on stay-at-home fathers (Richards Solomon, 2014).

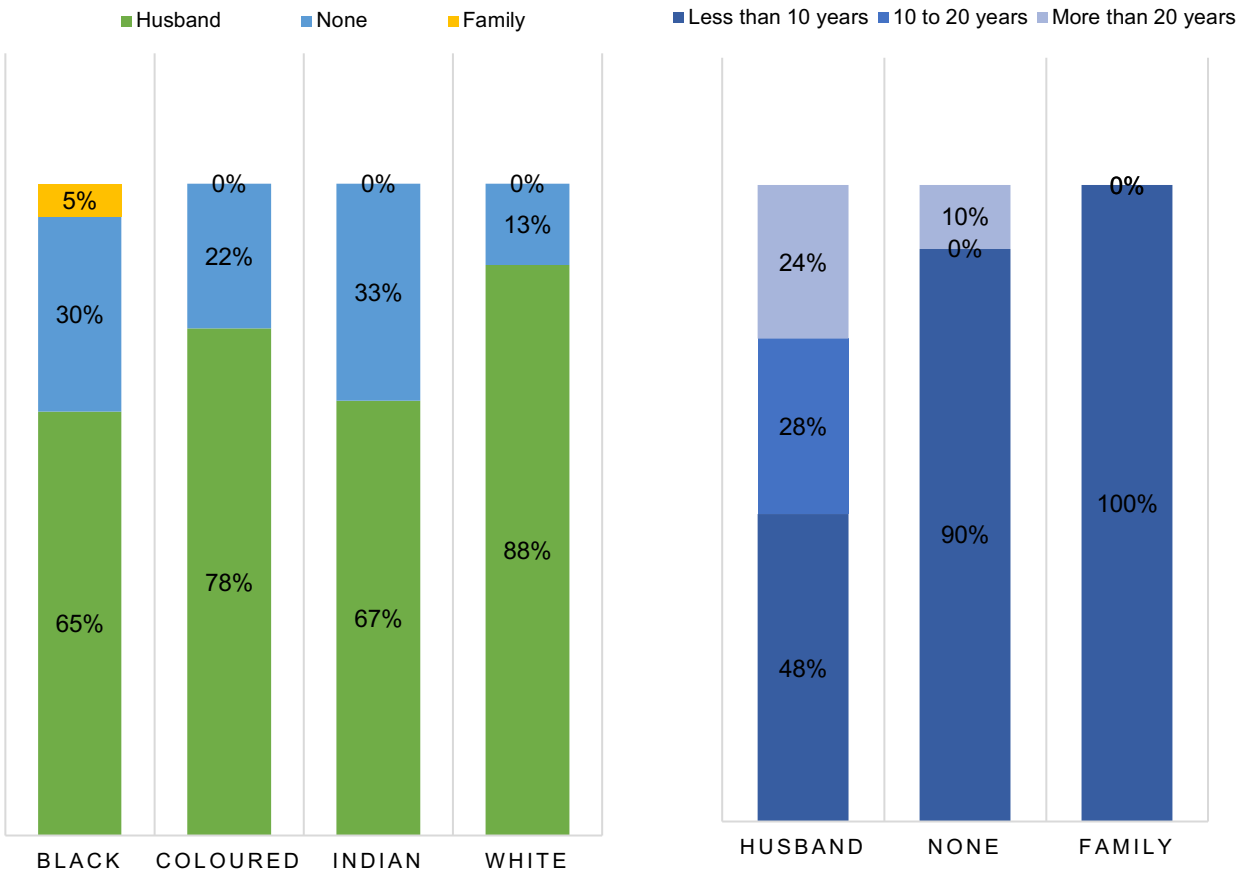


Figure 15: Personal support by race and management tenure

5.5.2.4 Pregnancy and Legislative Practice

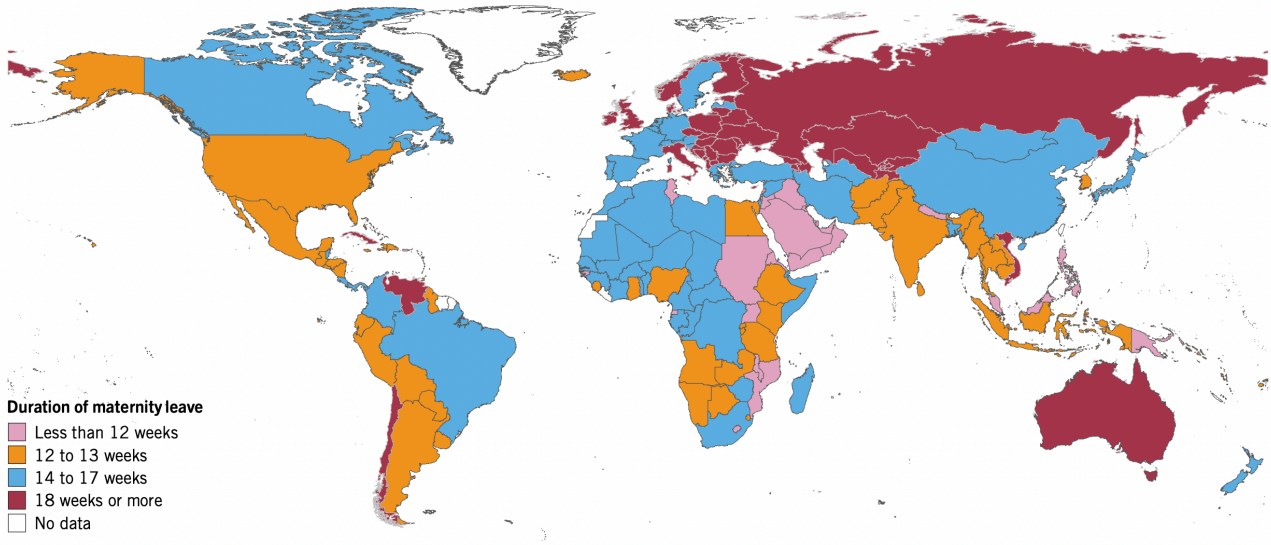
Without exception, across all nationalities and ethnicities, the most prominent category of exclusionary practices experienced by women in senior management is the perceived and actual impact of motherhood, from pregnancy to returning after the child's birth.

The impact is profound because of the need to balance the tension between motherhood and corporate careers in that respondent DRU15 reinforced that physically you cannot change the requirements of childbearing and you have to practically find ways to work around it as a working woman. This notion is further amplified by cultural feedback relating to the role of women in society, which leads to women questioning their own maternal and professional competence, which the responsibilities associated with childcare raise.

Respondent VSS38 explained, 'So, for me, if I go back and look at it, I think I probably lost four years of my career, in terms of having two children. So, it might be counted on paper as a 6-month maternity leave period. But even from an organisational perspective, in terms of how the organisation counted me out. From the moment in which a candidate announces her maternity, we stop reviewing her against any future roles, because there's a disconnect in her employment contract. So, we're not going to put her forward for a new promotion or a movement in her role. And then even when she comes back into her role, we sort of want to give her at least a six-month period in which she needs to settle to understand whether, you know, she's still going to be as motivated, whether she's had a different change of heart in terms of her commitment to her career.'

Beyond the cultural factors, the systemic exclusion of women because of childbearing continues in African countries. There have been recent reforms to maternity leave, but legislative changes still need to be reviewed because inadequate legislative reforms perpetuate the underrepresentation of women. Figure 16 provides an overview of the legislated time off during maternity leave; in African countries it ranges from fewer than 12 weeks to a maximum of 17 weeks.

Map 2.1 Statutory duration of maternity leave, 2013 (185 countries and territories)



Source: ILO Working Conditions Laws Database – Maternity Protection. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/travdatabase [25 Mar. 2014].

Figure 16: Maternity leave legislative practice

A recurring theme in the data was the impact of extended absences related to maternity leave, which physically exclude childbearing women from the workplace. These women are negatively affected by practices such as meeting exclusion, inflexible working arrangements, exclusion from development opportunities, poor reintegration into the workplace post maternity leave and the impact on their compensation. The effect of these factors is further exacerbated by out-of-date working arrangements that exclude women who are working from home while on maternity leave or do not communicate company news or strategic changes. This lack of information impacts on their roles and further perpetuates their exclusion. In the experience of respondent CRS08, her career slowed down during her childbearing years, which is something that her male counterparts would never have to contend with. This inequality is further reinforced by societal expectations that the primary role of women is to bear children and to remain home taking care of them. When women do return to work from maternity leave, they are often excluded from significant projects and restricted from business travel, as was the experience of respondent JON21.

The real impact of exclusion when returning from maternity leave is that it affects women's opportunities to progress. As a result of this, coupled with inflexible working arrangements that do not accommodate the demands of motherhood, several respondents left their organisations. Motherhood also has a direct impact on promotability; respondent DMK13's line manager retorted, 'How do you expect being promoted while you are taking advantage of the company time asking for flexi-time?'

5.5.3 Most Prominent Exclusionary Practices by Race and Gender

Figure 17 demonstrates the most prominent exclusionary practices by race and gender:

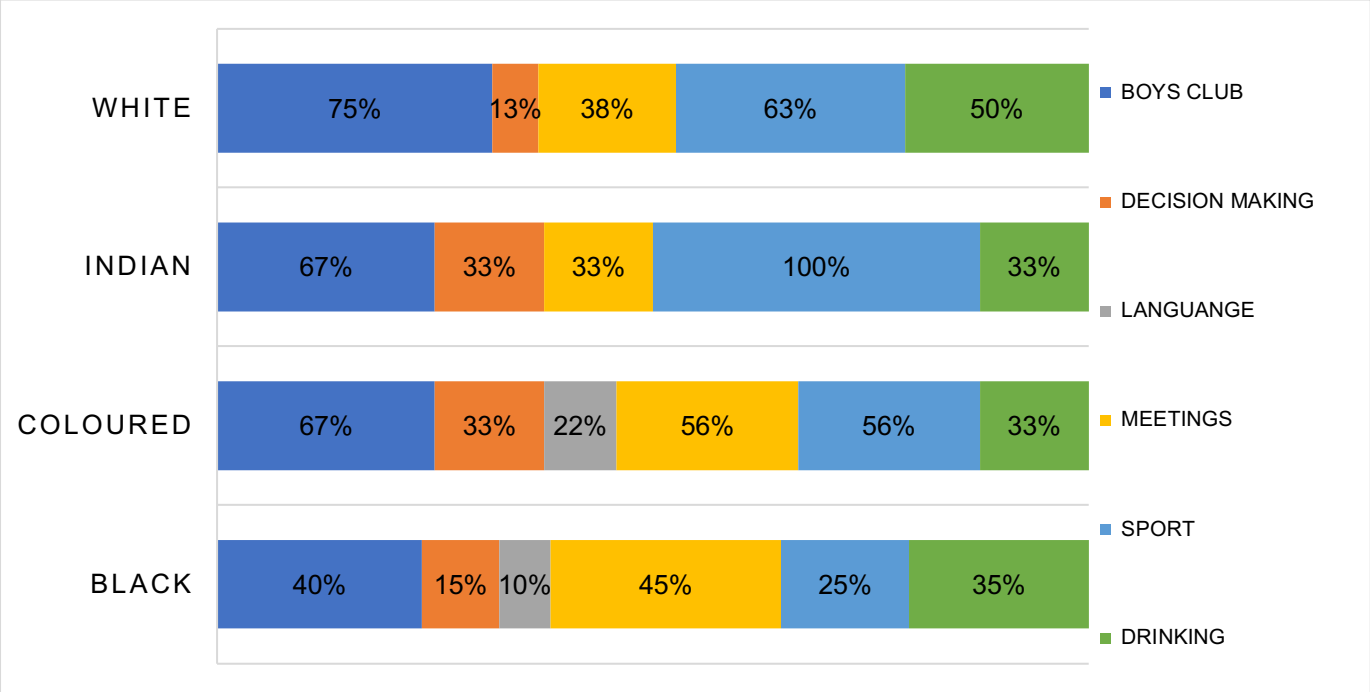


Figure 17: Exclusions by race

5.5.3.1 Black Experiences of Exclusionary Practices

5.5.3.1.1 Overt and Subtle Meeting Exclusions

A reasonable expectation in South Africa is that most business activities will be conducted in English. Some historically Afrikaans organisations, however, continue the legacy of conducting business activities in Afrikaans. Native and second language English speakers are thus excluded from participating in business meetings when colleagues switch into Afrikaans as experienced by respondent ADS02, 'People speaking Afrikaans. And I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one that struggles with this, but for me again, I just know how to adapt. So, I know how to bring people in, even in the midst of an exclusion. I started— I remember this bank. I worked at Absa. Well, I'm sure you know that by now. But the first time I joined Absa I was a project manager and everybody would speak Afrikaans in the middle of my meeting and I would say, "You know, actually, the medium of communication is English, because I speak IsiXhosa, you speak Afrikaans and if we all started speaking our languages we're not going to hear each other." But even as late as when I left corporate, which was my last job, my own boss and my own colleagues would do that all the time. So, you know, firstly, let's just say I quickly learned how to speak Afrikaans in my corporate years, because you are forced to, and you choose how you're going to handle it. So, for me, it's yes, let me remind you, because every time you're saying something and you're saying it in Afrikaans, I won't understand it. And I also have colleagues around the table who are not going to understand it. So, essentially you are excluding us from the conversation, which is fine if it's your social conversation, but if it's a business conversation we all need to be part of.'

Respondents from the rest of Africa experienced similar language exclusion, specifically on international assignments. Some had developed their careers outside their home country and one of the key exclusionary practices was the use of language in management meetings, where teams conversed in their home language even though French and English were the dominant business languages. This overt practice automatically excluded respondents as they were not able to understand the conversations, which often had an impact on key business decisions. Like the South African respondents, these respondents had to learn to adapt, at times approaching the situation with humour to diffuse the situation, and often the meeting members would apologise and revert to the business language.

Beyond this blatant language exclusion, the data indicated the impact of subtle language exclusion practices such as the use of business jargon. In highly regulated or technical industries, the use of jargon as an exclusionary practice is prevalent; business terms and anecdotes used in meetings excluded those who were recruited from outside the industry, had been newly promoted within the industry, or had crossed functional disciplines. This exclusion was often exerted as a demonstration of power to undermine those who did not have the industry knowledge. Again, those excluded found themselves having to approach the practice tactfully and subserviently, seeking clarity in the conversations and interrogating the business terms and concepts.

Overt exclusion from meetings is merely an expression of covert exclusionary organisational practices. Across the private and public sectors, women are excluded from communication distribution lists, which undermines their contributions. When they do eventually make it into the meetings, their contribution is muted, which diminishes their confidence about participating and speaking up. In the literature, this negative treatment is explained as attributional discrimination, which targets ambition experience (Deitch, et al., 2003). The data in this study indicated how, at a granular level, discriminatory practices were experienced according to race, gender and nationality.

Exclusion from meetings had a direct impact on the respondents' careers or functions. A recurring response was that women had to resort to including themselves as described by respondent DAE14 in that she had to learn to put her hand up to be noticed and participate in meetings.

Respondent DTA12 became aware of this blatant exclusionary management practice, and decided to invite herself to meetings that had a direct impact on their functions or department. Respondent CRS08 stated that historical levels of aggression between men and women determine the level of engagement, therefore negotiating various exclusionary practices requires a greater level of personal mastery for women in being more practical and focus on building their general business knowledge.

The data also indicate that beyond developing sound business acumen, to make their way through the management ranks, the respondent ADS02 had to learn how the unspoken systems in management worked she commented that she had to learn how the system works to win the war from the inside. These insights contributed to extant literature on discriminatory practices, observed as various forms of disrespectful treatment of minority groups in the management ranks (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016).

*5.5.3.1.2 **Social Exclusion***

Respondent ADS02 recognise that business decisions are often made outside the organisation at social gatherings, which automatically exclude those not able to participate due to family commitments, women therefore have to give up and adapt as she realised that you can't change exclusion from the outside. This exclusion is perpetuated if people, notably women, socialise with colleagues who share similar interests. As described in the literature, all this points to the impact that men's social and professional networks have on restricting the advancement of women (Mathur-Helm, 2006).

Respondent MMS30 experienced that women therefore have to create their own opportunities through networks and introductions; they have to push themselves and often become assertive in pursuing these opportunities, here experience were that she had to push for opportunities and assert herself which made her feel empowered. As clients and business partners were often entertained at these social functions, the women had to think of different ways to build business relationships while maintaining their family commitments. One option was to set up client lunches, or, as one respondent did, instead of client-only events, she extended the invitation to clients and their families so everybody could bring their families along.

The patriarchal factor in African society contributes significantly to the exclusion practices that African women experience in their careers (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). This is evident in the recruitment process, where a woman is well qualified to perform a role but when that role becomes available, the job description is changed to exclude female applicants. These recruitment practices further perpetuate the underrepresentation of women because women are not hired into these roles, and the impact extends into board positions.

*5.5.3.1.3 **Career Mobility and Performance***

Women are often automatically excluded from career mobility opportunities as the perception is that they prioritise family responsibilities at the expense of their career development, a perception further enforced by social culture (Mavin, 2001). In addition, international organisations with headquarters operating across Africa can have inherent bias in their recruitment process in that they give preference to candidates that obtained their academic qualifications from institutions in the UK or USA.

This preferment excludes African candidates, even if they have the relevant experience and are operationally astute. The data indicate that women operating in those organisations consistently have to prove themselves by demonstrating their competence to perform these roles. This insight contributes to the literacy on competency stereotyping and the anticipated work-family conflict (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009; Bagraim & Harrison, 2013).

The data also indicate that these self-imposed perceptions extend beyond capabilities to women's commitment to their careers while they manage family responsibilities. Their time availability is perceived as being restricted, which leads to them being marginalised and affects their career development. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that African women's appointments on international assignments can be sabotaged if the key decision-makers do not recognise African talent. The experience of respondent VDS39 was that in the management ranks was that they 'don't trust black talent' Her response was to focus on delivering the required results because in that she had to work to prove herself in prioritising delivery and performance.

5.5.3.1.4 ***Competency Stereotyping***

Beyond the actual delivery of objectives and performance outcomes, self-imposed perceptions on how women could deal with senior peers contribute to exclusionary practices (Deitch, et al., 2003). As experienced by respondent NES35 as a young professionals, women are often seen as inexperienced regardless of their education and training in the required field.

This is particularly the case in technically-orientated industries such as male-dominated engineering as experienced by respondent LVAS in that male line managers perception is that women are not able to perform certain physical role related activities that has an impact on women being able to make career progress, despite their technical capabilities and competencies to perform certain roles. Respondent ENS17 experience has been that institutionally, the opaque nature of performance appraisals can be an exclusionary factor in measuring contributions therefore women find that they have to impose themselves on role related activities in order be included in progressing careers.

This at times this leads to women compromising themselves through having intimate affairs in the workplace, because they succumb to power abuse by those in senior roles in an attempt to accelerate their careers. This finding is as per the literature on the sexualisation of women in patriarchal societies (Crenshaw K. , 1991; Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014).

5.5.3.2 White Experiences of Exclusionary Practices

*5.5.3.2.1 **Sporting Exclusion***

The predominant exclusionary practices that white respondents reported related to social activities, such as golf, which would be extended to male colleagues, thus reinforcing the concept of the boys' club as described by respondent HHS19 in that it was her experience that will never be one of the boys.

This was even more prevalent in male-dominated functions and industries, the effects of which can be seen in the gender imbalance in top management as well as the lack of racial diversity in key decision-making roles, in South Africa these functions are dominated by white males, which further perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Mathur-Helm, 2006).

White women in the study experienced these overt exclusions as being legitimised by their male counterparts. Typical networking events hosted for male clients included sporting events which excluded those with family responsibilities. This exclusion was further perpetuated by a culture of storytelling at sporting events that would be shared exclusively by men, i.e., the chauvinistic content and context explicitly excluded women.

*5.5.3.2.2 **Patriarchal impact***

Ideologies based on patriarchy have a direct effect on social context and to a large extent influence the exclusionary practices experienced in African societies. Typically, women are expected to be subservient to men (Amos-Wilson, 1999), however the data gathered in this study indicates that this is not a uniquely African phenomenon and is more pronounced in Eastern societies as experienced by respondent AHU03 she said, 'I arrived back from Saudi Arabia, and I was the only female in a group of people on the same level as me. So, there's about 30 attendees, and so, I'm the only female. And when we were discussing some of the strategy that we're going to be working on, and we were going to hold an event, and there was a luxury property and a non-luxury property. And one of the gentlemen that was there said, it's like seeing a really pretty girl and then realising you're married to the ugly sister. And that was like his comparison of the luxury property to the non-luxury property. I suppose it's because it's because it's very male dominated, and you know, one laughs and I'm like, "I understand that you're trying to make comparisons, but it takes a lot to offend me, and I just think you're a bit ignorant, and I'll leave it at that I think this part of the world is very male dominated.'

*5.5.3.2.3 **Sexual Harassment***

The complex intersection of the multi-layered identities of women in management with sexuality and cultural norms has led to the marginalisation of women in these ranks and instances of sexual harassment being silenced (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). These overt and invasive exclusionary practices are more pervasive than the data indicate, as women are exposed to inappropriate sexual innuendos from their male counterparts in both private and public platforms.

*5.5.3.2.4 **Life-Stage Demands***

The data indicate that an overwhelming lack of understanding by an organisation of what the various life stages and family demands place on women subtly excludes those who lack personal support structures from progressing into senior management roles. This exclusion means that women with family responsibility are excluded from early morning or late evening meetings because childcare responsibilities make it impossible for them to attend at these times.

5.5.3.3 Coloured Experiences of Exclusionary Practices

*5.5.3.3.1 **Management Meeting Dynamics***

Women's voices are often muted in management, therefore their contributions are either undermined or their outputs are commandeered and no recognition is given (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015). The exclusionary effect at meetings and social occasions of using a vernacular language has been discussed. This is even more pronounced in sectors such as white male-dominated mining, where English, as the business language, is often substituted with Afrikaans. Internationally, the cultural nuances in a country influence exclusionary practices. Respondent ENS17 experienced how the communication style of Americans is perceived as overbearing in the Canadian context, and how this can lead to Americans being excluded from meetings.

This perception is reinforced by stereotypes of role players during meetings and women being perceived as subservient (Holvino, 2008). As respondent NES35 explained, the unspoken expectation is that women take notes in male-dominated meetings in that the expectation in the room, if someone that women in the room is seen as the secretary. Masculine innuendos continued as she recalled that her male counterparts would assume she spent her weekend doing spa treatments. This stereotyping continued in social settings where derogatory conversations and sexist jokes took place in her presence.

Exclusion in meeting dynamics becomes overt when women are simply not included in discussions despite their role or position within the organisation, thus muting their contribution. Respondent WFS40's experience was that key decisions were taken which made her feel like she had no value to add. Respondent ESS16 recollected an ongoing work dynamic within her function between her and the corporate head office team. As she was based remotely at a client site she would typically be excluded from meetings and other office social functions. This sense of isolation eventually led to her being affected by a restructuring exercise in which she opted to exit the function and take on a business role

5.5.3.3.2 ***Competency Stereotyping***

The mind-sets in the management ranks of the roles that women are capable of in relation to their male counterparts, and which functions women 'belong' to, are systemically perpetuated (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Respondent NES35's experience of competency stereotyping was her observation during a recruitment process when the firm was recruiting a Legal Director. In discussing the requirements of the role, the recruiting line manager remarked, that he does not want someone of child-bearing age, adding, that he preferers candidates from certain residential areas which overtly excludes female candidates and people of colour as the subconscious list of candidates earmarked for the role should have a specific accent, have gone to certain schools and live in certain areas. The decision was thus skewed to a specific social class.

5.5.3.3.3 ***Queen Bees and Wannabees***

In the coloured female cohort, the effect of the Queen Bee was indicated as a key factor in hindering the progress of respondents. In the experience of respondent ENS17, same-sex line management support and leadership put persistent pressure on other women which perpetuated a stressful working environment to the extent that the Queen Bee's management was not supportive of pregnant women in the department in that most women in that department suffered the trauma of premature birth. The Wannabees demonstrate the same behaviour as the Queen Bees, but they are not in positions of power or leadership, which is expressed in how they relate to their female counterparts (Mavin, 2008)

*5.5.3.3.4 **Sexual Harassment***

Women in the management ranks often suffer sexual harassment during their career journeys (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004). In the respondent cohort, observation of this left respondent NES35 feeling helpless. As a woman in executive management in a management team that was mostly constituted of male executives, she recalled a meeting in which a female executive presented her sales results. At this point the men started talking amongst themselves saying, 'if you want to make better numbers flash your tits'. Even though the comment was directed at a colleague, the respondent was infuriated and demanded an apology. When she took up the issue with the Human Resources representative she was told she is being too sensitive and it is just boys talk.

5.5.3.4 Indian Experiences of Exclusionary Practices

*5.5.3.4.1 **Sporting Exclusion***

There is little equality in social contexts between peers who are from third generation wealth and others who are the first in their families to progress into executive management (Erwee, 1992). A characteristic of this cohort was their educational achievements in professions such as accounting and chemistry. In the workplace, however, professional qualifications do not prevent the practices of exclusion-creating barriers. The most prominent exclusionary practice the respondents faced was being excluded from attending business-related sporting activities such as customer golf days and social drinking after working hours.

Managerial perceptions that women are unable to attend these events because of their family commitments create a barrier for their advancement. Respondent JJS23 reported her experience when women were not invited to golf tournaments. When she addressed this she was told that they did not know women who play golf. In specific industries these golf day experiences are inherently exclusionary, as experienced by respondent VSS38 especially when the socialisation includes crazy nights and drinking tequila which resulted in debaucherous nights and 'buddy-bonding time' most of these activities would take place after hours so as a young mother she was specifically and effectively excluded.

5.5.3.4.2 ***Family-Work Conflict***

In this cohort, all the respondents were mothers and had school-going children. The data on work and personal commitments are supported by the experience of respondent JJS23 as the inconvenience of being a mother she recalled having to ask for a breastfeeding room as she was expected to continue working after breastfeeding. For women with younger families, achieving a balance between family and work proved to be more challenging in pursuing career progression (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007).

5.5.3.4.3 ***The Boys' World***

Men dominate the management ranks across the public and private sectors, but in industries like manufacturing and production, the concentration of masculinity leads to hegemonic sites of gendered exclusionary practices (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Respondent VSS38 described her manufacturing organisation as a boys' world, where leaders had already made up their minds who the decision-makers were, as was clear in management meeting dynamics. Additionally, during meetings, her male dominant, Afrikaans-speaking colleagues would revert to that language, automatically excluding those only conversant in English.

5.6 Intersectional Themes

The data indicate that not all exclusionary practices are experienced equally when race, gender and nationality intersect. The sections following set out the significant findings that emerged from the study when intersecting race and gender with the experience of multi-faceted exclusionary practices. Following this is discussion on how and to what extent the various ethnic groups and nationalities experienced the impact of the exclusionary practices as indicated in the data.

5.6.1 Ethnicity and Educational Attainment in the Management Ranks

A review of how the respondents were positioned across the management ranks indicates a range of post-schooling academic qualifications, as demonstrated in Figure 18.

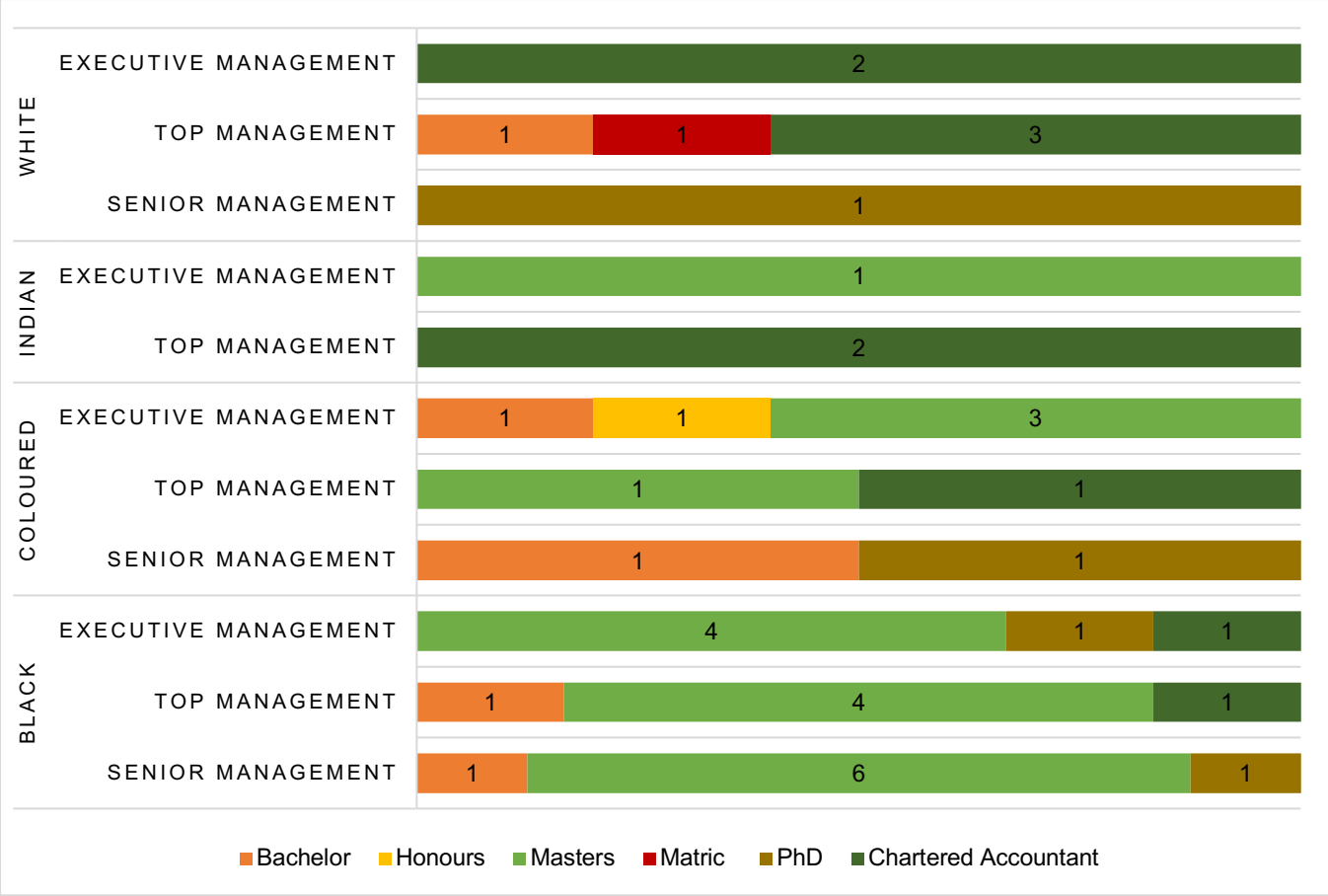


Figure 18: Educational attainment

The exception was a white respondent who held a Matriculation Certificate and progressed her career in corporate organisations from junior management through to top management in C-Suite roles. The data further indicate that most black respondents had postgraduate qualifications, in comparison with the white and coloured cohorts, whereas the Indian cohort mostly held professional qualifications.

In the literature, the impact of parental attitudes towards the education of girls and the employment of women is supported by the findings (Amos-Wilson, 1999), however there is little literature that explores restricted access to management ranks based on race, gender and educational attainment. To date, the literature has focussed on perceptions and competency stereotyping. The data in this study indicate that 98% of the respondents were academically qualified, which enabled their career progression.

5.6.2 Career Opportunities, Sponsorship and Mentorship

The role of formal mentoring and active sponsorship was important throughout the respondents' career journeys. Literature on the career development of women frequently reports the difficulty women have finding suitable sponsorship. Similarly, although research frequently identifies how important organisational mentoring is to women, it is not always easy to form a mentor relationship, which is often compounded by cross-gender relationship issues. An effective organisational system is required to ensure appropriate mentoring, and therein lies the dilemma.

Figure 19 below illustrates the interaction between sponsorship and mentorship in the lived experiences of the respondents across the regions.

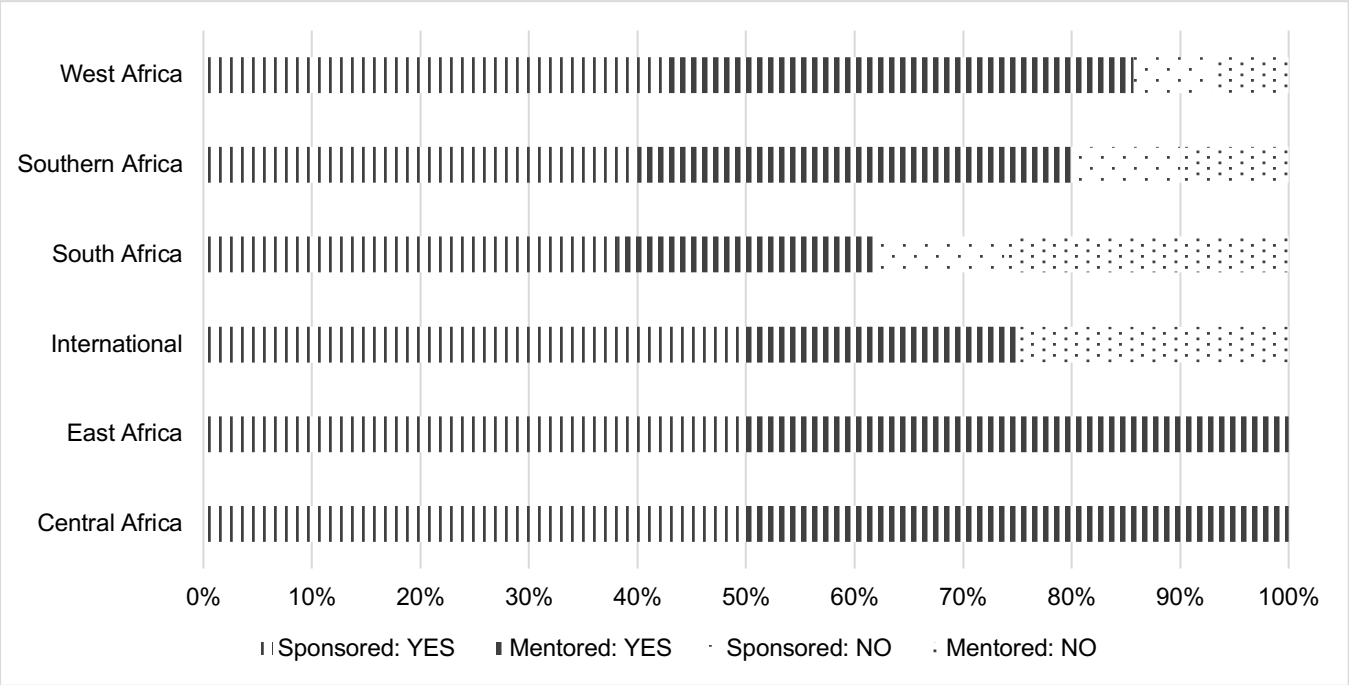


Figure 19: Sponsorship and mentorship experience

The data further indicate that a lack of sponsorship or mentorship was higher among the South African respondents, with closer analysis revealing that this was particularly true of woman executives who had been in management positions for over 20 years. This demonstrates the shift over time to practices that support and stimulate the advancement of women into the senior management ranks. However, as reviewed in the literature, boundary-making practices such as the invisible barriers of the glass ceiling, glass wall and the ultimate glass cliff remain (Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Davies-Netzley, 1998; Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2001; Mathur-Helm, 2006).

In conclusion, respondent JPS24, who had not been sponsored or mentored over her 15-year management tenure, said: 'Don't build your career on hope, plan it; it's okay to want to be a successful woman as we have the ability to connect dots, multi-skill, and move between tasks faster than men.'

5.6.3 Management Tenure and Ethnicity

When intersected with race, the data indicate that the average management tenure in years of white and Indian women far exceeds that of coloured and black women (see Figure 20).

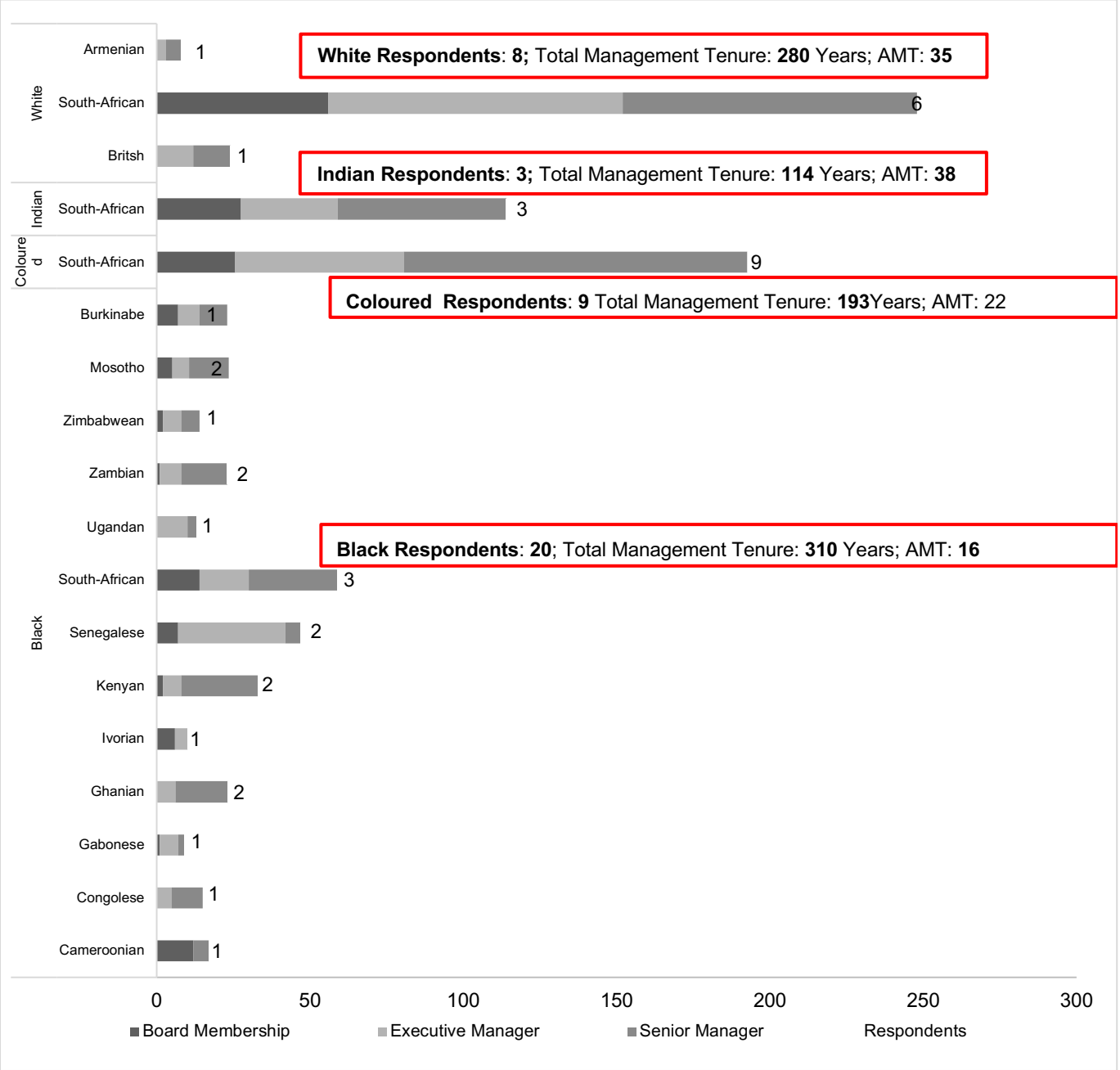


Figure 20: Average management tenure (AMT) by race and gender

The data further indicates that lack of sponsorship or mentorship was higher among South African respondents and closer analysis revealed that this was particularly true of woman executives who had been in management positions for over 20 years. This demonstrates the shift over time to practices that support and stimulate the advancement of women into the senior management ranks.

However, as reviewed in the literature, boundary-making practices such as the invisible barriers of the glass ceiling, glass wall and the ultimate glass cliff remain (Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Davies-Netzley, 1998; Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010; Mathur-Helm B. , 2006). The literature confirms that white women do not carry the additional discrimination beyond race, and experience the same privilege as their white male counterparts (Davies-Netzley, 1998).

In addition, the findings of this study are context-dependent; in Africa, the impact of colonisation and liberation struggles across the continent have influenced the racial representation and the access that different racial categories have had to the management ranks. In Africa, white women had earlier access into the management ranks (Goredema, 2010).

5.7 Summary and Key Insights

Undertaken in the context of Africa, this study generated new insights in that most respondents were black, coloured and Indian, although white women's career experiences were also incorporated. This study therefore goes some way to addressing the gap in literature of representing women of colour, because most studies have focussed on the experiences of white women in the West (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

The summaries will be presented in reference to extant literature; this studies research findings; and key contributions to production of management knowledge as follows:

- Table 8: Management Studies on African Women
- Table 9: Multiplicity of Exclusionary Practices
- Table 10: Societal Practices of Exclusion
- Table 11 & 12: Organisational Exclusionary Practices

Table 8: Contribution to management studies on African women

LITERATURE THEME	African Women in Management Studies
REFERENCES	(Goredema, 2010) (Omar & Davidson, 2001) (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009) (Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, Njambi, & Osirim, 2004) (Carrim & Nkomo, 2016) (Lauwo, 2018) (Nkomo, 2015)
EXTANT LITERATURE	Understanding the African women in published literature in an African context, who are largely underrepresented in research outputs in relation to global studies related to the study of women in management. The uniqueness of this research context is the complex social context and multiple identities of African women in management and recognising the discernible differences of the lived experiences of women following liberation struggles in a post-colonial society.
RESEARCH FINDINGS	This research uncovered the multi-layered social identities of African women and demonstrated the impact of colonisation on the career progression of women by highlighting the average management tenure of white women in Africa in relation to black women, articulated as the discernible difference between the colonised and the coloniser.
CONTRIBUTION	This research has further challenged the patriarchal climate of institutions that impedes the production of women by highlighting the realities, resources and priorities of conducting this study in an African context. It therefore responds to the call to unmute the muted voices in management scholarly conversation whilst remaining mindful of the sensitivity of the complexity of promoting gender equity in the tenuous task of driving social change.

The multi-layered identities of women in Africa interact with various exclusionary practices in that the findings indicate that the interaction of societal expectations and organisational factors combine to create gender-specific exclusionary practices (see Table 9).

Table 9: Contribution to multiplicity of exclusionary practices

LITERATURE THEME	Practices of Exclusion: Multi-Faceted and Context Dependent
REFERENCES	(Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016) (Amos-Wilson, 1999) (Davidson, Fielden, & Omar, 2010) (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015) (Erwee, 1992) (Prekel, 1980) (Deitch et al., 2003) (Mathur-Helm, 2006)
EXTANT LITERATURE	The unconscious enactment of exclusionary practices, whether overt or subtle, lies in the difficulty detecting it, whilst having a real impact on the targets of discrimination. The context in which this occurs and perpetuated is systemic in nature, thereby further entrenching inequalities. Systemically, women are perceived through the lens of socio-historical factors, resulting in the perpetuation of competency stereotyping, reinforced through structural impediments.
RESEARCH FINDINGS	Various structural impediments within the African context were identified that impacted the advancement of women through the management ranks, as demonstrated through legislative inequalities and multi-faceted exclusionary practices manifesting differently depending on context, race and gender. It further demonstrated the personal impact that the targets of discrimination suffered.
CONTRIBUTION	This study demonstrated the complexity and multiplicity of social and cultural contexts having been conducted in Africa and highlighting the entanglement of context and the experience of exclusionary practice beyond a surface level, one dimensional definition of exclusionary practices.

The findings indicate that the simultaneous interaction of multi-faceted subtle and overt exclusionary practices in the management tenures of the respondents had direct negative consequences on their physical, mental and social well-being, which were exacerbated by societal exclusionary practices.

The societal framework in which women progress their careers has multiple interactions with exclusionary practices and the cost and sacrifices they have to make (see Table 10).

Table 10: Contribution to societal practices of exclusion

LITERATURE THEME	Practices of Exclusion: Societal
REFERENCES	(April & Sikatali, 2019) (Mavin, 2001) (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007) (Holvino, 2008) (Griffin, Harding, & Learmonth, 2017) (Kellerman, 1980) (Lauwo, 2018) (Bagraim & Harrison, 2013) (Samuel & Mokoaleli, 2017) (Richards Solomon, 2014) (Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020) (Richardson & Loubier, 2008) (Bartram, 2005) (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017) (Crenshaw, 1993)
EXTANT LITERATURE	Institutionalised networking through men-only membership clubs that overtly exclude women has evolved to subtle men-only networking through the nature and the barriers represented in the old boys' club. The impact of these relationships and the power of the networks are evidenced as imperative to career progression. Recently, women's networking emerged as a source of learning and encouragement, however women remain far removed from key decision-makers. Therefore, the levels of authority are systemically maintained and inform attitudes towards women in management, reinforcing societal expectations and penalising them through inequalities in promotional opportunities, compensation, family-work conflict and gender-based violence.
RESEARCH FINDINGS	The study identified societal exclusionary practices rooted in the context of patriarchy. These influence women's lived experiences, as evidenced in the old boys' club. The limitation of women's networks is due to the underrepresentation of women in key decision-making roles, although these networks provide emotional support and learning opportunities.
CONTRIBUTION	Societal exclusionary practices are seen across various countries and work locations in Africa, Middle East and the West. The findings of this study highlighted the direct organisational ramifications and adversity women in Africa endure in progressing their careers through the management ranks in context of societal non-conformance and entrenched gender inequalities.

A concerning finding was personal impact and the practices respondents had to put in place to manage the strain of perpetually interacting with exclusionary practices. Throughout their career journeys, the respondents encountered costs and sacrifices to obtain “the brass ring” (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007, p. 60). More concerning in the societal framework in which this study was conducted is the lack of research on the impact of sexualisation and sexual harassment on the progression of women in the management ranks, as indicated in the findings in this study. The respondents navigated this in various ways, but for some the effects were unfortunately exacerbated when they suffered life-altering traumas such as terrorist attacks and the death of a child.

The most prominent exclusionary practice these women have experienced was the motherhood penalty in progressing their careers. In literature, this is oversimplified as family-work conflict, but the data in this study show that the interaction of a multi-layered, multiplicity of cultures and the age profile of children effects this exclusion. Maternity leave and the impact of various legislative frameworks merely consider the time off, and place the burden of reintegration after maternity leave on organisations (Bagraim & Harrison, 2013).

Personal primary support was indicated as a key factor for mothers to manage their career progression. Most of the respondents identified their husbands and family as their key support. There is a little literature in Africa on the role of stay-at-home fathers as women progress their careers, unlike in the West where there has been considerable research output. This demonstrates the shift from the traditional concepts of masculinity for men with certain social and economic privileges (Richards Solomon, 2014).

However, in an African context, the evolution of traditional concepts is still firmly rooted societally in patriarchy. This study has contributed knowledge from an African perspective on the impact that stay-at-home fathers have in helping their partners advance their careers. In contrast to findings from the West, African stay-at-home fathers are typically business owners or professionals with flexibility to take on childcare responsibilities, and do so within a structure of personal support including family and domestic arrangements.

Table 11: Contribution to organisational exclusionary practices (i)

LITERATURE THEME	Practices of Exclusion: Organisational
REFERENCES	(Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990) (Weyer, 2007) (Jeong & Harrison, 2017) (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010) (Davies-Netzley, 1998) (McKeen & Richardson, 1992) (Ryan & Haslam, 2007) (Griffin, Harding, & Learmonth, 2017) (Bartram, 2005) (Mavin, 2008) (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017) (Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017)
EXTANT LITERATURE	Organisational factors, systems and practices have a direct consequence on the progression of women into senior management ranks. Boundary-making practices strategically position women as outsiders looking at the invisible barriers theorised as the glass ceiling, glass wall and the eventuality women reaching the height of this boundary making practice when appointed to leadership positions on the glass cliff illustrated in 'think female, think crisis' Gendered management practice are informed by gender symbolism which is context dependent therefore sexual or racial bias inhibit career progression. Historically management studies focused on the traditional view of management in that 'think-male-think-manager' was excepted despite studies proving the limited impact of gender differences on leadership styles. Managerial competencies evidenced that competency stereotyping is context dependent and aligned to literature on the glass cliff, the sentiment towards women in leadership appointments was 'think-crisis-think-female'. Socially constructed stereotypes and gender symbolism inhibit women from participating equally in the traditional workplace, reinforcing gendered organisations and policies. Finally, the women to women conflict in management remains gendered and is theorised as the Queen Bee, which describes senior women managers who hinder the progress of other women through a lack of support and development.

Table 12: Contribution to organisational exclusionary practices (ii)

LITERATURE THEME	Practices of Exclusion: Organisational
RESEARCH FINDINGS	The findings of this research indicate that women unknowingly face the effects of the invisible barriers in organisations that hinder their career progression, however they experience the real effect of these invisible barriers. Furthermore, competency stereotyping directly impacts their organisational experience as they face practices such as meeting exclusions, language exclusions and decision-making exclusions. The most prominent feature of the gendered organisation experienced by the respondents was the impact of motherhood on retarding their career progression and managerial perceptions of family-work conflict. Finally, the experience of the Queen Bee had a direct impact on the minority of the respondents' career progression, which they navigated by taking on different roles or exiting their organisations.
CONTRIBUTION	There is a dearth of literature on motherhood in management studies in relation to the traditional view of management and the impact thereof on the career progression of women. Across race, ethnicity, nationality and geography, the respondents in this study contributed to the understanding of motherhood in the management ranks, from conception to birth, return-to-work and childcare.

In conclusion, this study has identified several exclusionary practices that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in senior management and the interaction of these exclusionary practices with multiple categories of identities. These findings respond to the call by Carrim and Nkomo (2016) that future research should take an inter-categorical approach and analyse complex relational identities within an intersectional framework.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the underrepresentation of women in senior management in Africa in the context of perpetual practices of exclusion. Brave, resilient and resourceful respondents from a range of African and international nationalities working across geographies in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the United States of America shared this knowledge from their lived experiences. The data indicate the adversity, cost and sacrifices they have had to overcome to make it to the upper echelons of management. The research has further identified, at an intra-categorical level, the manifestation of exclusionary practices and the systemic influences that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in senior management.

The current impact of the global pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 virus signals that the world needs to reset itself. It is time for women to take up their rightful place in society. Acknowledging this can reshape the narrative of women in the workplace, enable healthier societal outcomes in general, and carry humanity into a healthier state.

6.1 Key Contributions

Women's career progress is hindered by the unrealistic expectations placed on women in the workplace, at home and in society at large. The novel contribution of this study is in the production of knowledge of perpetual practices of exclusion in the management ranks. It is known that immobility and homosocial reproduction serve to perpetuate current power differentials and socio-cultural structures – in and across specific contexts, in gender and individual identities, as well as infrastructure and system-based exclusionary mechanisms in the workplace (Uteng, 2009, p. 1055; Zietsman & April, 2021). In that exclusionary practices reproduce and exacerbate the underrepresentation of women in the senior management ranks, the purpose of this research was to understand how practices of exclusion in the management ranks persistently perpetuate the underrepresentation of women executives in corporations. By uncovering these exclusionary practices, meaningful theories can be developed to guide the direction of future research on women managers in Africa. While these have been produced to a limited extent, there is a growing sense that further research is required to understand the underrepresentation of women in senior management (Zama, 2016)

There is an African proverb that says, 'Until the lions can tell their side of the story, the hunt will always glorify the hunter'. It is important that women tell their own stories in their own voices, as therein lies inclusion. Sharing their career experiences will continue to build our understanding of this phenomenon and to develop further research outputs that create knowledge of African women in management.

6.2 Theoretical Contribution

Using an intersectional lens, this research has created a framework for understanding the complex and iterative effect of exclusionary practices. This approach uncovered the effect of several exclusionary practices and their varied impact on the multi-layered identities of both women of colour and white women.

The underrepresentation of women in senior management roles is an international phenomenon. An examination of how this manifest in the African context has contributed to the production of knowledge on women in management, a gap clearly identified by Ngambi and Nkomo (2009), who challenged African scholars to look in the mirror and produce knowledge in Africa, for Africans. Until the muted voices of the respondents are heard in literature, they argued, knowledge on women in management will remain incomplete.

6.3 Methodological Significance

This study followed a phenomenographic approach through an intersectional lens as the researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of women in senior management in Africa. Hermeneutic phenomenology added a level of abstraction as the hermeneutic circle facilitated understanding and interpretation by continually reflecting on what was emerging in order to better understand the phenomenon under investigation.

CHAPTER 7: FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Implications for career women in African societies

Accelerated economic development creates opportunities for African women to accelerate their development and career growth across various industries and sectors across the continent. The reality is that this demand for talent across the continent is outweighed by the available supply in the context of the perpetual practices of exclusion that women experience. This is reinforced by out-of-date traditional paradigms of the role of women in African societies at the cost of economic growth and fulfilling their human potential.

African societies are systemically rooted in patriarchy, therefore recognising the cultural significance hereof women face a double-bind: career or family. The unaccounted cost of career or family is the personal sacrifice women experience, further exacerbated by the rising phenomenon of the African female breadwinner.

The most concerning finding is the impact on women's health – both emotionally and physically, this under-researched phenomenon specifically in Africa was highlighted in this study and the self-corrective measures women had to adopt to adapt to the business environment. Secondly, the African women are still sexualised as a site of reproduction, while beyond this, the innuendos and sexual gestures combined with gender-based violence have severe personal and social ramifications for the next generation of female leaders.

There is a need to develop social practices that create environments that recognise women's careers as a vital resources for societal development whilst providing support in their maternal endeavours as mothers and professionals. These narratives require further interrogation so that the next generation of women will successfully be able to have a family and realise their career goals.

7.2 Implications for Organisations in Africa

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the world was thrown into panic and the impact had direct and severe consequences for business. Organisations had to readjust their ways of work whilst providing the necessary information and support to their staff. The world changed, but the question is, have business practices changed?

Organisations were forced to reinvent traditional models of work and the workforce demanded flexibility and prioritisation of their health. This context is important as it relates to the purpose of this study, as motherhood and the need for flexibility were ranked as one of the most common and severe exclusionary practices. Legislative changes on maternity leave reinforces this exclusion as it does not allow for flexibility for women to develop their careers beyond those parameters. The physical and emotional strain women experience in childbearing, followed by the ongoing guilt of being a career woman during their children's formative and schooling careers, are unbearable for some.

Organisations develop maternity leave policies as required by legislation in various countries, however it is clear from the data that the underrepresentation of women in the management ranks will continue if organisations do not interrogate and revise their approach to motherhood and the requirements beyond simply maternity leave. For this reason, women who are already in senior management roles need to wield their influence to advocate for the next generation of women leaders by contributing to policy development and extending their networks across geographies to look for opportunities to contribute to changing the narratives.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

Psychology's overemphasis of internal as opposed to external validity has differentially hindered the development of ethnic minority research (Sue, 1999) – hence the focus on women from diverse nationalities in different regions in Africa (so that insights could be cross-validated, to the unit of analysis, across populations and regions). In the case of South African insights in this study, the findings are limited to women in the public and private sectors across all racial classifications, with limited investigation of entrepreneurial and women-owned small-, micro- and medium enterprises. Within this study though, the findings are limited to respondents with five or more years in senior management ranks across public and private sectors.

The study recognised the regional influences in the findings in Africa, which is therefore limited to the women in those countries in senior management roles and should not be generalised to the women across all management ranks. The same applies to the international respondents.

Finally, the findings discussed exclusionary practices through an intersectional lens within an African context and was limited to the binary gender concepts of male and female.

7.4 Future research recommendations

Further knowledge production is required for society to develop the necessary expertise in order to understand the underrepresentation of women in senior management. Lack of knowledge inadvertently perpetuates this phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in senior management on the continent, and within social contexts of experiencing perpetual exclusionary practices. This study identified several exclusionary practices that women experience to greater or lesser extent, as demonstrated through the intersectional framework applied during data analysis.

The data indicate two prominent exclusionary practices that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in the management ranks. Firstly, the ongoing old boys' club, which is reinforced by society and masculine social activities, resulting in the unspoken rules of the career progression of men in relation to their female counterparts. Therefore, scholars need to interrogate the wider organisational and social ramifications of the systemic nature of the old boys' club in relation to lowering the barriers of entry for women to participate, and the impact thereof on the representation of women in the management ranks.

Secondly, the data indicate that the role of motherhood, the resultant isolation of maternity leave during childbearing, and the distracted career focus during childrearing due to lack of effective organisational practices frustrate the career progression of women into the senior management ranks. Future research could investigate progress on flexible working and motherhood policies in organisations, as well as the impact thereof on the representation of women in the management ranks.

Finally, future research is recommended into the intra-categorical nature of sexual identity beyond biological sex differences, as attention is drawn to the intersection of experiences of exclusionary practices based on sexual orientation in the production of management knowledge.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE

Faculty of Commerce
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
2.26 Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 4375/ 5748 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 4369
E-mail: com-faculty@uct.ac.za
Internet: www.uct.ac.za
@Commerce UCT **UCT Commerce Faculty Office**

09th April 2019

Ms Candice Watson
Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town

Dear Ms Watson

REF: REC 2019/000/032

UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA, IN THE CONTEXT OF PERPETUAL PRACTICES OF EXCLUSION IN THE MANAGEMENT RANKS

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid for 1 year and may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

Shandre Swain
Administrative Assistant
University of Cape Town
Commerce Faculty Office
Room 2.26 | Leslie Commerce Building

Office Telephone: +27 (0)21 650 2695 / 4375
Office Fax: +27 (0)21 650 4369
E-mail: sl.swain@uct.ac.za
Website: www.commerce.uct.ac.za<http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
Igniting Knowledge and Opportunity

INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORM:

For Female Executive Managers

RESEARCH TOPIC:

Understanding the Underrepresentation of Women in Senior Management in Africa, in the context of perpetual practices of exclusion in the management ranks.

Good day,

My name is Candice Watson, and I am conducting research towards a doctoral degree. This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee.
The purpose of this research is to understand how practices of exclusion in the management ranks persistently perpetuate the underrepresentation of women executives in corporations.
I invite you to be part of this study and share your insights into this topic with me during a 45minute to 60minute interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed.
Please note that participation is voluntary, and should you choose to participate you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview. All data gathered during the interview will be kept confidential and your anonymity will be maintained. Once the research has been approved for publication the audio recordings will be deleted.

Name of respondent……. Date……
Signature of respondent…….

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
Igniting Knowledge and Opportunity

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL:

For Female Executive Managers

RESEARCH TOPIC:

Understanding the Underrepresentation of Women in Senior Management in Africa, in the context of perpetual practices of exclusion in the management ranks.

Thank you for taking time to share your insights as part of this study. The purpose of this research is to understand how practices of exclusion in the management ranks persistently perpetuate the underrepresentation of women executives in corporations.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be voice recorded and transcribed. All data gathered during the interview will be kept confidential and your anonymity will be maintained. Please note that participation is voluntary, and should you choose to participate you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview

This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">1. RESPONDENT DETAILS</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">NAME AND SURNAME:</td><td colspan="3">LOCATION:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">CURRENT JOB TITLE:</td><td colspan="3">CURRENT INDUSTRY:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">MANAGEMENT LEVEL EXPERIENCE:</td><td>BOARD MEMBER</td><td>EXEUCTIVE MANAGEMENT</td><td>SENIOR MANAGEMENT</td></tr>
<tr><td>YES | NO</td><td>YES | NO</td><td>YES | NO</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">NUMBER OF MANAGEMENT YEARS EXPERIENCE:</td><td>BOARD MEMBER</td><td>EXEUCTIVE MANAGEMENT</td><td>SENIOR MANAGEMENT</td></tr>
<tr><td>HIGHEST ACADEMEIC QUALIFICATION:</td><td colspan="2"></td><td>NATIONALITY:</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>RELATIONSHIP STATUS</td><td>SINGLE</td><td>PARTNER</td><td>NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

2. CAREER EXPERIENCE

2. Career Experience refer to the respondent's roles (job titles); line management experience; industry experience; management level experience; career mobility; and development opportunities throughout their career journey.

    2.1. Reflecting on your journey to date, please share with me examples of defining moments that shaped your career experience to date?

    2.2. Could you identify your key professional sponsors, and share specific examples of, how have they influenced your career?

    2.3. Have you actively pursued professional mentoring relationships, and if so, can you describe how these relationships have influenced your career?

    2.4. Is there anything else within the 'career experience' domain, (e.g., inclusion/exclusion/gender/career enhancement) which you wish to raise in addition to your responses above?

3. MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

3. Management Practice refer to the respondent's experience of their line manager relationship; company performance management practice; company remuneration & reward practices; professional peer-to-peer relationships; and how these practices influenced *(influence refers to the impact these practices had on either progressing OR inhibiting the respondent)* the respondent's career experience.

    3.1. Describe the characteristics of a line manager who significantly progressed your career?

    3.2. Describe the characteristics of a line manager who hindered your career progress?

    3.3. In your experience, describe how the company's performance management practices influenced your career experience?

    3.4. In your experience, has knowledge of the gender-pay gap directly impacted your pay decisions, if so, please share an example?

    3.5. Describe the characteristics of professional peer-to-peer relationships that influenced your career progression?

    3.6. Is there anything else within the 'management practice' domain, (e.g., inclusion/exclusion/gender/career enhancement) which you wish to raise in addition to your responses above?

4. PRACTICES OF EXCLUSION

4. Practices of Exclusion could be context-dependent, therefore, the purpose of this section in the interview is to gather data of the subtle, and often times, unconscious exclusionary practices that exist in the management ranks. Exclusionary practices are multi-faceted and could include the use of language other than business language; micro-aggressions; exclusion from informal social networks; restricted access to opportunities; exclusion from influencing strategic decision making; navigating organisational politics and the like.

    4.1. Reflecting on your career journey to date, describe the practices of exclusion in the management ranks you have experienced.

    4.2. In your opinion, which of these exclusionary practices perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management?

    4.3. Is there anything else within the 'practices of exclusion' domain, (e.g., inclusion/exclusion/gender/career enhancement) which you wish to raise in addition to your responses above?

5. WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

5. Work-Life Integration refer to personal impact experienced by respondents throughout their career journey as it relates to their role in their immediate and/or extended family; their role in their personal relationships; their role in the immediate community; and personal practices related to their personal well-being (resilience).

    5.1. Describe those who has been your primary personal support in your career journey?

    5.2. How has their support influenced the career opportunities you pursued?

    5.3. Describe the personal impact *(negative effects physically/psychologically/socially)* you've experienced in progressing your career?

    5.4. Describe personal practices *(personal practices could include activities related to mitigating the negative effects of personal impact)* you have implemented?

    5.5. Is there anything else within the work-life integration' domain, (e.g., inclusion/exclusion/gender/career enhancement) which you wish to raise in addition to your responses above?

6. CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

6. Thank you for your time and attention in responding during the interview. The insights you've shared will contribute to the production of knowledge to address and eliminate gender inequality in the workplace and society.
   6.1. Please share any further insights on the practices of exclusion that perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in senior management

TABLE OF COMMENTS

Comments shared by respondents related to their experience of practices of exclusion throughout the management ranks.

COMMENT	EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICE

APPENDIX D: RESPONDENT OVERVIEW

CODE	CURRENT JOB TITLE	CURRENT MANAGEMENT LEVEL	CURRENT INDUSTRY	MANAGEMENT TENURE	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	FUNCTIONAL DISCPLINE OF QUALIFICATION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY	MOTHER	PARTNER
ATS01	Chief Financial Officer	Executive	Financial Services	20	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	Indian	Y	N
ADS02	Chief Executive Officer	Executive	Finance Consulting	9	Bachelor	Social Sciences	South African	Black	Y	Y
AHU03	Vice President Human Resources	Executive	Hospitality	12	BA	Hospitality	British	Caucasian	Y	Y
AAS04	Director	Executive	Professional Services	20	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	White	Y	Y
ACS05	Senior Scientist	Senior Manager	Health	10	PhD	Health	South African	Coloured	Y	Y
BGS06	Chief People Officer	Executive	Hospitality	22	Masters	Social Sciences	South African	Coloured	N	N
BES07	Head Mobility	Senior Manager	Oil & Gas	12	Masters	Strategy	Cameroonian	African	Y	Y
CRS08	Human Capital Director	Executive	Financial Services	10	Masters	Engineering & Business	South African	Black	Y	Y
CKS09	Chief Financial Officer	Executive	Services	6	CA (SA)	Finance & EMBA	Zimbabwean	African	Y	N

CODE	CURRENT JOB TITLE	CURRENT MANAGEMENT LEVEL	CURRENT INDUSTRY	MANAGEMENT TENURE	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	FUNCTIONAL DISCPLINE OF QUALIFICATION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY	MOTHER	PARTNER
CCS10	Managing Director	Executive	Insurance	25	Matric	Insurance	South African	White	Y	Y
CSZ11	Head Internal Audit	Senior Manager	Financial Services	5	Masters	Business	Zambian	African	Y	Y
DTA12	Chief Operating Officer	Executive	Financial Services	9	Masters	Insurance	Burkinabé	African	Y	N
DMK13	Interim CEO	Executive	Economic Development NPO	15	Masters	Economics & Business	Kenyan	African	Y	Y
DAE14	Managing Director	Executive	Human Resources	10	Masters	Human Resources	Ghanian	African	Y	Y
DRU15	Regional Head of Audit	Senior Manager	Financial Services	10	Masters	Engineering & Business	Ugandan	African	Y	Y
ESS16	HR Practioner	Senior Manager	Banking	15	B Tech	Human Resources	South African	Coloured	Y	Y
ENS17	Chief Operating Officer	Executive	Information Technology	14	CA (SA)	Accounting	South African	Chinese	N	Y
GLS18	Divisional Executive Strategy	Executive	Diversified Industrials	15	Masters	Business	South African	Coloured	N	N
HHS19	Director	Executive	Listed Board Various	29	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	White	N	Y

CODE	CURRENT JOB TITLE	CURRENT MANAGEMENT LEVEL	CURRENT INDUSTRY	MANAGEMENT TENURE	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	FUNCTIONAL DISCPLINE OF QUALIFICATION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY	MOTHER	PARTNER
IDI20	Special Advisor	Senior Manager	Finance Ministry	6	Masters	International Business Law	Ivorian	African	N	N
JON21	Associate Director	Senior Manager	Advisory	5	PhD	Computer Science	British	Armenian	Y	Y
JMZ22	Country Head Zambia	Senior Manager	Education	10	Masters	Business	Zambian	African	Y	Y
JJS23	Chief Audit Executive	Executive	Financial Services	29	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	Indian	Y	Y
JPS24	Group Chief Financial Officer	Executive	Legal Services	15	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	White	Y	Y
JNS25	Deputy Director	Executive	Finance	10	PhD	Finance	Kenyan	African	Y	Y
LVAS26	Global Director	Executive	Technology	15	Masters	Engineering & Business	South African	Coloured	Y	Y
LOS27	Chief Financial Officer	Executive	Automotive	8	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	White	Y	Y
LYA28	Project Manager	Senior Manager	Energy	10	Masters	Engineering	Congolese	African	Y	Y
LMS29	Director General Finance	Executive	Financial Services	25	CA (SA)	Finance	South African	White	Y	N
MMS30	Founder	Executive	Human Resources	10	Bcomm	Marketing	South African	Black	N	N

CODE	CURRENT JOB TITLE	CURRENT MANAGEMENT LEVEL	CURRENT INDUSTRY	MANAGEMENT TENURE	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	FUNCTIONAL DISCPLINE OF QUALIFICATION	NATIONALITY	ETHNICITY	MOTHER	PARTNER
MRS31	Senior Lecturer	Senior Manager	Education	3	PhD	Education	Mosotho	African	Y	N
MEM32	Chief Operating Officer	Executive	Education	7	Masters	Sociology	Ghanaian	African	Y	Y
MSL33	Director Mental Health	Executive	Government	10	Masters	Psychology	Mosotho	African	Y	Y
NFI34	Managing Director	Executive	Communications Public Relations	25	Masters	Finance	Senegalese	African	Y	N
NES35	Legal Director	Executive	Property	5	LLB	Legal	South African	Coloured	Y	Y
USS36	HR Executive	Executive	Banking	9	Honours	Industrial Psychology	South African	Coloured	Y	Y
VAG37	Managing Partner	Executive	Accounting Financial	6	CA	Finance	Gabonese	African	Y	Y
VSS38	Marketing Director	Executive	Fast Moving Consumer Goods	6	Masters	Engineering & Business	South African	Indian	Y	Y
VDS39	Talent Director	Executive	Fast Moving Consumer Goods	10	Masters	Human Resources	Cape Verdean/ Senegalese	African	Y	N
WFS40	People Continuity Director	Executive	Beverages	7	Masters	Industrial Psychology	South African	Coloured	Y	Y