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**Women Leading in Silence in Papua New Guinea Higher
Education**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Educational Leadership



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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ABSTRACT

The Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea (National Goals and Directive Principles, the Preamble of the PNG Constitution, 1975) and the National Gender Equity Policy (2003) advocate for the increase of women's representation in educational leadership positions in higher education institutions. However, that has not been the case because leadership opportunities have not been fully extended to the women academics in the higher education sector.

This research explored the experiences of women in formal leadership positions and aspiring women leaders. The study examined what influenced women's access to leadership roles within the higher education in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and how this impacted their career advancement within the leadership structure. It also explored the beliefs and perceptions women held towards leadership, and investigated what factors influenced these.

This research used a qualitative approach to gather data in Papua New Guinea from April - June 2009. The interviews were conducted with five women who were in formal leadership positions and eight aspiring women leaders in one university. Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. A major finding was that the socio-cultural context had a powerful influence on women's educational leadership experiences in PNG. It impacted on women's values and beliefs in leadership which were significantly influenced by the Christian and Melanesian cultural value systems. As a result, women associated leadership with collaborative and servant leadership approaches. Some key findings illustrated how power was wielded over women in family settings, and through 'big man' leadership which in turn, impacted women's leadership aspirations. Furthermore, the appointment process and the lack of support systems such as mentoring and networking for women in the institution disadvantaged women to progress in their careers. There were other factors such as gender discrimination, the challenges of balancing family/work and lack of confidence which created barriers for women's advancement to leadership positions. Overall, this study has shown that Papua New Guinea patriarchal society by large has effects on the women educational leaders in the higher education sector.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Context of the study

This study is located in Papua New Guinea (PNG), a Melanesian country. It is largest of the Pacific Islands nations with an area of 474,000 square kilometres and made up of over 600 islands. PNG is situated on the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, which is the second largest island in the world. It also shares international borders with Solomon Islands on the south-east and Australia to the south. PNG was an Australian protectorate until 16 September 1975, when it gained independence. It is a land of great physical diversity, from the vast, swampy plains to the high alpine mountains, broad upland valleys, volcanoes and a number of great river systems, and this diversity extends to a culturally rich and ethnically diverse population with many tribal and ethnic groups, and more than 800 languages spoken. There are twenty provinces categorized into four distinct regions known as the Papua, Momase, Highlands and New Guinea Islands regions. Such geographical, ethnic and cultural diversity illustrates at a glance just how complex PNG society is; and therefore the importance of understanding the experiences of women educational leaders in such a context.

First, this section presents an overview of Papua New Guinea women's movement towards gender equity that paved the way for the introduction of the gender policies within the education system. Next, the context of this study is explored to explain the structure of higher education in PNG. Third, the underlying issue for this study is identified and the reason for undertaking this research is addressed. Fourth, I present a brief account of my experience and observation as a young Papua New Guinean woman that initiated my interest in this topic, women and educational leadership in PNG higher education. Lastly, I provide an overview of the thesis by outlining what each chapter entails. I begin by presenting an overview of how women in PNG gain momentum towards empowerment in the public spheres.

Women's journey for empowerment in Papua New Guinea

Over the years, the PNG Government has subscribed to and been part of international conventions such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1962), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Education for All (United Nations Declaration 1990), and particularly, the Beijing Declaration (1995) on gender issues. In 1995, prior to the Beijing convention, the PNG National Council of Women held an annual general meeting from 29th April to 3rd May in the capital city, Port Moresby. The meeting was intended to address many social issues that Papua New Guinean women encountered in rural and urban centres. They addressed areas such as equal access for females to primary education, employment, basic health care and other services. It was during this meeting that one of the issues the women called upon the government to address was equal participation of women in formal employment and the gender imbalance in the education system.

This call to the government was to implement section 102 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea that clearly outlined as part of one of the five National Goals and Directive Principles that everyone had the right to equal opportunities to participate and contribute to the social and economic development of the country (National Goals and Directive Principles, the Preamble of the PNG Constitution, 1975). It was in this meeting that *The Granville Declaration on Emergency Action for Women's Development and the Future of Papua New Guinea* was presented to the PNG government. Alongside this was a document prepared by the National Steering Committee called *PNG Platform for Action: A Decade of Action for Women towards National Unity and Sustainability 1995-2000*. The latter document was in preparation for the fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing. Both documents were signed and endorsed by the government before the Beijing Declaration (1995) that advocated for equal gender.

As a result of these documents and the Beijing Declaration (1995), the PNG government translated its commitment into national plans of action to promote gender equity through the National Education Plan 1995-2004. This plan provided a wide range of approaches to address issues of gender inequality. In 2003, the

Department of Education included Gender Equity as part of the Education Policy. The policy is fundamental to all educational policies and practices with the aim of achieving gender equity and empowerment of women in PNG through education.

The next step involved every educational institution developing an institutional gender equity policy under this umbrella policy (National Gender Equity Policy, 2003). Inherent within this gender equity policy was the understanding that the notion of gender equity would be addressed at all levels of education and workplaces as stated in the policy document. The ultimate aim was to increase opportunities for women in education and workplaces, with increased representation at the highest levels of decision-making bodies (Department of Education, 2002). In addition, in the light of the PNG National Constitution, to have equal opportunity means that regardless of race, religion or gender. Both men and women can access leadership role opportunities in all sectors of education and that there should be no form of discrimination. However, such opportunities have not been extended in all areas of society, and women have remained disadvantaged in the education sector. Furthermore, in the wider public sphere, the history of women in the political arena has not been progressive since the year 1975 when PNG gained independence. This has resulted in PNG falling behind other countries in terms of women's political empowerment and representation. For instance, in the 2007 elections, of 102 women candidates just one was elected amongst the 109 members of parliament (*Sunday Chronicle*, 2009).

Such a trend has also impacted on women and leadership in educational settings where although women make up the majority of the teaching workforce, they are under-represented in formal leadership positions (Kilavanwa, 2004). The views, perceptions, and values about what constitutes leadership and who should be a leader and hold these formal positions are strongly embedded in cultural practices, beliefs and value systems based on the 'big man' (Akao, 2008; Freeman, 1980; Lemonnier, 1991; Liep, 1991; Narokobi, 1983; Waiko, 1993; Warsal, 2009) system of leadership in PNG. This model continues to give more opportunity for men to access leadership opportunities while women are deprived of such opportunities. A male student from my society (Melanesia) commented "Women

have to keep proving themselves as leaders regardless of qualification or experience” (Personal conversation, 2008). Such a comment shows how deeply traditional views are entrenched in cultural practices, organisational structures and policy discourse that impede women’s access to and participation in formal education leadership positions in Papua New Guinea.

The education structure in Papua New Guinea

The education system in PNG comprises of the lower sector and the higher or tertiary sector. The lower sector consists of basic education from elementary starting at the age of six years old up to vocational and secondary level. The higher sector includes the tertiary level of education starting from the age of nineteen and above.

The Department of Education (DoE) manages teachers, nursing, and technical colleges, with some others while the six universities in PNG are accredited under the PNG Office of Higher Education (OHE). Two of the six are private institutions or run by the church while the others are publicly funded. The *Higher Education Act 1983* established the Commission of Higher Education (CHE) as the government’s principal advisory and consultative body in higher education, and the Office of Higher Education as its public service arm (Cortez & Modakewau, 2005). The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MHERST), oversees the higher sector, works with the CHE and OHE who are “in charge with the provisions of policy advice, coordination, planning and other expert services” (Papoutsaki & Rooney, 2006, p. 246). In addition, MHERST in conjunction with OHE organises scholarships for university students and budgets for research within the universities. The Office of Higher Education works with the Department of Education to manage and organize other tertiary institutions (that is, mono-disciplined or limited range of programmes institutions, for example, teacher education institutions) and provides students’ scholarships. The six universities are governed by their respective councils. The appointment procedures within the universities are similar in process.

For example, appointment procedures begin by for existing positions, each Department of the Schools forwarding the applications to their respective School Appointment Committees (SAC). Upon SAC's recommendations, the highest authority body the University Council (UC), endorses the appointments. For creation of new positions in the universities, the UC notifies the Department of Personnel Management (DPM) for funding the new positions. First appointments are done on a contract basis for three years. The DPM was established as a central government agency under the *Public Service Management Act 1986* and is primarily responsible for "public sector management, specifically as it relates to performance, human resources, and organisation management" (Department of Personnel Management, 2002, p. 1).

Rooney (2004) refers to the PNG higher education sector as mixed and disorganized in structure. One reason for this claim could be that the teacher education institutions and health education institutions, plus other colleges (for example, business colleges), are part of the higher education sector but managed to a certain extent by the Department of Education. However, it is understood that through amalgamation and affiliation, these smaller institutions will later be managed by the higher education sector (MERST and OHE) because currently most are single-disciplined institutions (Papoutsaki & Rooney, 2006; Rooney 2006). This research focuses on the higher education institutions in PNG, which have been sites where gender inequality exists. In the next section I direct attention to this issue, which underpins the direction of this research.

Statement of the issue

Papua New Guinea has an estimated population of over six million people and half of the population are women who do not have the same access to paid employment as men. For those who are employed, the opportunities for gainful employment are generally in the lower paid jobs. Similarly, women academics represent a small proportion in higher education institutions of those who contribute to the economic and social development of the country through tertiary education. The number of national teaching staff in all the higher education institutions in PNG, including teachers' colleges, nursing colleges, technical

colleges, business colleges and the universities, is 747 males compared to 250 females. When focusing specifically on the six universities of the country, there are 440 male academics compared to 118 female academics (Office of Higher Education, 2009). Although there is no Government information about the representation of women in formal leadership positions in the universities, inevitably the under representation of women academics in PNG higher education sector may also mean that women are under represented in formal leadership positions, as this is also my own personal experience as a Papua New Guinean woman. Research in PNG by Kilavanwa (2004) confirms that women are under-represented in formal educational leadership positions and that their access to leadership is minimal.

This level of gender inequality in higher education institutions is a social injustice that warrants investigation in order to seek avenues to rectify the situation. Much research has been conducted in developed countries and developing countries; however, very little research has been done in the Melanesian context, with the some exceptions of Akao (2008), Warsal (2009), Kilavanwa (2004), Strachan and Saunders (2007), Strachan (2009) and Tuaru (2008). They all call for more research to be conducted to further illustrate women's experiences of leadership and contribute to the body of literature focusing on women and leadership in education in a Melanesian context. This study answers such a call and will add to the slow growth of current research and literature focusing on Pacific women and leadership in educational settings.

This research is therefore underpinned by the following research questions:

- *What are the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education institutions in Papua New Guinea?*
- *What are the beliefs and perceptions PNG women hold towards leadership and what had influenced these?*
- *What influences women's access to leadership roles within Higher Education in Papua New Guinea in their career advancement within the formal leadership structure?*

Significance of the study

This research investigated the leadership experiences of PNG women in higher education institutions. The aim of the research was to examine how the social context of PNG influenced women's leadership practices and beliefs. It was hoped that any areas that required attention could be addressed by the institutions developing initiatives within their organisations to address cultural and social practices that impacted negatively on women's leadership. Furthermore, this research also intended to highlight that the under representation of women in PNG higher education sector was a social justice issue that required attention within the educational organisations and by the government in order to rectify the situation. This research may bring the re-evaluation of some of the institutional policies that discriminate against the career advancements of women.

Another significant aspect of this research was to provide the opportunity for the women involved in the research to collectively recognise and empower each other to support one another's work in their respective leadership roles. The women's narratives provided useful information in raising awareness among women the regarding the unique challenges and experiences of Papua New Guinean educational women leaders. It also provided opportunities to identify factors that might facilitate women's transition to leadership positions. Ultimately, women's voices were brought to the forefront of this research. The research contributes to the body of literature focusing on women's experiences and leadership involvement in higher education in a developing country, Papua New Guinea. The information gathered from this study will be useful for organisations such as the Office of Higher Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, and the Department of Education, Department of Community Development and the National Council of Women in PNG by providing current information on the status and experiences of women in higher education. This research aims to increase the awareness of the government bodies about the lack of women in leadership roles in education and encourage them to seek ways of improving the status and perception of women leaders in public spheres.

Personal narrative

My aspirations to be a woman leader began through humble beginnings in my family as the eldest sibling of three sisters and one brother. My parents and grandparents (my mother's parents) were my influential figures who believed I was a role model for my siblings and supported me through my education with words of wisdom and encouragement. With these family expectations, I began practising leadership in the family and in the church under the guidance of my parents and church leaders. Embarking on informal leadership roles and responsibilities started in my primary schooling days and continued through high school and tertiary education in PNG. My interest in leadership continued to grow with my knowledge that, as an educator, I automatically became an agent of change for the good of my society. I became particularly interested in, which I believe requires further attention are the issues which arise from gender inequality in PNG.

Within my patrilineal culture I grew up witnessing many social injustices related to women in PNG culture. For example, women were treated unfairly at many levels, such as being subjected to physical and verbal abuse at homes by family members and to unequal treatment in the workplace by co-workers. In 2000, during my preparations to leave for New Zealand to pursue further studies, a male relative told me "You are still single because of your studies, otherwise you would have already been married". The comment demonstrated societal expectations and my socially ascribed role as a female, highlighting the belief that as a woman I was not expected to pursue a career. This remark affected me so strongly that it became one of my objectives to show that career progression was not only for men but also for women, regardless of a woman's marital status (single/married/divorced/single parent). This status, societal expectations and gender stereotyping should not be a barrier to women's advancement in their careers.

Therefore, I embarked on the journey to graduate study with the aim for Papua New Guinean young women to believe in themselves to maximize their potential through education, and to aim to further their careers. More so, while working at a primary school and later at a Teacher's College, I had experienced and observed some of the challenges women encounter due to gender stereotyping which is

prevalent in my educational organisation. This was one of the reasons I chose to give investigate women's experiences in PNG higher education institutions, and undertaking the educational leadership programme at the University of Waikato provided the opportunity to do that. I hope that this is the beginning of more research to bring women's voices to the forefront, especially because research on women and educational leadership in PNG is largely undocumented.

Overview of the thesis

Chapter One presented brief background information on the PNG context and the journey women undertook for their empowerment in public spheres which resulted in National Gender Equity Policy in education. A brief overview of the PNG education structure was used to situate this research. The statement of the issue for this study has highlighted the disparity in representations of women academics and women educational leaders in PNG higher education institutions. In addition, it has been noted that this study addresses the issue of limited research on women and educational leaders in a Melanesian context and in developing countries as a whole. The significance of the study and also the personal interest to undertake this research was outlined.

Chapter Two presents a review of literature to first explore the areas of women and leadership, educational leadership, leadership and gender, and women in leadership in higher education from international perspectives. Literature exploring the challenges and barriers that impede women from advancing to leadership positions is also reviewed. Experiences of educational women leaders in developing countries are investigated, and this later provides a valuable background to explore the Melanesian context and finally PNG, allowing knowledge gaps to be identified and used to frame the research questions.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework for the research design. It outlines the use of the interpretative paradigm and describes how a feminist theoretical approach has been employed to underpin the research framework. Furthermore, the rationale for using qualitative methodology is discussed, and the research methods of semi-structured and focused group

interviews, are examined as a means to interact with women and address issues of power in the research relationship. The ethical aspects of this research are then considered and the chapter concludes with a description of the research process used to ensure the validity and credibility of the study.

Chapter Four identifies and categorizes the research findings according to emerging themes and ideas by using a thematic analysis strategy. The themes are grouped according to similarities that are identified in the women's narratives, and these are then discussed in the next chapter. Chapter Five discusses the findings from previous chapter in light of the current literature. This is to ensure that the research questions have been addressed throughout the discussions. Chapter Six summarizes the research, revisits the aims of the research. This chapter underlines the limitations of research and provides recommendations for future research. This chapter makes comment on findings unique to this research and examines how this research has contributed to the broader context of women and educational leadership in higher education.

The following chapter explores and examines literature on women and educational leadership in developed and developing countries to set the theoretical framework for this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review synthesizes research regarding women and educational leadership from developed and developing countries to contextualize my research which centred on the Melanesian context. There has been much research on women and leadership in education in a global context claiming that although women dominate the teaching population they are under-represented in educational leadership positions (Acker, 1994; Addi-Racah & Ayalon, 2002; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009). In addition, there have been claims that leadership attributes of women and men are distinctive, while others have claimed both genders can employ an androgynous leadership approach depending on the situation at hand (Blackmore, 1989, 2009; Collard, 2005; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993). Furthermore, there are also claims of barriers impeding women in advancing to formal educational leadership positions (Bagihole & White, 2008; Brooking, 1997; Coleman, 2009; Copper & Strachan, 2006; Ozkani & White, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1993; Strachan, 2009; Wallace, 2006). The majority of these claims are from the western literature which shows a need to address such claims in a Melanesian context.

The mainstream epistemology about women in educational leadership roles has been constructed, classified and theorized from a white hegemonic female perspective (Fitzgerald, 2003; Grimes, 2005; Oplatka, 2006). There is a growing amount of literature from developing countries representing various socio-cultural perspectives such as Arabic and Jewish (Addi-Racah, 2002, 2006), Bangladesh (Sperandio, 2009), Chinese (Coleman & Yanping, 1998; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Qiang, Han & Niu, 2009), Islamic (Shah, 2006), Melanesia (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004, Pollard, 2000, 2006; Strachan, 2002; Strachan & Saunders, 2007; Strachan, 2009; Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa & Warsal, 2010; Warsal, 2009), Muslim (Shad, 2009), Nigeria (Aladejana & Aladejana, 2005), Tanzania (Bandiho, 2009), Turkey (Ozkanl & White, 2008; Sanal, 2008), and Uganda (Brown & Ralph, 1996; Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2008).

With recent increasing attention to the role of context in influencing leadership practice and experiences, Blackmore (2009) has stated “research is needed to further explore the significance of the relations between context and leadership practice in order to comprehend how context shapes the practice of leadership” (p. 80). Additionally, there have been calls to understand the central issues of power and authority and differences between lines of gender and ethnicity in educational leadership (Akao, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Oplatka, 2006). To approach these issues, I examine literature on women and educational leadership from developed countries, and more particularly from developing countries. This is because of the commonalities of experiences due to traditional patriarchal culture, and the religious practices in most of the developing countries, which PNG society also values and practices.

First, I focus on the socio-cultural context of PNG to illustrate the cultural background. I explore the notion of Melanesian ‘big man’ leadership as this plays a role in determining the status of women in PNG society. Next, I review literature on leadership and draw the distinction between management and leadership by exploring the ranging definitions of leadership, and selecting one for use in this research. Third, I present researchers’ findings on the contrasting leadership attributes of men and women. Fourth, I synthesize literature on the social systems of the higher education structure that impact on women’s leadership and investigate the educational leadership approaches women frequently practise in educational organisations. The last part of this chapter explores the contextual nature of leadership and the barriers to and constraints which influence women’s advancement to formal educational leadership roles. This overview highlights the notable absence of research on PNG women in educational leadership. I now begin by exploring literature on the socio-cultural context of the PNG.

The socio-cultural context of Papua New Guinea

The diverse culture of Papua New Guinea is comprised of both traditional matrilineal and patrilineal systems. The latter is dominant in those parts of the country where the culture of big-man society is prevalent (Narokobi, 1983;

Lemonnier, 1991; Liep, 1991). Patrilineal lineage is where inheritance is passed down to the sons whereas for matrilineal lineage, inheritance is given to daughters. One very important part of family inheritance in PNG is the gifting of land. This is because most people are subsistence farmers who depend on the land for their livelihood. Another significant aspect of Melanesian society is communal living (Sanga & Walker, 2005), and rituals where communities depend on each other for support in terms of ceremonies such as bride price, funerals, and other cultural feasts. A bride price ceremony is where the groom's family or clan pays the bride's family with money and food or gifts as a way to show appreciation for their contribution and support in bringing her up (Pollard, 2000). It is traditionally believed that through such activities that people are drawn together and relationships are strengthened. These traditional activities are conducted through the wantok system, which is a network of people from similar ethnic background whose kinship communal values are based on reciprocity, which is central to relationship building (Sanga & Walker, 2005; Tivinarlik & Wanat, 2006). The negative effect of bride price is that it restricts women's ability to have a voice in the family or clan because the bride price ceremony itself signifies the groom's legitimate power and control over the bride. Additionally, some degree of power also extends to the male relatives of the groom to exercise control over the bride, such as ensuring that the woman meets the cultural expectations of her role through domestic duties and other traditional activities.

Melanesian societies traditionally are organised on the basis of kinship which is "a system that prescribes how people living together should interact with each other" (Tivinarlik et al, 2006, p. 103). Within this notion of kinship, individuals embark on a variety of roles when a feast is organised, the women's role is to prepare food while the men go hunting or fishing. Gustafsson (2003) explains roles where "each derived a combination of rights, duties, privileges and powers" (p. 30). However, within the kinship relations and the respective roles, the status of men has become more distinctive. This has occurred because historically when various activities positioned them as great hunters, gatherers or fishermen they had a wider network of acquaintances than the ordinary mass of individuals (Lemonnier, 1991; Waiko, 1993). Additionally, in the 1800s colonization and

missionarization reinforced and elevated the status of men in the society (Strachan et al, 2010).

The Melanesian socialisation process begins at home where men are seen as the head of the household who as the husband has the right to exercise power and authority over the wife and the children (Gustafsson, 2003; Pollard, 2000; Strachan et al, 2010). In his absence the sons automatically take over that role and responsibility. In matrilineal societies because of this belief and value system, although women have rights over the resources, particularly the land, men (husbands) have the power within their families to make decisions. This socialisation process conditions daughters and wives to be submissive to men as the authority figures in the family, and boys are taught to be outspoken, strong, aggressive and authoritarian (Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2000; Strachan, 2010). These aspects of the Melanesian value systems are interwoven with westernization values and the social structures have changed behaviour patterns and attitudes towards women (Garap, 2000; Kilavanwa, 2003; Korare, 2002). Garap (2000) highlighted this when referring to the struggles of girls and women who experience violence in the Simbu province of PNG, and stated “there can be little doubt that women in Papua New Guinea society today are viewed and treated differently than their female ancestors were” (p. 162). In particular, women today experience a higher degree of violence than did women in the traditional days because they were protected by some customs and traditional behaviour protocols that no longer exist. It could be argued that because of the power wielded by women in traditional matrilineal societies because they inherited land and wealth from their mothers, husbands were cautious of how they behaved towards their wives. Nonetheless, Shad (2009) asserted “cultural norms play a further role and consequently, women leaders’ professional experiences of power relations become scripted by their positions as women in their micro cultures” (p. 130). PNG is predominantly a patriarchal culture and irrespective of whether a woman’s cultural background is matrilineal or patrilineal the dominance of men means that they exercise patriarchal power over women in the public arena.

The introduced western social structures and systems, such as the hierarchal structures within organisations and the judicial systems whereby land titles are passed to men, reinforced the Melanesian socialisation process of women. In contrast, Korare's (2002) study focusing on gender and perceptions of political power in PNG, argued that "certain aspects of modernization such as education and health services have liberated women" (p. 40). However, at the same time she claimed that such developments do not mean that women have a voice in the public spheres. As the Melanesian culture "openly values males as superior and females as subordinates...this mental model restricts the culture's potential by assuring that an estimated one half of the population [in Melanesian countries] must subordinate itself to men" (Dana, 2009, p. 69).

However, it is important to note because of the cultural and ethnic diversity in PNG customs and traditional practices are not everywhere the same. Instead they are either different or have a certain degree of similarity. Accordingly, it would not be right to cluster all the behaviours and experiences of all the women as the same. Otherwise it would be same as silencing voices of women from other ethnic groups. However, in many aspects, PNG is still very much a male-dominated society. The domination of men in leadership roles can also be traced back to the traditional notion of 'big man' leadership practised in the patrilineal societies, and this has influenced leadership in PNG today. The prominent Melanesian 'big man' leadership theory and practice warrants attention because it so strongly influences how leadership is viewed in PNG society.

The Melanesian 'big man' leadership

Within a Melanesian context leadership traits and skills are entrenched deeply in the traditional view of 'big man' leadership (Narokobi, 1993). This form of leadership has gained popularity amongst men and in the past was only for men in PNG traditional societies. The 'big man' ideology in Melanesian leadership was based on the traditional social construction of a man. Men had the leading task of being the family providers, hunters, gatherers, warriors, peace-makers and ceremony organisers and possessed personal wealth (Lemonnier, 1991; Narokobi, 1983; Tivinarlik et al, 2006; Waiko, 1993). Leadership became the "technology of

[the] masculine” (Theobald, 1996), which was reinforced by the men’s traditional roles and responsibilities, which were seen as requiring authority, decisiveness and assertiveness (Hoff et al, 2008; Pollard, 2000). In Melanesia the “big man leadership is normalised and sets a superior and privileged standard” (Strachan et al, 2010, p. 73) which is a male domain. This has enacted in public spheres, and in opportunities for leadership, the fundamental inequalities between men and women.

‘Big man’ leadership in PNG has influenced men’s dominance gaining leadership positions (Kilavanwa, 2004, Tivinarlik et al, 2006; Warsal, 2009). ‘Big man’ leadership implies that men are more suitable candidates for leadership positions than women (Kilavanwa, 2004), because the attributes such as decisiveness, negotiating and networking with other males in the clan have historically the men’s role, for example, in the organising of community feasts. This is confirmed by White (2006), who stated that the ability to influence others and have power over others is based on what are considered male attributes. Additionally, the man’s role as the head of his family reinforces the notion of big man leadership (Strachan et al, 2010), and therefore, strength and action are associated with them in both private and public spheres. On the other hand, women’s presumed attributes of passiveness, vulnerability and fragility is believed to result in an inability to exercise power and influence over others (Bem, 1993). This view positions women as unsuitable for roles as educational leaders because they are perceived as weak in PNG society.

Research shows that Melanesian women educational leaders exhibit collaborative and servant leadership styles that foster collaborative decision-making processes, and being able to serve others first (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2006; Strachan, 2009; Strachan et al, 2007; Warsal, 2009). However, these approaches do not include one of the significant features of big man leadership, which is the ability to have power over others. Women in PNG therefore are pressured to behave like men in their leadership practices to gain acceptance as leaders. As Kilavanwa (2004) found in her study focusing on the experiences of women educational leaders in PNG, some participants admitted trying to think and act like male leaders in order to gain the respect of others. She stated:

Women's marginalization in the home and the big man society manipulates women and so when women have a chance of being above a man (leader), they will not want to be seen as weak, emotional and irrational as it is expected of women, but rather as strong as men. (p.75)

However, in doing so, the individuality of the women as leaders was made invisible and they perceived that they were not valued as women educational leaders. In order to maintain the status quo women are forced to exhibit leadership in a manner with which they might not feel confident and comfortable. This poses a challenge and a barrier for women who would prefer to employ women's way of leading. Unfortunately, women in PNG are disadvantaged by the traditional understandings of leadership and this has significant influence their career advancements. So what are the implications for women educational leaders in PNG if the views held towards leadership are entrenched in cultural beliefs and value systems and the ideologies of big man leadership? What is the way forward for women educational leaders, if big man leadership creates the perception that only men are suitable to be educational leaders in the higher education institutions? How can women's ways of leading be acknowledged and valued in a male-dominant culture which in turn colours the educational organisation culture? There are many other questions about how to ensure that women's ways of leading are acknowledged, given that big man leadership tends to limit women's access to formal educational leadership roles (Strachan, 2009). At the same time, it is important to understand other views of leadership in order to develop a grounded understanding of the term 'leadership' within the context of this research.

Conceptualizing leadership

There have been many studies on leadership such as the work of Fullan (2001), Northouse (2008), Schein (1985) and Yukl (2002) amongst many others who illustrate a wide variety of theoretical approaches to explain the complexities of leadership. Such scholarly writing illustrates there are many ways to conceptualize leadership and therefore creating one definition is very difficult. As

Yukl (2002) states, “Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no correct definition” (p. 6-7). Northouse (2008) defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). Meanwhile Yukl (2002) encompasses the wider scope of leadership by defining it as follows:

Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. (p. 7)

Common themes of the definitions of leadership indicate that leadership is contextual. The given situation at the time of leadership determines how a person executes their leadership. This is important in the case of this research as across continents there are ethnicities, races, cultures and traditional practices that are totally different, and thus the perceptions of what constitutes leadership will be distinctive in these various contexts. Shad (2009) confirms that “leadership is a situated concept” (p. 128) because there are factors within a society that have implications for leadership practice. It is therefore imperative that socio-cultural context of Melanesian countries is considered in order to draw on the cultural beliefs, norms, values and traditional practices that impact on the educational leadership experiences of women. In PNG, the cultural diversity of over 200 ethnic tribes and over 800 languages implies that leadership practices and experiences are complex. This means that even though the leadership experiences of women educational leaders in PNG higher education could, to some extent, be similar to those of women in western context, at the same time the experiences can be very different in nature because of the socio-cultural context.

For the purpose of my research I start by referring to the educational leadership experiences of women situated in Anglo -Saxon countries to developing countries and relating these to the Melanesian context. In relation to this research which focus on how Papua New Guinean women’s experiences of educational leadership, it will be important to discover how the socio-cultural context impacts their views of what leadership is.

Fullan (2001) stressed that leadership is about leading change with a moral purpose. Regarding my research, would leadership for women mean being an agent of change to addressing social justice issues, for women and with women? Therefore, for the purpose of this research I utilize a definition created from the work of Blackmore (2009) and Strachan (2009), who say that educational leadership is about bringing positive change to the educational organisations and upholding the principle of gender equity in all aspects through the leadership one employs. I now focus on the debates regarding the comparison in the leadership attributes of women and men educational leaders.

Gender and leadership

Eagly and Johannesen (2001) stated, “whether men and women behave differently in leadership roles is a much debated question” (p. 781). As women seek and sometimes gain formal leadership positions in educational contexts, questions have been raised by researchers comparing the leadership styles and practices of women and men (Blackmore, 1998; Eagly et al, 2001; Hall, 1996; Oplatka & Atias, 2007; Reay & Ball, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). Hoff and Mitchell’s (2008) research in the USA investigated the career paths of male and female school leaders to identify barriers that impede their advancement to leadership positions. They concluded that gender socialization determined the respective roles and behaviours for men and women. Likewise, Eagly and Johannesen (2001) asserted “gender roles spill over to influence leadership behaviour in organisations, the behaviours of female leaders, compared with that of male leaders” (p. 787). Research has shown that behaviour which tends to be competitive, authoritarian, more objective, task-oriented and aggressive is associated with the traditional masculine leadership approaches (Blackmore, 2002a; Eagly, 2007; Sherman, 2000), while empowering, communicative, caring, consensus-oriented, consultative and collaborative leadership are approaches often associated with women (Eagly et al, 2001).

Blackmore (2002b) cautions that the notion of caring and sharing associated with women educational leaders, as most research shows (Coleman, 2002; Eagly,

2007; Ozga, 1993; Sherman, 2000), is problematic. In her earlier research (Blackmore, 1998), she argued that “process of popularization women’s ways of leading discourse treats women as homogeneous group without differences in race/class/gender or in beliefs” (p. 57). These claims are relevant to Melanesian contexts, because the cultural diversity and the big man leadership theory, missionarisation and colonization impact women’s leadership approaches which consequently can be different to women from other cultures, the western context, and even within cultures. It reaffirms that leadership is situational (Fitzgerald, 2006) and a “situated practice” and therefore “constructs big man leadership as normative” in Melanesia (Strachan et al, 2010, p. 74).

Others believe that leadership style is independent of gender (Eagly et al, 2001). Bem (1993) stressed that it is the leader who determines the values associated with that position that can influence leadership style. However, there is strong argument which illustrates that stereotyping of leadership styles is based on gendered socially constructed norms (Hoff et al, 2008) that causes the division and classifies leadership styles based on gender (Hofstede, 1980) and this continues to marginalise women (Bagihole et al, 2008; Blackmore, 2002a; Court, 1994; Fletcher, 2007; Sherman, 2000).

Men are viewed as natural incumbents of most leadership roles because they exhibit the masculine traits portrayed as the alternative. This places women at a disadvantage position, requires them to constantly attempt to gain approval as leaders (Court, 1998). As Shakeshaft (1989) cautioned, if females adopted traditional (masculine) ‘men in skirts’ leadership styles, the administration should be a success; otherwise they are marginalized. An example of this can be seen in a study done by Kilavanwa (2004) in PNG, where a woman leader pointed out “I have a heart like a man, I think like a man” (Kilavanwa, 2003, p. 97). She saw herself adopting the roles and behaviours of the masculine paradigm of power, control and authority, despite the fact that the social construction of gender viewed her as an outsider and cultural expectations did not see her as having leadership ability.

Eagly (2007) highlighted that in the USA although women were praised for excellent leadership skills because they manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders, people still preferred male to female leaders because stereotypes of leaders were male. Eagly claimed that due to cultural stereotypes women face a 'double bind' because they are expected to be collaborative and caring due to gender socialization but at the same time they are required to be individualistic, decisive and authoritative because of the expectations inherent in the masculine model. Coleman and Pounder (2002) reviewed leadership literature that explored the gender differences to determine if women were better leaders. They assessed factors perpetuating differences in leadership and concluded that the true value of the debate about gender-related leadership issues lies in its ability to reveal factors which created differences rather than reinforced gender stereotyping. In other words, there are other surrounding factors which determined leadership style besides gender stereotypes. For example, considering the socio-cultural context of leadership in PNG, in terms of family upbringings, cultural values and beliefs, religion and westernization can shed light on the leadership approaches employed by PNG women. However, gender stereotyping is central to the explanations of why gender is perceived to be the central determinant of leadership approaches, therefore implying that females are inferior to men in leadership capacity (Coleman et al, 2002). As such, acknowledging gender stereotyping in the diverse socio-cultural context of PNG is important because it appears from the literature that this is an issue of social justice which impacts on women's leadership approaches in higher education.

The debate on gendered differentiation of leadership has progressed further to engage the concept of the androgynous leader (Collard, 2005). This concept suggests that every influential and successful leader has available both sets of characteristics: the empowering and the collaborative styles of leadership - from which they are able to choose the most appropriate for the situation at hand (Cubillo et al, 2003). This requires flexibility regardless of gender for a leader to be demonstrating androgynous leadership. However, Court (1998) reported that despite the changing image of such leadership images, links persist between dominant forms of masculinity as a means to represent authority and leadership.

Therefore, in the case of this research it was essential to find out how this group of PNG women in higher education viewed and practiced leadership, considering the socio-cultural context of PNG higher education.

Women and leadership in higher education

Universities are traditional sites of learning and seen as producers of knowledge within an emerging global knowledge economy (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Brooks, 2001). Historically, leadership in higher education has been organised in hierarchical structures (Fletcher, 2007). The hierarchical nature of universities has been reinforced by social formations of bureaucracies informed by liberal political theories that premised the relationship between society and the individual (Blackmore, 2005a; Blackmore et al, 2000). The changing contours of higher education show that “there has been a gradual shift away from relative autonomy to centralized direction through the major changes in the structure of institutional governance” (Shaw & Chassell, 2007, p. 500), as universities are driven by market and performance-oriented goals. The economic and managerial transformations of universities as a result of organisational restructuring to meet the demands of globalization have had implications for women academics in these environments where management and leadership opportunities have been a terrain traditionally dominated by men (Bagilhole & White, 2008; Blackmore, 2005a; Blackmore et al, 2000; Brooks, 2001).

Such implications were first alluded to by Blackmore (1989), who argued that “liberal political theory promoted a hegemonic masculinist view of leadership, which is grounded in particular interpretations of rationality, morality, organisations and individualism” (p. 99). Similarly, Davis (1994) believed that educational institutions continue to reinforce which gender has more power in speaking for and deciding for the organisations. Very recent research shows that men dominate the formal leadership positions in the higher education sector worldwide (Blackmore, 2009; Shad, 2009; Sobehart, 2009; Strachan, 2009). Consequently, it has been documented that the university culture itself may not be welcoming for women, and the term ‘chilly climate’ has been used by Sandler and Hall (1986) to describe the university workplace. The term ‘organisational

culture' refers to the sets of norms, beliefs, and values that are commonly shared by members of the organisation (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Rutherford, 2001; Schein, 1992; Trinidad & Normore, 2005), and also applies to codes of behaviour, processes and policies in the organisation (Schein, 1992). An example of the masculine culture is provided in Shaw and Chassell's (2007) study of male and female academics in business schools in UK universities, examining the impact of gender on the way academic performance was perceived. They found that all the business schools upheld the masculine culture by, for example, referring to the tutor positions as women's jobs while male academics dominated the leadership positions. Thus, it could be perceived that the masculine culture gave men access to more privileges and opportunities for leadership positions in the universities, and marginalized women.

After a three year research project that focused on the experiences on the women leaders in Australian universities, Blackmore and Sachs (2000) concluded that with restructuring processes within the universities, which are also premised on managerialism, the notion of the woman academic has become problematic. They elaborated:

Paradoxically, senior women are framed as both workers and management workers. They identified as academics but the nature of their work as they move into senior positions is more aligned with management. Many women do try to balance these subject positions, but for many there is a personal cost, frustration, overwork, and doing things on the run. (p. 6)

It is possible that in the midst of ongoing university restructuring, women academics may encounter a dilemma between prioritizing academic and managerial work which is attached to their roles and responsibilities as leaders. The conflict between the different roles can impact on their opportunities to gain leadership roles and may also influence their future aspirations to leadership positions. This is illustrated in Fletcher's (2007) case study evaluating the situation of women manager-academics in a UK university regarding gender equity. She found that many of the women had experienced a high level of stress and sometimes when they were invited to address the gender imbalance and make

up in the numbers for interviews, for senior management positions. However, they declined as they were not keen about further promotion. Participants in Fletcher's (2007) study felt that the competitive and managerial nature of the institution had a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of their collaborative leadership practices. For this research, it was vital to find out how the women subjects balanced the two aspects of leadership and management in their responsibilities as leaders.

Recent research shows that in developing and developed countries women academics are still under-represented in leadership positions (Sobehart, 2009). Below are statistics representing women leaders by role/title at the executive level in universities from a number of countries from year 2007, in Germany: chancellors (17%); Hong Kong: professors (8%), and senior lecturers (15%); South Africa: vice chancellors (4%), and UK: vice-chancellors (13.2%). In 2005, there were three female chancellors and 11 vice-chancellors at the 38 Australian universities (Blackmore, 2009). In 2005 in New Zealand, 13.8% of professors and 19.9% of associate professors were females (Strachan, 2009). Looking at academic status by in professorship by rank/discipline in a number of countries Sobehart (2009) found: Bangladesh-17%, Germany-16.6 %, Greece-15%, Hong Kong-8%, Tanzania-11% and UK-19%. Shah (2009) found significantly low representation of female academics in Pakistani universities, with 7,962 women academics and 52,671 male academics. She used data from three universities to make a comparison between male and female academics in formal leadership positions, and discovered that there were 11 male deans and only three female deans. She also found that of heads of departments 18 were female and 93 were male.

The above statistics reveal that across the globe women are still under-represented in formal leadership positions in the higher education sector. It also portrays that even though there are provisions for gender equality in both developed and developing countries, they are not specifically intended to ensure fair representation of women in leadership positions (Ozkanli et al, 2008; Sanal, 2008). The statistics above indicated that there has been a small growth in the number of women professors in the UK. Fletcher's (2007) study, found that in 2004-2005 14 % of the academic women leaders in the universities were

professors. After five years, according to Sobehart (2009), it had only increased by 2%. This means that although there is evidence of growth, it is at a snail's pace. If this is the case in a developed country like the UK and other developed countries, how would this be different in PNG higher education, especially in this patriarchal society?

Educational leadership approaches of women

As the number of women holding positions of leadership in higher education slowly increases, more studies examining women's approaches to leadership have been done in Australia (Blackmore, 2002a, Wallace; 2006; Ozkani et al, 2008), New Zealand (Copper et al, 2006, Strachan, 2009), UK (Bagilhole & White, 2008; Coleman, 2002, 2005a, 2007; Hearn, 2001; Becher et al, 2001) and United States (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Grogan et al, 2009). Although there are many leadership approaches, the one most often associated with women is collaborative leadership. It is appropriate that collaborative and servant leadership are explored at this time, as research conducted in Melanesia has found that these leadership styles are prominent for women educational leaders (Akao, 2008; Pollard, 2006; Strachan et al, 2007; Strachan, 2009; Strachan et al, 2010; Warsal, 2009).

Collaborative leadership

Research suggests that within educational organisations women are perceived as caring, consensual in decision-making processes and collaborative, and this has led to the notion that women's approach to leadership tends to be collaborative (Blackmore, 1998; 2002; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Collard, 2005; Court, 1994; Hall, 1993, 1996; Lyman, Reppa & Lazaridou, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989). Collard's (2005) research exploring the interaction of female and male principals with the school community (teachers, students, parents) in primary and secondary schools in Australia identified that the women were committed to collegiality and teamwork and fostered a consultative climate that allowed staff to participate. A recent comparative study by Lyman, Reppa and Lazaridou (2009) in Greece and the USA explored women principals' values and perceptions of leadership, and found that collaborative leadership style was fundamental to democratic

leadership. Such democracy fostered “team decisions, democratic processes, reciprocity, cooperation and recognizing the talents and abilities of others” (p. 123). The collaborative leadership approach is warmly espoused by Melanesian women educational leaders in the Solomon Islands (Akao, 2008) and Vanuatu (Warsal, 2009), and the commonalities of the Melanesian cultural values system suggested that it was important for the current study to discover whether Papua New Guinean women also utilize to this leadership approach. Lyman, Reppa and Lazaridou (2009) further identified that the democratic processes used by collaborative leadership allow women to demonstrate their values of caring and respect for others. This illustrated that women tended to display this leadership approach because of the feminine attributes of caring, nurturing and sharing.

In a comparative study of male and female leaders at higher education institutions in Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Portugal, Ireland, and South Africa, the researchers commented that collaboration was a skill required in their leadership roles, but that only the women practised it as a leadership style (Ozkanl, Machado, White, O'Connor, Riordan, & Neale, 2009). This finding implies that leaders who view collaboration as simply a skill can overlook the significance and the necessity of collaboration as a leadership style which benefits the organisation and people within it. Similarly, Akao (2008) stressed that collaborative decision-making processes had positive outcomes for teachers, students, parents and the wider community in the Solomon Islands. The Melanesian communal cultural values system cultivates the importance of relationship building, reciprocity, respect, and collectiveness and this may have influenced their choice of the leadership approach. For the purpose of this research, it was important to investigate the assumption that Melanesian values systems foster a collaborative leadership approach. At the same time, research in Melanesia shows that women educational leaders practise servant leadership, which I now discuss.

Servant leadership

The servant leadership model was introduced by missionaries in the Pacific in 1800s and is intimately linked to the strong religious beliefs and principles, both women and men hold in Melanesia (Ako, 2008; Sanga et al, 2005; Strachan et al,

2007, Strachan, 2009; Warsal, 2009). Servant leadership is referred to as the ability to serve others (Alston, 2005). Research in Melanesia confirms that the primary motivation of a servant leader is the desire to serve rather than to lead in educational organisations (Akao, 2008; Sanga et al, 2005; Strachan et al, 2007; Warsal, 2009). Servant leadership emphasises the importance of appreciating and valuing people, listening, mentoring or teaching, and empowering followers (Parolini, Patterson & Winston, 2009; Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004). Warsal (2009) found Christian principles of forgiveness, honesty, respect and the practice of daily praying enabled women educational leaders in Vanuatu to practice servant leadership in a manner which enabled them to uphold those principles despite facing challenges in their leadership roles. Research conducted in the United States with black female school superintendents revealed that women educational leaders used the spiritual dimension of their Christian beliefs to practise “a strong sense of efficacy, [dedication] to the care of children, ...[and] use collaboration that is more relational and consensus building” (Alston, 2005, pp. 681-682). It was their Christian principles that led the women to demonstrate a servant leadership approach with a mission to serve.

Similarly, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009) noted, in their examination of literature on women’s approaches to educational leadership in the United States, that “women extend the ministerial aspect of their leadership and include a spiritual dimension...to their success and the ability to push forward, often in conflictual and difficult situations” (p. 23). This means that regardless of the circumstances women educational leaders encounter, the pastoral aspect of Christianity enables them to persevere in their roles. However, this part of their leadership could also be taken advantage of. Women whose leadership style is based on forbearance and forgiveness, and who have learned and are socialised to lead in silence may seem unwilling to address challenges to their practice. Consequently, women may have to continue to endure more challenges to their leadership practice. This aspect of PNG women’s educational experience is significant in the wider consideration of their approach to managing gender-based challenges or conflict. It is also possible that the servant leadership approach could be disadvantageous in a traditionally patriarchal society such as PNG.

In Strachan and Saunders' (2007) research in Vanuatu, one of the participants commented that "to be a good leader...you have to be humble at heart, take time to listen and you do things for the benefit of others and yourself as well...[but] not only uplifting yourself" (p. 42). Being humble in a Melanesian context for women may mean further muffling of educational women leaders' voices, particularly when men are socialised to be outspoken and assertive and women to be passive. Exhibiting Christian principles are an important part of servant leadership approaches. Strachan (2009) stated that the characteristics of servant leadership such as "service to others, submission, humility and truthfulness fit with women's stereotypical roles within the Melanesian society" (p. 104). Servant leadership is widely practised by women in Melanesia because it is less threatening to men than more assertive styles (Pollard, 2006; Sanga et al, 2005; Strachan, et al, 2010; Warsal, 2009). This approach does not challenge the status quo, and as a result women's access to leadership is limited, unless women are aware of some of the limitations of the style and address them.

It is also possible that servant leadership is the only leadership model that the women know of and have been exposed to. Only when women observe and are aware of the possible variations in leadership styles and expectations can they have the option of choosing other approaches. Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal (2010) claimed that the servant leadership model in Melanesia is "problematic as it continues to position women as subordinates and does nothing to change the inequalities in attitudes, systems and social structures" (p. 71).

Akao (2008) found out in her research with secondary school women leaders in the Solomon Islands that their leadership demonstrated the characteristics of servant leadership but was also influenced by the social context. It seemed that leadership was affected not only by gender but also was a product of the cultural context. The notion that educational leadership is contextual is examined in the next section.

Educational leadership is contextual

In any examination of educational leadership, it is important that the context of that leadership, for example, the socio-cultural and the political environments of a country are considered (Blackmore, 2009). This is because not only culture but also values and the beliefs about leadership “differ in fundamental ways across nations” (Fullan, 1992, p. viii). For many years educational concepts, theories and practices in education have been embedded in western philosophy and values (Dimmock, 2000). Fitzgerald (2006) has argued that western values and practices serve to “homogenize and standardize and simultaneously segregate, stratify and marginalize” (p.203) women from minority groups and of other cultures. Therefore, there is a need to understand how a particular society perceives and constructs educational leadership in order to acknowledge the impact of diverse cultural and ethnic concepts of leadership on leadership practices. Sanga (2005) reflected on leadership theory and practice in the Pacific and declared:

Leadership is contextual. It is cultural. It involves social interactions and takes place within social settings. Its expression in behavioural terms is situational. Measures of appropriateness and desirability of leadership are determined by the values of the context and culture. (p. 2)

Consequently, the fact that leadership is contextual and is predetermined by cultural values of the society, is of primary significance to this study. Given that the research was situated in PNG, a Melanesian context that has its own cultural norms, beliefs, ideologies and value systems which, in differing from those of a western context, leadership may be viewed differently. An important aspect of this study, therefore, was to view leadership through the experiences of women educational leaders working in the Melanesian context as it may be possible that Melanesian women lead differently from women in western contexts.

Cross-cultural comparative studies of educational administration and leadership research by Dimmock (2002) and Walker and Dimmock (2002) both found that societal and organisational cultures impacted on leadership theory and practice generally in education. Furthermore, they elaborated that educational leadership

was formulated against the backdrop of the values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour and ideologies of a community. An example can be drawn from China where the patriarchal leadership, power and responsibility is based on Confucius social ideology and the functions of that value system (Tung, 2003). Social harmony is highly valued and hence strong expectations to maintain this value in leadership practices are evident through the decision-making processes of Hong Kong school principals (Walker, 2002). Shad (2006) believed that leaders and followers' interaction and patterns of behaviour are "informed by their ideological and cultural knowledge - transmitted from generation to generation and learned through living and sharing with a group or community as its members" (p. 366). Shad further claimed that religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and other cultures like Chinese and Japanese entail leader/follower relationships that are quite similar. This was one area of consideration for this research because Christianity is a very important part of people's lives in PNG and therefore affects how people interact socially. It was important to acknowledge these Christian values and principles in women's leadership practices.

As discussed earlier, research has shown that Christian principles influence the leadership practice in Melanesian societies (Akao, 2008; Pollard, 2006; Sanga & Walker, 2005; Strachan, 2009; Strachan et al, 2010; Warsal, 2009). Churches can be a site of leadership capacity building for some women who later embark on formal educational leadership roles through their learning in leadership roles within the church (Strachan, 2009). However, Pollard (2000) argued that the patriarchal theology of the Christian teachings, interwoven with "patriarchal power structure of colonial governments form an effective basis for women's subordination, submission, and exclusion from public decision-making process" (p. 43). Additionally, Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal's (2010) research in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG with women educational leaders led them to conclude that "the religious discourse that places men as leaders in both public and private domains is powerful" (p. 70). These contrasting points show the dual role of the church, Strachan (2009) has commented on the "role of Christianity and traditional practices as constraining/or liberating for forces for women" (p. 104).

Since leadership is contextual and variable, it would be wrong to generalize PNG educational women leaders' experiences on the basis of what is said by the women who shared their experiences with me in this research. This is because of the cultural and ethnic diversity of women in PNG, and within the cultures not all the experiences are similar. Nonetheless, the context where leadership is practised can pose many challenges for women. I now explore some of the barriers and constraints to women's advancement in their careers that contribute to their under-representation in formal educational leadership positions.

Barriers and constraints to leadership

Researchers have attempted to identify and categorize some of the barriers and constraints that hinder women's progress to leadership roles (Christman, 2003). Women's low representation in formal educational leadership roles is believed to be a result of both external and internal barriers (Cubillo et al, 2003). In the next section, I examine these impediments. I first address key themes in the research literature, including stereotyping, selection processes, discrimination, women's roles, family and work, and violence against women. I also draw on literature on women educational leaders in PNG universities to contextualize this research. First, I begin by exploring literature on the stereotyping of women's roles within educational settings.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping women leaders in educational settings based on gender draws on the notion that men are more likely to be natural leaders than are women and thus women are viewed as subordinates (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2005; Fletcher, 2007). Much of this stereotyping is founded on gendered roles where women are encapsulated within the feminine role which defines women as wives and mothers with the responsibilities of caregiving, childbearing, and nurturing, while men are located in the public spheres (Coleman, 2007; Weyer, 2007). The qualities of nurturance and caring that are associated with a caring profession have led to the belief that teaching is more suited to women.

Addi-Racah and Ayalon (2002) caution that teaching has become a feminine occupation, and consequently men have preserved their dominance in leadership positions. For example, Addi-Racah's (2002a) comparative study of the Israel educational system found that men occupied the higher positions while women were allocated to the lower ranks. She highlighted that this gender segregation of jobs is context-bound due to the predominant socio-cultural, political and religious value and belief systems. There are other societal values and traditional roles that combine to have a detrimental effect on how women are viewed as leaders. This has been shown by studies conducted in Nigeria (Uduigwomen, 2004), in Uganda (Brown et al, 1996; Kagoda et al, 2009) and in Turkey (Turan & Ebiclioglu, 2002) where in traditionally male-dominated societies, women's socialized patterns of behaviour, including adopting family roles and being submissive, have marginalized the female population. For example, Kagoda and Sperandio (2009) show how the prevailing traditional male attitude viewed mothering and nurturing as a weakness in society, and society therefore criticized decisions made by a woman leader precisely because she was a female. Such stereotyping affects women's self-esteem and confidence because they might come to see themselves as unfit for leadership roles, or unable to perform outside their domestic roles.

Similarly, Akao (2008) and Kilavanwa (2004) in their respective studies of the experiences of women leaders in the Solomon Islands and PNG educational settings concluded that cultural stereotypes placed women in the home as subordinates. This made it difficult for men to respect, acknowledge and accept women as educational leaders. Such behaviour portrayed that cultural practices have a major influence on how women are viewed and challenged in their leadership roles.

Along with the social and gender role stereotypes, there are expectations of how an individual of a specific gender should behave (Weyer, 2007). Kilavanwa (2004) says that women's individuality as leaders is not frequently acknowledged and recognised as part of mainstream leadership, and instead, their voices continue to be silenced. Schmuck (1986) argued that women should be valued for what they will bring to the arena of educational leadership in their individuality

and uniqueness as women. For the purpose of this study, it was vital to consider how the PNG higher education culture relates to the roles of women academics.

Selection process

Women encounter a major barrier in the form of the hiring and selection processes which determine access to leadership positions. These are not localized and have been experiences of women worldwide, in Australia (Blackmore, Thomas & Barty, 2006; Bagilhole & White, 2008; Ozkanl & White, 2008), in the United Kingdom (Acker, 1994; Coleman, 2009), in New Zealand (Brooking, 2005; Strachan, 1997) and in the USA (Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993). In Australia, Wyn (1997) noted that there is a disjunction between formal and informal processes around selection and promotion, and thus argued that Australian women academics were placed in a contradictory position because while “they depend on formal processes and procedures to achieve recognition and advancement through merit, yet it is in the interpretation of these processes that systemic disadvantage occurs” (p. 56). Furthermore, Brooking (2005) revealed that women are discriminated against in their leadership careers in higher education even though they may be qualified and experienced for the leadership positions.

A number of factors have been used to explain this discrimination. Appointment panels are male dominant, and they can become the gatekeepers within institutions at work to maintain the ‘old boys’ network often well established in the institutions through the interview and appointment processes (Bagilhole et al, 2008; Blackmore et al, 2006; Coleman, 2007). Appointment rules and codes are intended to guide and protect standards of a status quo that is based on male experiences, and women therefore women face discrimination in the appointment processes. For example, in Coleman’s research in 2005, a participant stated: “Yes, I believe that some governing bodies have a hidden agenda of seeking a male for the position” (p. 7). Such occurrence are a tradition in most developed countries such as Australia (Bagilhole et al, 2008; Blackmore et al, 2006; Ozkanl et al, 2008), in the United Kingdom(Acker, 1994; Coleman, 2009; Evetts, 1994; Hall, 1996), in New Zealand (Brooks, 2005) and in the USA (Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993). Similarly, in developing countries such as Uganda, Sperandio and Kagoda (2008)

found in secondary schools that male domination at the “appointment and selection process created a situation that discouraged or actively deterred women from reaching the selection process as they seek recommendations and appraisals for their initial applications” (p. 9). Likewise, in Nigerian educational settings, individuals from other professions, especially outside the education sector, are politically appointed to education boards and committees that make selections and appointments (Uwazurike, 1991), so it is difficult for women when the socio-cultural context of the society has always been male-dominated and where “there is enduring association between masculinity and strong leadership - disciplinary and directive” (Blackmore et al, 2006, p. 17).

Some researchers have observed there are cases in which women are encouraged to apply for leadership positions and then found to be the ‘token woman’ because the encouragement is only to make the shortlist look more diverse (Bagilhole et al, 2008). This indicates one of the reasons women are appointed is because of cultural fit (Ozkanl et al, 2008), which Blackmore, Thomas and Barty (2006) refers to this concept as ‘normal identity’ (p. 310). Appointment selection of women requires that they suit the current leadership structures and functions, referred to as ‘preferred styles and principles of leadership’ (Blackmore et al, 2006). However, these researchers further caution that such an approach to the appointment process tends to produce ‘incumbents’ where a person who has held a leadership position for a long duration is more likely to be appointed. In addition, applicants from outside the institution are further disadvantaged because the selection of incumbents produces a system of rewards constituted on past internal reputation and experience, so being a woman applicant who is also an outsider meets further barriers.

Tivinarlik and Wanat (2006) researched into the leadership styles of PNG women and men principals in New Ireland province high schools. They found that the wantok system (closely related to kinship relationships where support or favour is sought through relatives) can be both a beneficial and an impediment to career advancement. An example of the wantok system is when an appointment officer from the provincial education department made changes after the official school appointment meeting by choosing his relatives or in-laws to replace the initially

appointed candidates (Tivinarlik et al, 2006). Similarly, the work of Lahui-Ako (2001) with PNG high school teachers found that the wantok system was evident in the appointments, even though in many cases the appointed relatives lacked qualifications or merit. In contrast, Warsal's (2009) study in Vanuatu indicated that the wantok system provided women educational leaders with the opportunity to advance to leadership positions. For example, women in formal leadership roles in the urban schools showed favour to other women from their islands. Seemingly, the wantok system has a dual application: it can hinder a woman's career advancement, or it can positively influence her opportunities if she has relatives on the appointment panels. The use of the wantok system in appointments processes shows that there is minimal transparency of decision-making processes, and this can further disadvantage and discriminate against women in their quest for formal leadership roles.

Discrimination

The literature from developed countries indicates that stereotypical beliefs and attitudes held towards women can cause discrimination against women in educational organisations (Acker, 1994; Brooks, 1997; Coleman, 2005, 2007, 2009; Hall, 1993; Hearn, 2001; Shakeshaft, 1987; Shaw et al, 2007). Shakeshaft (1987) described discrimination as overt discrimination where women were treated unfairly based on gender. In educational organisations discrimination is most likely to occur at the appointment stage (Acker, 1994; Blackmore, 1989; Coleman, 2009). For example, Coleman (1996) shares the experience of a headteacher whose application for a deputy headship was turned down in a letter stating "in this case, I have to interview men only" (p. 320). Discrimination based on gender is very difficult to challenge because there is nothing much that women are able to do to change the mindsets of others. In addition, women have to keep proving that they are as capable as men of being leaders, because even when they are appointed they are still regarded as "outsiders" in the leadership arena (Coleman, 2009, p. 15), when, rather, they should be free of scrutiny and accepted for their individuality and for what they can contribute to their educational organisations.

Coleman (2009) discovered in a longitudinal comparative study focusing on secondary headteachers in England that some forms of discrimination were more covert. She identified that women leaders experienced discriminatory treatment in relation to how they could balance family and work as others undermined that they might be unable to cope with both responsibilities. Shakeshaft (1989) refers to such practices as covert or indirect discrimination, that is, unequal treatment that is not directly traceable to gender but uses other criteria which disadvantage women. Such criteria include age, position, or travel distance from the school's vicinity. As illustrated in research which investigated the leadership opportunities for women in nonformal education in Bangladesh, the traditional views of promotion based on years of experience in the educational sector and previous leadership experience also covertly disadvantaged women in their career advancement (Sperandio, 2009). Likewise, literature from developing countries demonstrated discrimination encountered was also as a result of entrenched cultural beliefs, values and ideologies of the place of women in society from a traditional perspective (Akao, 2008; Addi-Raccach, 2002a, 2006; Aladejana et al, 2005; Brown et al, 1996; Brown et al, 2003; Coleman et al, 1998; Kagoda et al, 2009; Sanal, 2008; Turan et al, 2002; Warsal, 2009).

Research shows that women can sometimes use techniques of denial when they faced with discrimination, to avoid being labelled a feminist or because they are unaware of what is happening (Celikten, 2009; Coleman, 2007, Marshall, 1985; Rusch & Marshall, 2006). For example, in a study that focused on identifying the factors underlying the small representation of women principals in Turkey, a participant did not feel comfortable about saying she had witnessed any discriminatory behaviour based on gender. Instead her response was "I was not exposed to such behaviours but I heard that others were. Sometimes it happens but I can not tell you exactly what it is" (Celikten, 2009, p. 173). Such denial may indicate that cultural socialisation in a patriarchal culture restricted women from freely expressing their views and experiences of discrimination, ultimately silencing the woman. Shakeshaft (1989) conceded that women's denial of discrimination is a survival mechanism in a male-dominated environment because if it was acknowledged, the women would have to face it directly, with consequent effects on their careers. On the other hand, Marshall (1985) argued

that “such denial results in the end of career mobility” (p. 139) and that “denial results in invisibility” (Rusch et al, 2006, p. 236).

Blackmore (2009) asserted that when re-positioning women in educational leadership contexts, women researchers first need to understand the structures that allow or disallow women’s particular “career choices [because] discrimination is no longer constrained to workplaces but is part of wider structural and cultural relations between family, work and community that are being reconstituted” (p. 80) within the educational organisations. For example, in the Melanesian context, discrimination begins at home when, because of financial constraints, sons are chosen over daughters to go to school. Similarly, men are expected to be the public speakers in cultural meetings while women are expected to contribute less because it is considered that men normally do the hardest work. The PNG men’s role in preparation relates to hunting, fishing, and building of platforms for visitors, deciding where food will be placed, and negotiating with relatives from other villages for their support in the feasts. Melanesian women’s experience of discrimination in the workplace (Akao, 2008; Warsal, 2009) initially begins at home. Brown and Ralph (1996) believed a determining factor of discrimination was due to men’s vested interest in holding onto power and authority rather than sharing it with women. This means that Melanesian women are discriminated against because their ascribed roles in the society do not position them as leaders in the public arena.

Women’s place in the society

In Melanesia most of the population lives in rural areas. Girls are taught by their mothers and other female relatives to be homemakers, good wives and mothers, and efficient workers in the gardens. This has been the usual practice, and is traced back to the traditional times when women’s ascribed role positioned them at a ‘secondary’ place in the society (Cox & Aitsi, 1988; Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2000; Tuivaga, 1988). Furthermore, Gustafsson (2003) stated that traditional principles of kinship determined domestic life, which was organised primarily by gender, and women did not compare themselves with men. However, she cautions it did not mean men and women enjoyed equal rights through the

kinship system. More importantly, the system contained a “structure for cooperation and guaranteed participation by both genders” (p. 35). This may mean that in the traditional social structure and systems, women worked alongside men to aid the functioning of the community, for example, in food preparation for the feasts. It may seem possible that women had opportunities to informally lead in the decision-making process regarding the amount of food to harvest and organisation of the food preparation for the feasts. In the background of PNG society, women’s contributions and participation were therefore valued. However, at the forefront, their voices were unheard because the public spheres were traditionally, and as they continue to be a male domain.

The role of the women became more distinctive as a result of colonization and the Christian religious values that reinforced the patriarchal culture through education. Girls were taught how to sew and cook, as the duties of a wife, while boys were taught practical skills of carpentry, book-keeping and mechanics (Blackmore, 1999). The cultural expectations, influence of the colonization, and influential religious beliefs, have conditioned women to behave a certain way and women are expected to remain within the bounds of their feminine roles (Kilavanwa, 2004). Pollard (2000) gives an account of this by explaining girls are taught at an earlier age not to question their brothers, fathers or male relatives but instead show respect by following what they are told to do. Tongamoa (1988) also stated, “the women perceived their ascribed and traditional roles and responsibilities as being divinely sanctioned and unchangeable, to be carried out for the benefit of everybody in the family and community” (p. 89).

Some women today may feel the need to abide by such patterns of behaviour because they are conditioned to see their domestic responsibilities as having priority over career progression and may not want to step into the unfamiliar territory of a leadership role. Nonetheless, due to national and international educational opportunities, and exposure to western media, it is likely that PNG women may now view their roles differently than would have been the case some twenty years ago. Warsal (2009) found in Vanuatu urban schools that beliefs and practices about women’s prescribed roles have been changed by exposure to western ideas and practices. In the rural islands, however, she found that men’s

views of women's roles and place in society had not changed much at all. This shows that men in rural areas with limited access to education and exposure to western thinking still held tightly to their traditional values and beliefs, unlike men in the urban centres. It indicates that women in Melanesia's rural areas and islands are more likely to encounter greater resistance in their roles as educational leaders than women in the urban centres. The current research was carried out in an urban centre, and thus provided an opportunity to see whether such variation between urban and rural views of women's place in the society existed in another Melanesian context such as PNG.

Balancing work and family

Balancing work and family responsibilities is one of the greatest challenges faced by women who are either current or aspiring educational leaders (Warsal, 2009). Women are responsible for the majority of childcare and homemaking (Shakeshaft, 1993) and therefore have major family responsibilities. Motherhood in particular can be viewed as an obstacle to academic career progression (Court, 1994; Ozkanh et al, 2008). Notably, role conflict becomes problematic for academic women, according to Ozkanh and White (2008), when they progress to leadership roles such as professorship with their increased complexity and at the same time maintain their roles at home as a wife and a mother. Each role has its own set of responsibilities which sometimes can be confusing and difficult for the women as they try to balance them all. Coleman (2007) found there were three routes women in England take when it comes to balancing work and family. Many women choose to put family first and then fit their job around the family, others decide to focus on their career and postpone having children, and some choose to manage a dual-career household with shared responsibilities.

Women in leadership positions with families are likely to be working 'double shift' due to domestic duties and leadership responsibilities, while women with younger children work 'triple shift' because they have duties at work, their domestic duties and major childcare responsibilities (Acker, 1994, p. 118). Research in South Africa showed that childcare and other domestic responsibilities produced strain on single women parents in leadership positions

(Chisholm, 2001). Chisholm also discovered that although some women had supportive partners who also attended to domestic responsibilities, generally most domestic duties and childcare were left for the mothers to do. For dual-career families, a common practice would be that the husband's career would take precedence over that of his wife.

Conversely, a comparative research project by Coleman and Yanping (1998) conducted in China showed that women sacrificed some aspects of their career, not only to fulfil their domestic role but also because of a perceived need to support their husbands. Women educational leaders in Hong Kong also reported similar problems (Ho, 2009). There was evidence that the dual role affects women's advancement to leadership positions irrespective of their ability and leadership qualities. Likewise, women in Turkey felt that the increasing demands of family roles and responsibilities did affect the standard of their work performance even though their families were supportive (Ozkanh et al, 2008).

In the Melanesian context, Kilavanwa (2004), Akao (2008) and Warsal (2009) all found that many of the women had experienced difficulties when balancing family and work demands, with many of them receiving little support from their partners. They believed this impacted on their advancement to leadership roles. In PNG families, domestic duties and childcare are deemed the women's responsibilities so women have little support from spouses as it is considered inappropriate for men to perform women's work (Kilavanwa, 2004). Likewise in the US, the dominant family discourse portrays that a woman should "subordinate the interest of her outside activities to those of the home" (Grogan, 1996, p. 111). In Melanesian contexts women perform domestic duties as their 'cultural obligation' and their 'traditional role' at home takes priority over their professional lives (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009), minimising their chances of advancing to leadership positions. Literature from developing countries shows that typically women educational leaders are not supported by their partners as they try to balance their work/family commitments because cultural stereotyping requires women to undertake domestic duties as inherent in their role and responsibility as wives and mothers.

Violence against women

In Melanesian societies the incidence of violence against women is extremely high. Cultural beliefs position women as subordinates (Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2000; Warsal, 2009), and in Melanesia women are viewed as the ‘possessions of men’ (Gibson, 1993). This gives men power, authority and control over women and women must be passive and submissive to their husbands or brothers (Pollard, 2000). If women go beyond the boundaries of their prescribed roles as portrayed by the society, violence against them can be justified by the men as a consequence (Donald, Strachan & Taleo, 2002; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009). Tonissen (2000) found in her study in PNG that violence of all forms creates an environment of fear and uncertainty which has devastating psychological effects on women. She argued:

Violence prevents women from exercising their rights to achieving social and economic equality, hampers their ability to organise and, ultimately, is a major obstacle to their empowerment and full participation in shaping the economic, social and political life of their countries. (p. 26)

For example, Warsal’s (2009) recent study focusing on how culture impacted women educational leaders in Vanuatu secondary schools found that some women were physically assaulted by community members in the rural areas. A participant in the study stated “an incident that happened caused me to leave...they [the community] destroyed every property in my house belonging to me and my family” (p. 71). Apparently women experience violence not only from their husbands but also from the communities that they live in which raises safety concerns for the women and their families. Sepoe (2000) argued that when women live in continuous fear of potential or actual physical violence, “inclusive democracy will remain elusive” (p. 6) because violence prevents women from exercising their rights to practise leadership in educational settings. This is one of the factors that contribute to the under-representation of women educational leaders in Melanesian contexts (Strachan, 2009). Besides the physical abuse, there is emotional turmoil that damages women’s self-esteem (Kilavanwa, 2004), and women begin to lose confidence in themselves and in their abilities and their potential to become leaders. This is examined in the next section.

Lack of confidence

Cubillo and Brown (2003) believe that one of the factors that hinder women's progress to leadership positions is because they lack confidence and are perhaps afraid of failure if given the opportunity to lead. Cubillo (1999) discovered that "women's so-called lack of confidence" was not that they lacked faith in their abilities but instead was due to working in an "unfamiliar territory" (p. 554). In other words, women in their first experience of functioning as a leader in a public spheres where stakes are normally high have to get used to the expectations placed on that role. Consequently, Cubillo and Brown's (2003) study with women from cultural diverse societies found that such fear was reduced once women knew the "rules of the game" (p. 281). Research carried out by Turan and Ebiclioglu (2002) discovered that women's low self-esteem contributed to their lack of interest in applying for principalship in secondary schools even though they were qualified and experienced. Similarly, research in the Shaanxi province of China by Coleman and Yanping (1998) indicated that the underlying patriarchal values created difficulties for women to transcend entrenched attitudes to women and for them to embark on leadership roles in schools regardless of the general approval of equality between men and women.

In a Melanesian context, Akao (2008) found that in the Solomon Islands the upbringing of the women leaders impacted their self-confidence when dealing with male staff because they had to deal with continuous criticisms from them. Similarly, in Vanuatu, Warsal (2009) also found that women had low self confidence and refused to take up formal leadership positions. The lack of confidence was due to the lack of higher qualifications, which the women felt were necessary to enhance their leadership. Furthermore, Warsal discovered that aspiring women leaders also had low self-confidence due to limited training and mentoring, and lack of higher qualifications. These findings may also illustrate the influence of the Melanesian cultural norms where the aspiring who were often needed to be submissive and show respect to older people. Ultimately younger women lacked the confidence to embark on leadership. However, Cubillo and Brown (2003) claim that it is not surprising women initially felt that way because they have been virtually excluded from the male-dominant leadership arena for so long. As we have seen, this is because women are generally working within a

system that promotes masculine discourse, whereby society has constructed power and privilege over women (Shakeshaft, 1989) historically and traditionally, and this can be unsettling. With these aspects in mind, I now focus specifically on the women academics in PNG universities to further situate this research focus.

PNG women academics and leadership in the universities

During the process of writing this literature review, I experienced difficulties in accessing recent data on the representation of women leaders in the PNG higher education sector, particularly universities. After an extensive literature search, which was largely unsuccessful, I visited the Office of Higher Education (OHE) during my field research in PNG to retrieve statistics for this study. The OHE was unable to provide the specific data on women educational leaders in PNG higher institutions. However, I was able to access information on the number of women teaching in higher education institutions, which I have presented earlier in Chapter One. The information showed data collected for years 2007 - 2008. It showed that there were 118 female academics compared to the 440 male academics in the six universities of the country. The overall figure for the higher education institutions (that is, including teachers college, business college, nursing college etc.) still indicated a significant contrast between male and female teaching staff. There were 747 males compared to 250 female academics. In a less recent study conducted by Lund (1998) in two universities, it was found that women made up 20% of the academic staff in PNG, in which there was only one professor, one associate professor, three senior lecturers and two department heads who were women. The information indicated that over a decade, not much has changed for women educational leaders in the PNG universities as women are still under-represented in the higher education leadership positions.

While research in PNG shows that women are under-represented in educational leadership positions (Kilavanwa, 2004) on the one hand, Strachan (2009) stated that in Melanesia there is a need to “look beyond women’s representation in leadership to the underlying causes of that representation” (p. 106). It is important to develop an understanding of the socio-cultural and the political environments of PNG that pose many challenges for women, in order to counteract the social

justice issue of women's under-representation in PNG universities. Strachan (2009) elaborated "women's invisibility in formal leadership positions has its roots in violations against women, such as ...violence...and... cultural and male hegemonic practices that deny women access to equal participation in society" (p. 106). Therefore, this research intended to identify the factors within the PNG context that contribute to women's under-representation in higher education leadership. Additionally, minimal research in PNG and other Melanesian higher education sectors indicated a gap in the literature, and this research adds to the body of literature on women and leadership in the Melanesian higher education context, by focusing on these overarching research questions:

- What are the leadership experiences of women leaders in higher education institutions in PNG?
- What are the beliefs and perceptions PNG women hold towards leadership?
- What influences women's access to leadership roles within Higher Education in PNG in their career advancement within the formal leadership structure?

Summary

This literature review has examined research from developed and developing countries to identify factors that contribute to the under-representation of women in the education sector. First, I have situated the research by examining PNG social systems to demonstrate the various ways the society can constrain leadership opportunities for women academics in higher education. 'Big man' leadership was identified, amongst others as a major impediment for women's career progress in PNG.

Next, I have examined the term 'leadership' to identify the appropriate definition to use in the context of this research. This definition advocated for addressing the social justice issue of women's under-representation in higher education. The debate on the gendered differentiation of leadership was explored, so as women's

representation in leadership opportunities. Third, literature addressing the barriers which impede women advancing to formal leadership positions was reviewed.

Lastly, I examined literature on women and leadership in PNG universities to situate the research focus. From the small amount of literature on women educational leaders in PNG universities it was identified that women are under-represented in formal leadership positions. Therefore, it was important that this research investigate the experiences of women academics in formal leadership, positions and of aspiring women leaders to identify their beliefs and values about leadership, and establish what had influenced their access to leadership roles within higher education. In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework for the research design.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The choice of methodological approach to use and the paradigm to situate the research within depends on the purpose of the research and the methods that suit the scope of the research topic. It is important to note that methodology describes the theory of knowledge that guides the research whereas methods describe the specific techniques used to collect information (Lather, 2006). A research design should always be ‘tailor-made’ as it may seem that “no one research method is intrinsically and universally better than any other” (Davidson et al, 1999, p. 21).

The research context is important to consider, as this can influence the nature and the scope of the research focus. The focus and the objective of the research set the foundation to design the theoretical and the conceptual framework. This research therefore required methodological approaches which placed the women at the centre of the inquiry to allow them to voice their experiences (Maynard, 1994; Morrison, 2002; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

The first part of this chapter examines the framework of the research, which was situated within the interpretive paradigm. The qualitative and feminist principles which underpinned the research are described to demonstrate their appropriateness in the context of this research in PNG. The validity and trustworthiness, and the significance of reflexivity for the research are examined. The second part of the chapter refers to relevant ethical aspects such as informed consent, privacy considerations and social and cultural issues that were important to consider in the research design and process. The third part of this chapter illustrates and justifies the data collection methods (semi-structured and focused group interviews) and the benefits and limitations of each of these methods are highlighted. The fourth part of this chapter describes the research process and outlines the key features of the process with regard to the uniqueness of the Melanesian context. Lastly, I highlight and discuss the complexity of researching in a Melanesian context as an ‘insider’ of the culture.

The interpretative paradigm

Discovering knowledge through research means it is essential that the theoretical framework is situated in a paradigm which guides the overall research process (Tobin & Kincheloe, 2006). As Guba and Lincoln (1994) have stated “the basic belief system or worldview ... guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 105). Within the interpretative paradigm, reality is believed to be subjective and constructed (Lather, 2006). Guba and Lincoln (1994) contend that subjectivity in research is important to what constitutes the focus of inquiry. They argue that life is not just in terms of measurability but rather is dependent on experiences. The contexts for research vary and as a result there are multiple realities (Lather, 2006). Reality is constructed by individuals applying meaning to a situation and because different people have varying perspectives, they bring different conceptual frameworks to situations based on their experiences. This, in turn influences what they perceive in a particular situation (Hess-Biber & Guba, 2006; Guba et al, 1994; Patton, 1990).

Therefore, the interpretative paradigm suited this research because it enabled me to examine and understand the social world from the viewpoint of the participants within their own context. As Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006) further clarify, “phenomena must be understood as complex ‘wholes’ that are inextricably bound up with the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts in which they are embedded” (p. 8). This was important considering the scope and the focus of this research project, which was situated in PNG, a culturally diverse society with over 200 ethnic groups and more than 800 languages spoken. Davidson and Tolich (1999) also claim that no phenomenon can be better understood or solved in isolation from its larger environment or social context. This means that answers or explanations to the experiences of aspiring women leaders and women in formal leadership roles were context-bound. In essence using an interpretative paradigm as the platform for this research enabled me to access and identify multiple layers of information within the PNG context that contributed to women’s under representation in formal leadership positions in higher education. An interpretative paradigm also fostered close interaction with participants

through qualitative approaches such as interviews, and therefore seemed an appropriate theoretical framework for this research. The methodology that underpins feminist approach tends to be interpretative (Morrison, 2002) and therefore employs qualitative feminist methodology which I discuss below.

Characteristics of qualitative research

Qualitative research is a situated activity that comprises a set of interpretive material practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is centred within subjective experiences and the socially constructed nature of reality by participants (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison, 2007; Denzin et al, 2005). Qualitative research allows the researcher to examine people's words and actions, and so enables the researcher to represent the situation as experienced by the participants through their narratives (Burton, Brundrell & Jones, 2008). In relation to this research it was important that the opportunity was made available for the women to give a descriptive account of their lived experiences so that I could develop a better understanding of their social context, and their beliefs about and perceptions of leadership. Morrison (2002) says that in qualitative research:

Detailed consideration is given to the holistic picture in which the research topic is embedded. This is more than attention to the setting; the approach taken is that researchers can only make sense of the data collected if they are able to understand the data in a broader educational, social and historic context. (p. 20)

Qualitative research embraces multiple interpretative practices such as case studies, action research, ethnography and interview research and does not belong to a single discipline (Denzin et al, 2005). It has a set of methods or practices that are entirely its own because qualitative inquiry most often involves people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001). Also, with regard to this research, data in the form of the participants' own words was likely to impact on the presentation of the information from the research as this added more meaning and depth to the participants' voices. Thus, qualitative inquiry suited this research

because a qualitative method, in this case, semi-structured interviews, provided descriptive and detailed accounts of the women academics in PNG higher education.

One of the strengths of qualitative methods is that data collection methods evolve because flexibility is valued in the qualitative research approach (Davidson et al, 1999). This flexibility is due to the changing nature of the research process, as it is naturalist and inductive and situational (Patton, 1990). It can be described as 'situational' because inevitably there are external factors within the research site that may pose unforeseen challenges to the emergent research design. I experienced this in my research process in PNG, where one of the qualitative methods (focused groups) was not used for a number of reasons which I will address briefly in latter parts of this chapter. As Strachan (1997) has observed:

Because of the changing nature of the research process it is important that the researcher is him/herself flexible enough to be able to cope with the inevitable design and redesign process. (p. 87)

Qualitative research seeks to discover knowledge through researcher and participant interactions during the research process in natural settings. This calls for the building of relationships based on trust and respect for participants. Guba and Lincoln (1994) posit that the researcher and the participant interact to influence one another, and therefore the relationship is reciprocal and inseparable. The subjectivity of the researcher is acknowledged and attempts are made to acknowledge and reduce the distance between the researcher and participants (Lather, 1991).

Characteristics of feminist research

At the centre of feminist inquiry is the understanding that the social construction of gender. This is one of the predetermining factors as to how society views women and therefore, creates gender division in social life (Lather, 1991). Ozga (2000) claims "because 'normal' identity has been so exclusively masculine in its assumptions, it follows that women are largely absent or spoken for in gender-

blind theory and literature” (p. 84). Therefore, according to Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2007):

Feminist research seeks to demolish and replace this with a different substantive agenda - of empowerment, voice, emancipation, equality and representation for oppressed groups...in order to bring issues of power and silencing of women to the foreground to be exposed. (p. 35)

It is committed to social justice and progressive democracy for women. This research aimed to give voice to Papua New Guinean women academics by applying the feminist principles of research and qualitative methods (Ramazanoglu et al, 2002). Maynard (1994) states that feminist research is an approach which maximizes the opportunity to explore women’s experiences rather than imposing external defined structures on women’s lives. There is an emphasis on “listening to, recording and understanding women’s own descriptions and accounts” (p. 12).

The key reason for using feminist principles was to the provide opportunity to women to describe their experiences, and give accounts in their own words of factors which either advanced them to leadership roles or served as constraints within their place of employment. Olesen (2005) affirms that feminist research seeks to represent women’s voices in data gathering by preparing an account that transmits those voices so that they are heard, and “not treated simply as a source of data” (Maynard, 1994, p. 16). As Letherby (2003) asserts, although experience may be the start of feminist research, it is the analysis of the experience that provides the potential for change. Letherby further stresses that to see a clearer picture of women’s experiences requires a better understanding of the whole cultural and historical experience of women. Therefore, it is my intention that PNG women’s voices are heard through this feminist research within the Melanesian context.

Kelly, Burton and Regan (1994) argue that one of the fundamental premises of feminist research that distinguishes it from other forms of research is the process of questioning. This can include the questions that are asked, the way researchers

locate themselves within their questions, and the ultimate purpose of the study which is to create useful knowledge that can be used by the researcher and others to make a difference for women. Thus, the objective of knowledge building in feminist research is to emancipate and expose social injustice (Biber & Leavy, 2006). However, they further stress that reality viewed in this sense is very much 'situational'. In other words, one way of viewing is not always the way it will be viewed in another context; neither it is wrong or right. Instead these ways of viewing are windows into information about the social world of that particular context. For example, the experiences of women in developing countries are not necessarily congruent to all Melanesian women's experiences and, particularly within Melanesia, each woman's experiences may also be different because although the socio-cultural contexts are similar, the cultures which shape individuals are diverse.

It was my intention that the research would have a positive impact on the participants in order for change to occur in terms of critiquing gender equality within higher education in PNG society. This would happen through our interaction in the course of the interviews and the informal conversations on the research topic. Feminism is said to be theory and practice in action, that is, praxis that produces useful knowledge that will make a difference in women's lives for a social and individual change (Letherby, 2003). Morrison (2002) posits that feminist research can be viewed as an 'inter-subjective' experience that empowers rather than exploits because details of gender as experienced by women in the research are the central focus of the participants and the researcher.

Therefore, Lather (1991) encourages reciprocity through the feminist research design; its methodology can create knowledge that has a profound impact on the participants and the researcher during the research process. Reciprocity was present in the following forms of the research process. As part of the informal talk about the research, I described to some of the women the papers illustrating the different models of leadership approaches that are offered in the educational leadership programme at the University of Waikato. This was part of the mentoring process in our discussions. I also gave copies of the NZAID 2010 application forms and encouraged women to apply for the scholarships.

Considering the research participants, McNae and Strachan (in press) have noted, “people’s [participants] efforts must be recognized and celebrated to illustrate positive contributions” (p. 6) to the research. To further illustrate this, I was able to hand deliver one of the women’s NZAID application forms to the University of Waikato International Office. In next section, I address the advantages and the disadvantages of researching as an insider.

Benefits and the limitations of researching within the culture

Reinharz (1992) stated that personal experience can be the start of a study which questions can be drawn from. This can create a personal connection to the research and participants involved. In relation to my research, its genesis goes back to my experience as an aspiring woman leader and thus I initially identified with the research questions at a personal level. As stated in Chapter One, while working in PNG education sector, I experienced discrimination at two levels: my gender and my young age. At a primary school where I was teaching, I was always under the close scrutiny of a male senior male teacher. This occurred after I had attained my overseas teaching qualification. My being young and a female with such a qualification caused the male senior teacher to behave in a discriminatory manner towards me, and at his request led to my removal without any justification. Formal procedures were not followed, I believe this was because I was a woman and was young. The challenges I encountered were due to PNG’s traditional and culturally reinforced male ideologies.

Being an insider was advantageous for me as I undertook this research. Certainly researchers not of the culture can still conduct successful research across cultures; however, not being familiar with the research context protocols can pose many challenges (McNae et al, in press), and Sprague (2005) has conceded that studies on women should preferably be conducted by women of that society. There are benefits to being an insider researcher (Bjorkert & Phoenix, 1994; Reinharz, 1992; Sprague, 2005). A researcher from the same ethnic background and gender as the research participants can generate trust that their involvement in the research will not cause them harm and will result in benefits to their community.

Researchers say that ‘being an insider’ (Hess-Biber et al, 2006; Ramazanoglu et al, 2002; Sprague, 2005) enables a researcher to understand what “women have to say that no outsider could” (Reinharz 1999, p. 260).

On the other hand, starting from one’s experience poses challenges in the research process. Bjorkert and Phoenix (1994) argue that being an insider from the same culture is not enough to create trust and willingness to disclose information. For example, Akao (2008) discovered in the Solomon Islands that she was able to interview only those secondary schools women leaders who were not in a principal position because her status as a young researcher may have affected the women principals’ willingness to participate. Additionally, her experience may mean that her status as a postgraduate student from an overseas university may have caused the women principals to feel inferior to her.

Sprague (2005) asserts that being an insider has both its benefits and limitations. As the researcher I was mindful of the power dynamics involved in my relationships with the research participants. They were all older than me and some were experienced researchers, and held higher qualifications. Culturally, it was important that I showed respect by being cautious in how I asked my interview questions because of their academic standings in the university. Another challenge of being an insider is that one’s own biases could interfere with the perspective of the research (Reinharz, 1992). Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) cautioned feminist researchers to differentiate their own experiences from those of participants especially when using information from the data, and they stressed that the researchers must be “reflexive about the nature of the relation between experience and research” (p. 262). Hess-Biber and Leavy (2006) draw from Harding’s (1993) concept of ‘strong objectivity’ and encourage researchers to listen to participants’ voice and ensure that they are understood, and that the voices are represented fairly and truthfully.

Validity and trustworthiness

Validity in qualitative research relates to knowledge claims from the research with the assurance that they are trustworthy (Davidson et al, 1999; Lincoln et al, 1994).

Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) draw on the standards of validity from Guba and Lincoln (1985) and state that it is important within the process “to demonstrate the true value of multiple perspectives, the dependability of findings amid variability, the applicability of findings to broader contexts, and the freedom from bias in the research process” (p. 524). They reconceptualize the concept of validity in qualitative research by examining the criteria and techniques of validity and contend that they are paramount and cannot function individually. Instead, they complement each other to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research.

Three specific criteria were considered for the credibility of this research. The first criterion related to the reliability of the knowledge claims. For this research, this involved ensuring that knowledge claims were credible and authentic and grounded within the data. This was considered as it was the first time I had conducted research and hence I had to ensure that the voices of the women educational leaders in PNG higher education were fairly represented. One way of approaching this was talking through the data analysis information with a female Melanesian PhD student who questioned how I had reached my interpretations, and also gave insights from her point of view. Her research was not similar to this topic but based on political empowerment of women. Nevertheless, the process of sharing information with her enabled me to ensure that the data was analysed and interpreted to best reflect the given information. The other approach used was by sending the transcriptions to respective participants to check that the transcriptions accurately represented the information given during the interviews.

The second criterion of validity related to congruency between the overarching research questions and the theoretical framework. This aspect of validity considered was how the overarching research questions fitted within the chosen framework for this research. In particular, I needed to ensure that the data collection methods and analysis strategies were within the methodological framework and might convincingly answer the research questions. An aspect of this was evident in how the findings of this research reflected previous Melanesian research (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009) and developing countries; and to some extent, the findings were also congruent with

research in developed countries. As Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) reaffirm, that findings are theorized from previous research.

Finally I addressed validity through the sampling population and interview question. This was an important third criterion of validity to ensure that the sampling and interview questions were adequate and could convincingly answer the underpinning research questions (Hess-Biber et al, 2006; Ramazanoglu et al, 2002). An approach used to address such validity was purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) of women in formal leadership positions (strand leaders and senior lecturers) and aspiring women leaders (junior academic and tutors) to present various perspectives of educational leadership experiences. Furthermore, findings from the information were checked and questioned (Hesse-Biber et al, 2006).

In relation to this research, I was able to benefit from the input of another woman researcher who was not of my culture but had done a similar study in another Melanesian context, and was able to contribute to the interpretation of findings from the outsider perspective. This was another way to ensure avoiding bias on my part and true representation of the women's voices. The ongoing dialogue between this woman researcher and myself enhanced the interpretation and the presentation of the data, enabling me to reflect as accurately as possible the participants' experiences and to ensure that their voices be heard to establish credibility.

Reflexivity in the research

Feminist qualitative research entails a holistic approach that is “reflexive and process driven” (Hess-Biber et al, 2006, p. 5). Reflexivity requires you as a researcher to discern the significance of situational dynamics between you and the participants that could impact the creation of the knowledge. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) highlight the importance of reflexivity in social research because “it covers various attempts to unpack what knowledge is contingent upon, how the researcher is socially situated, and how the research agenda/process has been constituted” (p.118). It is essential to be aware of potentially biased values that are attached to the research project and could impact on the research (Brooks & Hess-

Biber, 2007). Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2007) propose that research is primarily the shared construction of knowledge by the researcher and the participants. Therefore, it is important to recognise that such knowledge construction involves “an active process that requires scrutiny, reflection, and interrogation of the data, the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 274). Similarly, Letherby (2003) states:

Research from a feminist methodological standpoint involves the researcher taking women’s experiences seriously and being openly subjective and reflexive of herself and the research process, which includes planning, doing fieldwork and interpreting and presenting research findings. (p. 69)

Equally important, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) urge “researchers to be reflexive in relation to interpersonal and ethical aspects of research practice, not just the epistemology aspect of rigorous research” (p. 277). This is because of the potential ethical dilemmas which can emerge. I encountered such a dilemma during the research process, when a woman wanted to be interviewed in the tea room, and I needed to find a balance between upholding the Melanesian cultural view of respecting older persons and the ethical aspects of the research regarding confidentiality and anonymity. This required a critical reflection concerning my stance as a researcher, as I realised it could be “both a hindrance and a resource towards achieving knowledge throughout the research process” (Brooks et al, 2007, p. 15). My example confirms Guillemin and Gillam’s (2004) notion of reflexivity in the ethical aspect of research practice:

In the actual conduct of research, the reflexive researcher will be placed to be aware of ethical important moments as they arise and will have a basis for responding in a way that is likely to be ethically appropriate, even with the unforeseeable. (p. 277)

In a sense, being reflexive alerts the researcher to challenges that may arise, and what sort of approach to use to address the possible challenges. In the case of this

research, it enabled me to ensure that my voice did not overpower the voices of the women participants I was attempting to represent.

Reflexivity is a vital key to enhancing validity and trustworthiness in the entire research process. It is believed that the “goal of reflexivity in this sense has to do with improving the quality and validity of the research and recognizing the limitations of the knowledge that is produced” (Guillemin et al, 2004, p. 275). Reflexivity is very important in feminist research because every researcher has personal values attached to the topic under study, and these can impact the research process and the knowledge claims. Thus, Hess-Biber and Leavy (2006) claimed that as a researcher you are able to discern the significance of the situational dynamics between you and the participants that can influence the creation of the knowledge. Similarly, the interactions between the researcher and the participants require support and planning. The next section explores the ethical aspects of this research which supported the research process.

Ethical considerations

Several important considerations and procedures were central to the design of this research. These considerations were intended to protect the participants in the research project as there is a risk with any research that involvement may cause physical or emotional harm, invasion of privacy, or even lead to exploitation (Cohen et al, 2007; Guillemin et al, 2004; Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Wilkinson (2001) claims that ethical principles ensure “that research is undertaken in ways to protect and enhance participants in research projects” (p. 26). Each stage in the research sequence raises ethical issues (Cohen et al, 2007) and hence Davidson and Tolich (1999) state that every effort has to be made to protect and respect the participants, and to ensure that the whole research process is ethical. Therefore, for the purpose of this research project, I adhered to the Waikato University Research Code of Ethics (University of Waikato Human Research Ethics, 2008) so that no harm was brought my participants. This rigorous process ensured that I considered the key aspects of informed consent, upholding confidentiality and anonymity to respect all participants’ privacy, and being socially and culturally sensitive to participants within the research context. These ethical principles were

addressed to participants in the course of my research, that is, before, during and after the research process, to ensure the research process was fair, just and legitimate.

Informed consent

The choice to be involved in research must be made by the participants and should be voluntary (Christians, 2005), and agreement for participation must be based entirely on full and open information sharing. There should be no physical or psychological coercion nor financial inducements used to make subjects agree to be part of the research (Creswell, 2005; Wilkinson, 2001). The participants have the right to be informed of the benefits and potential emotional, psychological or physical harm through their involvement, and participants are to be reassured regarding confidentiality and anonymity with how the information would be utilised (Burns, 2000; Christensen & Johnson, 2000).

Therefore, informed consent is a significant ethical principle which serves as the basis for other ethical principles (Cohen et al, 2007). It is the first part of the ethical procedures that begin the practical aspect of the research design. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) describe informed consent as “an interpersonal process between the researcher and participant, where the prospective participants come to an understanding of what the research project is about and what participation would involve” (p. 279). It was also important that the participants were given the opportunity to either decline or consent to participate in the research (Tobin, 2006) without any repercussions or harm.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are two ethical principles of research that aim to protect the privacy rights of the research participants. One aspect of participant privacy is the degree of sensitivity of information that is personal and delicate in nature (Davidson et al, 1999). In relation to this research, examining the experiences of women leaders may elicit sensitive information if they disclosed gender prejudices or discrimination by colleagues. In addition, information that is

disseminated could possibly connect personal information to research participants' identities. As O'Brian (2001) points out, the researcher "has control over the distribution and transmission of that information" (p. 30). Thus, as the researcher, it was important to ensure that every effort was made to prevent the public deducing the identity of the participants (Cohen et al, 2007), to avoid any harm or embarrassment as a consequence of the research (Nespor, 2000).

However, total confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed (Tolich, 2001), and researchers are cautioned to consider before embarking on the research whether the ethical risks of the research project outweigh the benefits (Davidson et al, 1999). In relation to my research project it was conducted in the capital city of PNG where the higher education institution was known due to small numbers of them. This meant there was a possibility that maintaining anonymity would be problematic because of my presence as a 'visitor' to the research site. Consequently, other individuals besides the participants knew the purpose of my presence at the research site and were able to make connections to women participants because there were only a few women in leadership positions in the respective schools of the institutions. As Christian (2005) confirmed, "pseudonyms and disguised locations are often recognised by insiders" (p. 145). Similarly, Nespor (2000) highlights how anonymity can be problematic within the research site:

The process of gaining access to settings produce a large tangential participants, for example, the administrators, manager, and officials with whom one negotiates for access who will know where the research is being undertaken and who some of the main participants are and may knowingly or accidentally publicly reveal their identities to others. (p. 547)

The smallness of the community where the research site is located can potentially reveal the identity of the participants. Therefore, it was my responsibility to protect the privacy of all the women by deleting personal information, such as their names, and addresses, precise details of the institution and any information that could possibly make them identifiable (Davison et al, 1999). Other strategies were employed to maintain anonymity. For example, with the consent of some of

the participants, other rooms were made available at the research site for the interviews instead of conducting them in their offices. Some interviews were conducted outside the working environment. Overall, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and to disguise the research location.

Social and cultural sensitivity

In planning and designing this research project, several considerations relating directly to the research context were highly significant and impacted on the research process. The cultural context needed to be taken into account because of the diversity of the cultures in PNG. As stated earlier, there are over 800 languages in the twenty provinces of the country; and while some customs are common to a number of areas, at the same time, some customs are very different. Such customs impacted on this research project. The socio-cultural context of PNG required me to follow cultural behaviour protocols. Vaioleti (2006) stressed that researching in the Pacific context requires a researcher to abide within the cultural norms of behaviour and attitude. For example, one of the women in my research had been involved in many of the government and non government bodies that pushed for gender equality issues in the country and also was one of the longest serving women academic in the institution. As part of the cultural protocols, I had to show respect and humility towards her and other older participants, some of whom were also experienced researchers.

For the women participants sharing personal experiences in on-site interviews, including gender discrimination and harassment within the same organisation, may have been a daunting process. I realised that some might fear that exposure could harm their careers or working relationships. I therefore gave them the option of using another venue for the interviews. A third factor I had to consider was the differences in views about the timeframe for the interview dates. In PNG, activities are not always time bounded and so it was inevitable that there could be problems about timelines between enforced westernized timeframes from the university and the busy timetable of the women. For example, several of the interviews were not held at the initial appointed time and were moved forward due to other commitments of the participants. This required the need for flexibility

in planning to accommodate changes. It demonstrated an important part of the research process where western research principles meet with the Melanesian way of doing things. Even though this may have caused some problems such as not being able to collect data on schedule, abiding by the Melanesian protocols was fundamental to the relationship-building process, and to respect the cultural protocols. Similarly, McNae and Strachan (in press) when conducting cross cultural research in Vanuatu found that researching in Melanesian context can impact the research process both positively and negatively. They have stated that entering a different research context means acquiring and learning “new protocols, processes and systems” (p. 10) of Melanesia, and this required flexibility.

Each of these aspects impacted on my selection of data collection methods and the actual timeframe for data collection in PNG. It was therefore essential to ensure the data collection methods used for this research were appropriate to the social and cultural context, and suited the participants involved in the research.

Data collection methods

Careful consideration of data collection methods was essential to choose those which were most applicable and appropriate for the nature of this research. Qualitative research uses data collection methods that allow participants to give a descriptive account of their experiences, feelings, perceptions, ideas, and thoughts in their own words (Maykut et al, 2001). As social reality is complex and multi-dimensional (Patton, 1990) such approaches seek to capture the lived experiences of the participants expressed in their own words. Therefore, I selected semi-structured interviews as my main data collection method for this research which was to be supported by the use of focused group discussions. In this section I firstly provide a brief overview of the interviews as a research method. Next, the appropriateness of semi-structured interviews and its benefits and limitations are addressed. Lastly, I explore the potentials of the focus group as a data collection method and address the challenges of this interview approach, which caused a change to my research design.

Interviews as research methods

Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2007) define research interviews as “a two person (or more) conversation initiated by the interviewer for the purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused by him (or her) on content specified research objectives of systemic descriptions, prediction and explanation” (p. 351). Interviews are interactive encounters and hence the nature of the social dynamic of the interview can shape the sort of knowledge generated (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Researchers have realized that interviews are not neutral tools for gathering information but rather active interactions between two or more people leading to negotiated contextual based results (Fontana et al, 2005; Kvale, 2007). Interview information can be obtained by a number of methods, for example, during face to face or telephone verbal exchange interviews (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

Interviews in qualitative research can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Unstructured or informal conversation is described as questions being asked in whatever order seems appropriate (Kvale, 2007). The immediate context determines the question and there are no predetermined fixed questions (Best & Kahn, 2006). In contrast, a structured interview is described as where content and the procedures are organised in advance (Cohen et al, 2007). The semi-structured interview is made up of open-ended questions with a focus relevant to the research purpose (Best et al, 2006, Cohen et al, 2007; Kvale, 2007). Reinharz (1985) believes that this form is most appropriate for feminist research. This is because it fosters a non-hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the participants and increases the rapport between them. I now elaborate on these and other key features of the semi-structured interview and the appropriateness of their use for this research is demonstrated.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews interview method was selected because of five main themes identified in the literature which showed its relevance and appropriateness to this research. I now outline the key themes in semi-structured interviews which are related to this research.

First, semi-structured interviews allow the voices of women to be heard. The semi-structured interview maximizes discovery and fits within the feminist research paradigm (Reinharz, 1985). Second, according to Brooks and Hess-Biber (2007), this form of interview is valuable because it is a two-way process. These authors argue that it requires interactive, reciprocal self-disclosure that the researcher has to first initiate. This reciprocity enables the women participants to express themselves freely and with ease as a friendly and conversational approach develops during the interviews. Similarly, Oakley (1981) believes that interviewing in feminist research enables a researcher to obtain information about participants' lives and experiences, as they disclose information which they would not include in everyday conversations. She also stresses that the best way to find out about people's lives is by establishing a non-hierarchical relationship where the interviewer is prepared to invest her own identity in the research relationship by answering questions and sharing experiences. For example, when I realised that their narratives were quite similar to some of my own gender-based experiences, I shared some of them to assure the participants that I understood their feelings.

Third, as other researchers have asserted the semi-structured interviews initiated rapport-building between the researchers and the participants and thus they felt able to disclose sensitive information (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputthong, 2007; Johnson et al, 2000). This was very significant because once the interview atmosphere felt safe, women shared very sensitive information. For example, some participants described how they were verbally and physically harassed by particular male colleagues. This emphasised the importance of rapport-building, which allows participants to disclose sensitive experiences because they were able to trust me, not just as the researcher but as an individual. It also meant that I was offered special insights and useful data to which another researcher might not have been given access.

Third, the non-hierarchical relationship of those taking part in a semi-structured interviews meant that women had more autonomy and control over what they shared, and used their own words to express feelings, perceptions, and views on what constituted leadership and what their leadership experiences were like

(Reinharz, 1985). Patton (1990) and Reinharz (1985) have affirmed that capturing the lived experiences of participants in their own words is the hallmark of feminist enquiry. The fourth important reason for my deciding to use semi-structured interviews was that it gave opportunity for the women participants and the researcher to acknowledge the gender inequality issues they were describing in the interviews. The interactions between the women participants and me established a shared understanding of their world and their experiences (Guba, et al, 1994; Oakley, 1981), which are often not recognised as issues that need addressing in the higher education context. Therefore, the interview process challenged women to see that they had a role in addressing gender equity issues in the university. This was another form of reciprocity in this feminist research.

Lastly, semi-structured interviews allowed me to probe for specific elaboration and clarification of the responses to the interview questions (Best et al, 2006; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al, 2007). Patton's (1990) open-ended question typology was adopted for the interviews: experience/behaviour questions, opinion/value questions, feeling questions, sensory and background/demographic questions. Overall, the semi-structured interview was best suited to give the PNG women academics a space to share their experiences of leadership within their social context (Burns, 2000).

Limitations of semi-structured interviews

Clearly, there are many benefits offered by the semi-structured interview in feminist research (Cohen et al, 2007; Best et al, 2006; Kelly et al, 1994; Kvale, 2007; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992). However, I am also mindful of a number of limitations of this interview method, which I now address.

Firstly, while the interview process maximizes flexibility and adaptability (Best et al, 2006) it also has a tendency to use probes and prompts to purposely ask questions to support a particular viewpoint and can steer questioning, this can weaken the validity of the given information. Best and Kahn (2006), Burns (2000) and Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2007) caution that if this kind of probing is misused it can lead to incomplete or inaccurate responses. Patton (2002) agrees

that every researcher has his or her preconceived notions about the topic of inquiry. Nonetheless, it is how we ensure that those views do not influence the research interview process that protects the research against researcher bias.

Secondly, the non-hierarchical relationship between the participants and the researcher (Maynard, 1994; Oakley, 1981) can grow transcend into ‘friendship’ which may affect the interview process. This is because Melanesians value relationships, and therefore, once ‘friendship’ is built through the interactive-relation approach in the interview, it is likely that the participants might want to respond to the interview questions in a particular way that pleases the researcher. In doing so, the information provided can be compromised and might not serve the actual purpose of the interview or the aim of the research. As Dickson-Swift, Kippen and Liamputthong (2007) confirm, on occasion the line between being a researcher but also a friend may be blurred, which ultimately impacts the research process. Being of the culture, I was aware and mindful of such possibilities, and I was careful to find middle ground among the complex relationships during the interviews. For instance, I would move to another question when I felt that there was ample information on a particular topic, especially on the questions which I had earlier shared my experience on.

The third limitation relates to the complex combination of my roles as a post-graduate student, a young female researcher and an outsider to the research site. The information I was retrieving could be sensitive and hence participants may have felt uncomfortable about disclosing such information, especially because they were all older than I was. Because of this, establishing a rapport based on a non-hierarchical and non-exploitative relationship (Fontana et al, 2005) was fundamental to obtaining quality data. Also, to address these limitations, I considered in advance PNG customary protocols of showing respect to older persons.

Focus groups interviews

When designing this research I had planned to use focus groups to provide a forum for the women who formally held leadership positions and aspiring women

leaders to share, discuss and critique together. In this way, it would potentially facilitate a collective voice for the women as a group. Furthermore, in this instance, the women holding leadership positions and aspiring women leaders would intentionally be encouraged to identify issues and similar experiences that had either advanced them in their careers or were impediments.

Focus groups were selected because they facilitated discussion and were exploratory in nature to provide understanding of perceptions, feelings, attitudes and opinions about a specific topic (Barbour, 2007; Madriz, 2003). They also relied on generating and analyzing interactions between participants (Barbour, 2007; Fontana et al, 2005). Thus, I decided to use them to collect information because they suited the aspect of this project which was exploring women's views and perceptions about leadership. This research approach is also characterized by 'non-hierarchical interaction' and a 'horizontal relationship' between researcher and participants (Reinharz, 1992), making focus group interviews a potentially useful tool to generate data through the interactions with other participants (Wilkinson, 1999). Focus groups aimed to reduce the researcher's power and enable the participants to assert their own agendas and points of views (Madriz, 2003), resulting in better access to participants' opinions and worldviews (Barbour, 2007; Cohen et al, 2007; Kitzinger, 1994).

Focus group interviews are useful not only for the importance of the content generated in the discussion but also for the way it is expressed (Morgan, 1988). To a greater extent than individual interviews, focus groups "afford researchers access to the kinds of social interactional dynamics that produce particular memories, positions, ideologies, practices, and desires among specific groups of people" (Kamberelis et al, 2005, p. 904). The focus group interview requires facilitation by the researcher to enable participants to discuss, converse together, ask questions of each other, and comment on each other's experiences and varying points of view (Barbour, 2007; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, 1988). Through the sharing and comparing of experiences it is intended that participants have the opportunity "to piece together the fragmented experiences of group members [so that they] may come to view events in their own lives in a new light in the course of such discussions" (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, pp. 18-19).

Furthermore, focus groups have the potential to reflect and monitor change “for the focus group process itself to initiate changes in participants thinking or understanding, merely through exposure to the interactive process” (Kitzinger, 1999, p. 118). Lastly, the focus group can be seen as a potential tool for triangulation to complement the semi-structured interview responses, and enhance the trustworthiness of the information obtained (Patton, 2002), and to further explore issues raised in either data collection methods for the reliability of the information collected. For this research I adopted Krueger’s (1998) focus group questioning routine: opening question, transition question, key question, ending question and putting the parts together. While the group interview is potentially a very useful tool in qualitative feminist research, the method has limitations that need addressing.

Limitations of focus group interviews

Focus group interviews present some challenges. Firstly, Krueger (1994) observed that the control of interactions by the participants can result in unnecessary discussions or raising of irrelevant issues and the researcher needs to carefully moderate the discussion by refocusing it when necessary (Barbour, 2007; Morgan, 1988). However, this leads to a second problem, in that when the researcher takes a direct and controlling stance the participants may feel isolated (Fontana et al, 2005) and their autonomy in sharing valid information will be constrained. Thirdly, the transcription of focus group discussions can be a very difficult exercise because the tangle of voices produced by a group conversation means that the researcher might be unable to tell some of the participants apart during the transcription process (Tilley, 2003), and this can cause confusion in identifying who provides individual pieces of information. Additionally, the large volume of data produced by group interviews can be time-consuming to transcribe and analyse (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

It is also important to note that the results of group interviews cannot be generalised because there is a tendency for a group to be dominated by one or two persons (Fontana et al, 2005), and the data can lack overall reliability. Likewise, Morgan (1988) cautions that group dynamics may lead to non-participation by

some members and dominance by others. For example, having a group combination of aspiring women leaders and those in formal leadership positions may create a difference of opinion which can result in disagreements and even conflict. Finally, a study in Vanuatu that involved focus group interviews found “organising a suitable time for all participants to meet was problematic for everyone” (Warsal, 2009, p. 27), especially in the case where participants are employed. In relation to this research, I encountered this problem because of the social and the cultural context of PNG, where activities are not time-bound, and so women did not always turn up for the focus group interview. Besides this, there were other factors which contributed to the women’s non-participation in the focus groups, and I decided not to utilize this interview method as originally intended in the research design. I elaborate on this in the last part of this chapter. In the next section, I present an account of the overall research process involving the research site, the participants and the various stages of the research process.

The research process

In this section, I present an overview of this research project that began in New Zealand which involved, firstly designing the theoretical and conceptual research framework in the initial part of the research process. The next part of the process involved collecting data in PNG and lastly collating all the information to present the research results as part of the degree course in New Zealand. The length of this research project was 12 months. It began with identifying an underlying issue in Papua New Guinea for the research and then I developed the research questions to address the issue of ‘women educational leaders’ under-representation in PNG higher education’. The overall research process had three phases. Phase One involved preparation for the research project. Phase Two was the information-gathering process and Phase Three involved analysis and presentation of the information.

Phase One: Preparing for research and ethical procedures

This phase was the research preparation stage and focused on the ethical procedures. Ethical consent was required at a number of levels. Firstly, from the

University of Waikato to allow me to proceed with the research, and secondly from the chosen research site in order to gain access to the institution and the potential participants. I now provide information on how I approached both of these aspects.

Preparation for research and ethics application

The first part of this phase involved writing a research proposal which included designing the theoretical and conceptual framework for the research that I would use to undertake this project. The proposal included a timeline of activities of all major aspects of the research activities, for example, when I would travel to PNG to collect data. The research proposal and an application for ethical consideration were then submitted to the University of Waikato School of Education Ethics Committee. This application was a requirement of the research component of this degree in accordance with the code of ethics in the University of Waikato. The next important aspect was planning for home-based research by providing a timeline of activities (Appendix 7) for the period of three months' research in PNG. The timeline plan contained the dates of the following activities: my arrival in PNG, access to the research site, locating potential participants and individual information-sharing sessions, interview dates, and transcribing of the interviews.

Ethical procedures

Once the School of Education Ethics Committee had approved the ethical application, I liaised with the International Office for travelling arrangements to PNG. Following the timeline plan of activities, upon my arrival in PNG I visited the university administration team where the research was to take place to make an appointment to finalize the processes for accessing the institution. The appointment meeting involved presenting a letter (Appendix 1) seeking permission to have access to the research site.

It was part of their institutional ethical procedures that researchers from other organisations or external educational bodies wishing to conduct research in the university should submit a research proposal and an ethical application to ensure that the research project was within the ethical parameters of their institution. Therefore, I also submitted an ethical application I had prepared prior to departure

from New Zealand. The Academic and Student Vice-Chancellor approved the final details. After the institutional ethical protocols had been approved, I began locating my prospective participants in the institution.

Selection of the participants

As this research set out to study the experiences of women leaders and aspiring leaders, and their beliefs about and perceptions of educational leadership in Papua New Guinea higher education, I firstly had to identify who these women were in each of the five Schools at the university. The five schools were Natural and Physical Science, Medicine and Health Science, Humanities and Social Science, Law, and Business Administration. This involved visiting each of the schools' administration offices and enquiring verbally for information of women in formal leadership positions and those in junior academic positions within the respective schools. From this list I identified potential participants from all five Schools. In order not to "generalize to a population, but develop an in-depth exploration" (Creswell, 2003, p. 192), I adopted purposeful sampling for the selection of the participants (Patton, 1990). Maykut and Morehouse (2001) believe that it increases the likelihood of common variability in the information. Meanwhile Pashkin (2001) has pointed out "research success builds on how effectively we can conceive, perceive, and represent what we have sampled, as we become more informed about our research destination, we make our sampling more refined and precise" (p. 240). This strategy fitted "the purpose of the study... and the questions being asked" (Patton, 1990, p. 183) by targeting the appropriate sampling population of the two groups of women: women in formal leadership positions and aspiring women leaders.

The selection of the participants was based on the following criteria: (a) women currently in formal leadership positions (senior academics such as dean, strand leader, head of department, senior lecturer); (b) women academics in non-formal leadership positions (lecturers & tutors); (c) women with an employment history of 2-5 or more years of working at the institution. The initial sample size for my research study was ten women participants in one semi-structured interview and one focus group interview respectively. However, the sampling population increased to a total of thirteen in the latter part of the data collection process. This

was due to the fact that focus groups were unsuccessful as a data collection method in this context. I elaborate on this in the last part of this chapter.

Informed consent process

Once ten women were identified, the next task was to contact them. I did this in person by visiting the women in their respective offices. The choice was made to contact them face to face because in Melanesian culture more value is placed on this type of communication than on a formal letter. This way of communication is valued because personal contact shows respect for the person you wish to see. I was also aware that because they had not met me before they may be hesitant to respond to a formal letter. Therefore, sending a formal letter prior to my arrival in PNG was not an option in my society because the potential participants needed to know me as a person before either agreeing or disagreeing to participate. McNae and Strachan (in press) have shared similar sentiments when referring to their research experiences in Vanuatu. They stated that when researching in other cultural contexts:

...less traditional ways of contacting people may be used which may not necessarily be aligned with traditional Western ethical considerations... messages may need to be sent via other people or [researchers consider] directly visiting participants in their homes or workplaces (the face to face approach). (p. 8)

This requires researchers to be flexible and to be able to accommodate the cultural protocols of the research context. The women were willing to spend time listening to the purpose of my visit after I had briefly introduced myself. I also presented the formal invitation letter (Appendix 2). This was part of the initial information-sharing sessions with the potential participants. I outlined the purpose of my investigations and what would be required of them if they chose to participate in the project. I explained that they would be involved in one semi-structured (Appendix 5) and one focus group interview (Appendix 6), and told them that the focus group interviews would comprise of five participants from the respective Schools of the institution. I also explained some of the ethical considerations and what their rights were if they volunteered to participate. In particular I emphasized

the importance of maintaining confidentiality for the group and individual interviews and explained how the information would be presented, including the use of pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

At these sessions I also gave the women copies of the information sheet (Appendix 3) reiterating the verbal information so they would be familiar with the research procedure, the research topic, its purpose and the objectives, and also outlining what were their rights if they chose to participate. Some of the women asked questions about the research and why I had selected them to participate in the research, and so I responded accordingly. The women were told that an informed consent form (Appendix 4) was attached to the information sheet, and that I could check on them later if they wished to think about it. Interestingly, all the women responded that it was important to push for gender equity issues in higher education, and they were therefore willing to share their experiences. While some consented formally to their participation during this session, others verbally agreed to participate and later signed the consent form before the interview. It was during the information-sharing sessions that we negotiated suitable times and locations to conduct the interviews. Notably, when I found out later during the interview process that more than half of the women declined to participate in focus group interviews (a significant finding), I referred to my list of potential participants to conduct more individual interviews, and also investigated the reasons why focus groups were not desirable. Three more women were then involved in the interviews. At the end, a total of thirteen women were interviewed. The next section addresses the information gathering process.

Phase Two: Gathering information

This section provides a descriptive account on the interview and the data transcription process, and outlines the methods I undertook to establish the credibility of the process.

The interview process

The interviews were conducted in an informal manner. Participants were given opportunity to take an active role in the interview process, and were shown that

their participation in the research project was of value as it was important for women's voices in PNG higher institutions to be heard. The interviews were generally conducted at the institution, and only one woman was interviewed outside the working environment at her request. Most interviews were conducted in the women's offices and a small number were conducted within the institution (e.g. conference room). All interviews took approximately one hour and thirty minutes, and were conducted face to face in English. During the interviews, some women emphasized certain responses in pidgin (the lingua franca of PNG). All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the women. In addition, interview notes were taken to capture body language that reinforced their verbal statement, reaffirming what Burns (2000) had stated that actions and facial expressions, from body movements to body positions, strongly reinforce words that are verbally used, and so add another dynamic to the interview process. Furthermore, probes were used for clarity, elaborations and more specific information (Best et al, 2006; Kvale, 2007).

In order to establish a friendly tone to emphasise the non-hierarchical approach prior to the interview, the participants and I chatted informally about the processes of acquiring NZAID (New Zealand Development Scholarships) by using my experience as an NZAID scholar and giving the participants a copy of the application form (2010). I then used 'ice breaker' questions which were generally introductory questions that eventually led to specific questions (Fontana et al, 2005): for example, how long had they worked there, what were their roles and responsibilities, and what were some of the most rewarding experiences in their professions as academics? (Appendix 5). Such questions also allowed me to check the authenticity of the participants' statements and if necessary modify certain questions when I felt the need to suit the respective participants. Most importantly, taking such an approach emphasised the conversational and informal nature of the interview.

Building rapport was an essential aspect of the interview process because it was the first stage of establishing the trust which would allow the women to be open and comfortable in sharing personal information (Christensen et al, 2000; Lincoln et al, 1985). To emphasise the non-hierarchical relationship with the participants,

in some instances I briefly shared some of my personal experiences during the interview, when I felt the need to show that I empathized with those women because I understood and had felt what some of their experiences had been like (Oakley, 1989). This approach enabled the women to disclose sensitive information that may not be included in everyday conversations. For example, one woman participant whispered when sharing information on how she was harassed by a colleague.

The women did not participate in the planned focus group interviews. Six of the women declined due to personal reasons but they volunteered to be involved in the individual interviews. The other four women did not decline; however, they did not turn up when the time came for the session to be held. Only one woman turned up and therefore the focus group session did not eventuate. After the women had not turned up for the session, I attempted to arrange another time that suited all the members of the focus group. At that point the women responded that they were unable to participate. Later during the individual interviews two of the women stated their reasons for not participating in a focus group. One of the reasons stated was because certain issues that related to their experiences were sensitive to discuss in a group, especially when issues were connected with respective individuals who also were part of the focus groups. I elaborate on this in the last part of this chapter.

Data transcription

The first stage of my data transcription process involved listening to the audio interviews twice, as recommended by Dickson-Swift, Kippen and Liamputthong (2007), to become more familiar with the information. All interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of two women who had used short phrases in pidgin to emphasise certain responses and these were translated in English. I later posted the transcriptions by mail to the respective participants to check that I had created an accurate record of the interview, but only two participants responded.

Listening to the powerful narratives of the women was a very moving experience for me as an insider who to some degree had similar experiences. It felt as though

I was there reliving the moments with those women during the transcription process because by this stage I was immersed in the narratives (data). My experience confirms the findings of Dickson-Swift, Kippen and Liamputhong (2007) on the research experiences of qualitative researchers on sensitive topics, where the researchers described becoming quite emotionally involved at the time of the data collection and the transcription process. In addition the transcription process challenged my own thinking. I started reflecting on how to represent the voices of the women in my role as a woman researcher who was advocating for positive change in my society. This reflection enabled me to identify some similar patterns of experiences from the thirteen women during the transcription process. Lapadat and Linsay (1999) have noted:

It is not just the transcription product - those verbatim words written down - that is important; it is the process that is valuable. Analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing...Transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data...Transcription as a theory-laden component of qualitative analysis warrants closer examination. (p. 82)

In other words, the transcription process goes beyond typical concerns for accurate displaying of text heard on the digital recorder or for standardized punctuation conventions (full stops, pauses etc). The transcription process is closely linked to the analysis of the data, as one considers what information to use and how to use it. I will address this in the next section.

Phase Three: Analysis and presentation of information

Finally, I present the data analysis strategy which was employed to analyse the information and also give a brief summary of how I used the strategy. This phase also focused on writing up and presenting the findings and discussions.

Data analysis

It is believed by Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2007) that the process of interpreting qualitative data depends on what the researcher wants the data analysis to do. Its purpose will determine the sort of analysis strategy undertaken (Biber et al, 2006). As this research project was exploring the experiences of women leaders in PNG higher education, thematic analysis (O' Leary, 2004; Patton, 1990) was utilized in generating and exploring relevant themes from the raw data, to ensure that women's experiences would be presented in their own words. More significantly, the thematic analysis strategy facilitated identifying and analyzing the number of women with common and different experiences in order to make a sound judgment of the women's voices in the information. I adopted Creswell's (2003) procedures in thematic analysis, such as code texting data, developing a description from the data, defining themes from the data, and connecting and interrelating themes.

After familiarizing myself with the data by going through it several times, I started organizing the responses. Firstly, I organised the data using code segments to cluster similar data from each of the interviews, by using different colour highlighters of the transcripts. These were then collated onto a master document. This process was done with the aid of the hard copies of the data because it was easier to read and flip through the pages. These were then later referred to in the Word document to highlight like information. This was done to all the information from the respective thirteen participants. Secondly, after colour coding the data, I copied and pasted the codes into major themes that were aligned with the literature review themes in Chapter Two and the research questions. It is important to note that while I classified the codes under major themes, the names of the women were placed at the top of the transcription of what each had said on that theme. This was helpful when I underlined quotes that I would later use in Chapter Four to identify which participant had given that particular information. Thirdly, the major themes were then synthesized and further classified into specific themes of the findings.

The next section examines the significant findings through my experience and that of the participants to highlight the challenges of transferring western research

protocols to a Melanesian context. This finding was beyond the scope of the study, however, it is worth mentioning to alert researchers to the complexity of conducting research in PNG.

Researching in the Melanesian context

As a young Melanesian woman researcher, I had assumed that adhering to the research methods and protocols that were approved by the University of Waikato School of Education Ethics Committee would ensure my research was successful in all the research process. However, I was to discover that this was not the case. In this section, I recount the challenges of researching within the Melanesian context when transferring western ethics to PNG. First, I provide an overview of how Melanesians place value on social interactions which can impact the western values and principles in research. Second, I examine how the focus group interviews did not work as an intended data collection method for this research. Lastly, I describe the dilemma I encountered in trying to balance western ethical principles and Melanesian values.

I do not claim myself an expert in this area of researching, but it is hoped that viewing the nature of research in Melanesia through my experience as the researcher (of the culture) and the participants in this research will alert other feminist researchers about some of the limitations that may hinder research in Melanesia. The findings are to help guide their research design framework, whether that research is within the culture or cross-cultural.

A reflection on Melanesian social interactions

Researching within my socio-cultural context has prompted me to reflect on the research processes and the ethical issues from a Melanesian perspective. It has encouraged me to think how structured and tightly bound are the research processes and ethical considerations situated in a diverse socio-cultural context such as PNG, which is not a western context. This is because Melanesians have their own way of doing things. For example, if participating in a research project is significant to them they will either openly talk about what they have shared in

the interviews or tell others of their involvement in the project, or even mention names of others who also participated in the project if participation is conducted in groups. It is part of being a Melanesian that everything you do is shared based on the Melanesian communal values, in this case even without the intention of harming any person.

In small communities where everybody knows everyone, people are more or less living in each other's lives, and so most of the things you do are noticed. The 'Melanesian way' can forfeit the purpose of western ethical principles, which uphold confidentiality and anonymity to ensure that participants are neither identified nor harmed. The contrast between western principles and the 'Melanesian way' reinforces the important point that one way of doing things is not everybody's way of doing things. So the question is what was the lived reality of the research processes from the perspectives of the researcher and the participants? And how suitable were the formal academic ethical considerations in a Melanesian context? In the next section, I draw on my experience of researching in PNG as a Melanesian and extrapolate the experiences of the participants in their involvement in certain aspects of the research process.

The reality of research processes within a Melanesian context

The data collection methods initially chosen for this research were individual and group interviews. All the women were involved in individual interviews; however, six declined to participate in the focus group. Nevertheless, one focus group meeting was organised for a few participants, to be held at the research site. Unfortunately, only one participant, who had assisted in organizing a room for the session, was available. So I visited each participant and asked if she was still willing to participate at another time that suited everyone. However, they said that they were unable to be involved in the focus group because they were very busy. This was also the experience of Warsal (2009), who used focus group interviews in her work with women leaders in Vanuatu secondary schools. In that study, the focus groups were difficult to organise and eventually had to be conducted after hours, but participants found it an exhausting exercise at the end of their busy

days, and it is possible that this may have impacted their responses to the questions.

In the case of my research, it was only later during several of the individual interviews that other reasons for participants' unwillingness to take part in focus groups became apparent, and I realised there were underlying cultural and social issues that probably accounted for their non-participation. For one, women felt the research topic was sensitive and hence were concerned about how issues would emerge as a result of the group interviews. It is important to note that participants were all from the same research site, and this could possibly cause them harm. In contrast, the participants in Warsal's (2009) study were from different secondary schools in Vanuatu, so most of them would not know the micro-politics of the respective participants and the people involved beforehand. In my study, because every participant knew the others one way or another they were all aware of the micro-politics of their schools and of the university as a whole, for example, issues that involved gender inequities within the institution. To know and to be able to identify discriminatory individuals and systems within the university was not a good option for the women. Hence some declined to participate and others initially consented to their participation but then changed their minds. This finding demonstrated that even though women were keen to participate, as was evident during the information-sharing sessions, at the same time they ensured that their participation was restricted to individual interviews so that they would not bring harm to themselves. To some extent in PNG higher education institutions, the democratic voice of women is compromised because if they are to survive working as academics within the institutions, they must *serve* in silence.

On reflection I realised that there was another, more important reason why these women were uneasy about taking part in group interviews. In PNG a fundamental societal value is the concept of kinship (Tivinarlik et al, 2006). Loyalty is one of the key principles as it has the function of binding everyone together. In relation to my research, the women were able to openly share their experiences during individual interviews. However, participating in a group interview with other women posed a dilemma because their narrative could possibly show disloyalty to certain individuals within the organisation.

My experience demonstrates that the kinship system, which is closely related to the wantok system (Tivinarlik et al, 2006) is prominent in PNG higher education institutions. Kinship means being loyal, which includes not saying anything against another wantok or another sister in front of other people. In this case being a wantok or a sister does not necessarily mean that you are related by blood, but because you have either formed a trustworthy friendship as work colleagues or come from the same province, that defines you as a sister or a wantok. Thus, in a Melanesian context, any form of disloyalty such as unwittingly sharing sensitive information involving another wantok, although with good intentions for the purpose of the research, could harm the working relationships or job promotions. More importantly, it could harm the wantok relationship.

This became even more apparent while listening to the women's narratives during individual interviews. Tilley and Gormley (2007), who discuss the cultural complications in translating ethical research principles into practice in cross-cultural research, argue "without applying sensitivity to the ways in which research intersects with cultural norms, participants may be placed at risk when research designs and data collection procedures are inappropriate for the specific research context" (p. 373). Therefore, in this instance, the focus group interview was not appropriate because of the potential risk to the participants if they got involved. With Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, McNae and Strachan (in press) highlight the need for flexibility and to accommodate the "different processes and priorities and the rituals of Vanuatu life" (p. 10) in order to ensure that the research is a socially just process in a Melanesian context.

My experience has demonstrated that research conducted in the Melanesian context must be conducted through Melanesian research views. This is because culture impacts people's everyday life and so the researcher needs to consider carefully cultural protocols and Melanesian world views when choosing what data collection methods are suitable for sensitive research topics that challenge the male domain. As McNae and Strachan (in press) say "researchers must be cognisant of the current issues related to research across, within and alongside cultures other than their own" (p. 10) as they consider their research design and approaches.

A dilemma balancing two world views in a Melanesian context

As a young researcher and being of the culture, I was aware of the social and cultural implications that I had to adhere to. I had to show respect to the participants whose social standing was based on research backgrounds, their status in the institution, and their age (older than I). In an example, already mentioned, a participant preferred to be interviewed in the tea room which I knew would compromise confidentiality and anonymity but could not voice my concerns since I had to respect her decision.

This finding illustrated and confirmed Vaioleti's (2006) research on Pacific research protocols. Written specifically from a Tongan perspective, it reiterates the need for Pacific researchers to observe the Pacific values of respect, humility and consideration of culture and context. In addition, the social standing of participants must be taken into account so that the researcher relates and behaves appropriately according to the particular socio-cultural context. Referring to an earlier example, the participant who wanted to be interviewed in the tea room was a challenging experience because I was confronted with the dilemma of trying to balance the ethical principles of University of Waikato and those that operate within my culture. Accommodating the two different world views, the western and the Melanesian views was at times a challenging task.

Similar sentiments are shared by Vallance (2008) who explores the Melanesian research ethics with particular reference to research conducted in PNG: "Melanesian research cannot be neutral since it is informed and involved in Melanesian values and world-views" (p. 8). It demonstrated that researching in PNG is complex due to the diverse socio-cultural context. Therefore, it is imperative to consider what research methods and ethical protocols are congruent and will complement the cultural practices and values, and be appropriate and suitable for sensitive research topics in Melanesia. Otherwise, culture can complicate the pursuit of respectful research, and the western methodologies can complicate respectful research if the culture of the society is not carefully considered. Therefore, McNae and Strachan (in press) have highlighted:

Research design and approaches are dependent on the research context and the people involved in the process and will be different from context to context...it is therefore essential to ask questions that will help frame the research into culturally appropriate methodology. (p. 10)

Finding a balance between a western perspective, with its emphasis on the individual's rights and empowerment, and my own cultural protocols was a challenging experience. But at the same time, it was an illuminating and empowering journey to be able to identify and reflect on the research processes and ethical protocols within my social context. As I discovered, researching in an indigenous context occurs inside the cultural world-view and discursive practices within which the participants function, make sense of their lives and understand their experiences (Tivinarlik et al, 2006; Vaioleti, 2006; Vallance, 2008) and therefore their expectations of research and what it entails would be different to participants familiar with the western perspective. Although I embarked on my research with the benefit of cultural knowledge and familiarity with the norms of my social context, nonetheless, I still experienced challenges with the research process. This demonstrates that there is a need for more research on the research processes in the Melanesian context to enhance future research projects. This also shows how the social context of the research inevitably influences which research methods can work and which will not work for sensitive research topics in the Melanesian contexts. In other words, what works in a western context does not always work in other socio-cultural contexts.

Summary

This was qualitative feminist research which was embodied within an interpretative paradigm. This approach was employed because the research was for and about women (Maynard, 1994; Morrison, 2002 Ramazanoglu et al, 2002), in its examination of the under representation of women in PNG high education. The research involved semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. Additionally, validity and the trustworthiness of the knowledge claims were addressed, including the importance of reflexivity for this research process. The ethical considerations including informed consent, maintaining anonymity and

confidentiality have been highlighted to ensure that this research did not harm the participants, and that the social and the cultural aspects specific to PNG culture were considered. An account of the research process that was undertaken has been outlined, including the ethical procedures, selection of the participants, the informed consent process, the interview process, data transcription and analysis to establish the credibility of this research.

The final part of this chapter addressed a key finding which is outside the scope of my research focus and was based on my own experience as a researcher who tried to transfer the western research principles to PNG, and found that this posed a number of challenges to the research process. It illustrated that research design and approaches require serious consideration when conducting research in diverse socio - cultural contexts such as PNG. The next chapter presents the findings of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter illustrates the findings from the research that was conducted. The key aim of this research was to investigate the experiences of women who held formal leadership positions or were aspiring women leaders in Papua New Guinea Higher Education. Their experiences were explored through these three main research questions:

- What are the leadership experiences of women in higher institutions in PNG?
- What beliefs and perceptions do these women hold towards leadership, and what had influenced these?
- What influences women's access to leadership roles within Higher Education in PNG in their career advancement within the formal leadership structure?

Information was gathered through semi - structured interviews. The significant themes were able to be identified after analyzing the transcripts through the process of thematic analysis. The recurring themes related to women's experiences of educational leadership were, firstly, the impact of the socio-cultural context of PNG regarding the women's family influence, women's place in society, the differences in the gender attributes and the influence of big man leadership. Informal leadership opportunities outside of higher context were also key themes. Secondly, the impact of the socio-cultural context on the beliefs and perceptions held by the women towards leadership was a significant theme also. The formal leadership opportunities are explored within the higher education organisational systems and the organisational ethos, the appointment process, gatekeeping, and women's attitude towards each other, lack of mentoring, discrimination, balancing family and work, and women's lack of confidence to show leadership are addressed.

I will provide a brief overview of the women participants who have been given pseudonyms and I present the findings which are organized into the following manner. First, I explore the significant influence of the socio-cultural context of PNG on the women's aspirations for leadership roles and how it had also impacted their leadership practices within the higher education context. Second, I share the women's beliefs and perceptions about leadership and illustrate what influenced these beliefs. Third, I specifically focus on the experiences of the women in formal leadership positions and the aspiring women leaders, and examine what has influenced their access to leadership roles in higher education. Fourth, the leadership approaches the women mostly associate with is examined. I will conclude this chapter with the summary of the key findings.

The women of the study

This study involved thirteen women from different parts of Papua New Guinea in one higher education institution. Two of the women, Ade and Vavi were from matrilineal societies, where family inheritance is passed down to daughters. The other eleven women: Jolly, Monica, Rigo, Geno, Samantha, Taksy, Tessy, Jill, Daisy, Silo and Betty were from patrilineal backgrounds. In their societies, family inheritance is passed down to sons. All thirteen women came from various disciplines/strands within the five different schools of the institution. The five schools were: Natural and Physical Science, Medicine and Health Science, Humanities and Social Science, Law and Business Administration.

The group of the women in this study could be categorized into two groups, current educational leaders and aspiring educational leaders. Five of the women held formal leadership positions. Jolly and Vavi were both chairpersons of their divisions, which they were the head of several disciplines within their division. Monica, a strand leader, supervised the other lecturers, including senior lecturers and also coordinates professional activities at strand level and liaises with other strand leaders within the discipline. Ade and Tessy were both senior lecturers. Two women held PhDs, and another two women have Masters Degrees and one had a Bachelors Degree.

Aspiring women leaders who were lecturers and did not hold formal leadership positions were Silo, Betty, Rigo, Taksy, Daisy and Geno. Samantha and Jill were tutors and also did not hold formal leadership positions. It is important to note that most of these aspiring women leaders although not formally holding a leadership position within this institution, had shown leadership, and conducted consultation work, attended workshops, conferences and been involved in research projects outside of their academic teaching responsibilities. For example, in Daisy's case she had also been acting head of discipline on occasion. All the aspiring women leaders held a Masters Degree except for two women where one had a Degree and was currently doing postgraduate studies. Another one had a Diploma and was studying part-time for her Degree. Both are studying at the institution where this research took place. The remaining eleven women had attained their Masters and PhD qualifications overseas. Qualifications attained were within their area of teaching expertise and there were no qualification or postgraduate study in educational leadership, with the exception of Jolly who held a Masters in Educational Administration.

The careers of thirteen women selected for this study covered a range of experience in working in education. They were in early, middle and later stages of their careers. Their teaching experiences within higher education are from 2-30 years. Only one woman had been there for 2 years but the rest have been there for over 5 years. The women's age ranged from late 20s to late 50s. The majority of the women have children apart from Geno who was still single. Two participants had both lost their husbands a few years ago while another three were single parents. Most of these women had grown up children while a small number had children who were still at primary and secondary schools. Some of the women began their career in secondary school teaching while others started by working in government departments, non government (NGO) and private organisations and then later became academics. One exception was Tessy who started her career in the institution in which she is currently employed. For some of these women prior to becoming academics, the institution had requested specifically for their services as a result of restructuring which paved way for new courses in which some of the women specialised in and so their expertise was needed. Some had taken academic positions at the institution as a result of a merger between a training

college and the university as a continuation process of those programmes already in place.

The majority of the women had been raised by their parents in Christian homes which meant going to church regularly on either Sundays or Saturdays. Besides their professional lives, they were involved one way or another in traditional and cultural duties such as traditional marriage ceremonies or feasts and other obligations whenever the occasion called for one. In other words, cultural engagement was an important part of these women's lives. With an understanding of the backgrounds of the women involved in this research, in the next section I now illustrate the influence of the socio-cultural context on the women's experiences of leadership and how the society perceived women as leaders within their own context.

Influence of the Socio-cultural Context

The socio-cultural context played a significant role in influencing the leadership perceptions and practice in PNG. It also impacted how the women were viewed as leaders in the higher education context. This section highlights the socio-cultural context elements such as the impact of family, the women's place in the society, the differences in the gender attributes and the impact of 'big man' leadership on the women, and the informal leadership opportunities within the women's social context. These aspects demonstrate how power over women is still prominent in PNG society.

Family influence

The family was often cited by the women as an important foundation for learning about leadership which influenced their personal and professional contexts. Interestingly, a number of the women spoke of the male figures in their families as role models to their success in their career. Monica explained:

I started learning to be a leader starting from home...while growing up, my father had this expectation of me being able to do it... I remember as a

kid, my father will let me paddle on my own with a shopping list and money to the other side of the island to buy items from the canteen... my father trusted me. My father inspired me a lot while growing up.

Similarly, Rigo shared on her upbringing in the family:

Even though my father was an old person and just a subsistence farmer, he believed in education. He gave his time to our education... I was the second last in my family (a family of over 5 siblings) so I always looked upon my brothers.

These findings illustrated that male family members had a positive influence as role models on the importance of a career in the women's childhood. However, on one hand it demonstrated a measure of influence, control, authority and supremacy over women rather than sharing power because male figures were more influential than the women in the family (mothers and sisters). Jolly shared her experience:

My father was the church counsellor all his life until he passed away. My mother was a leader (church) in our village. They were really dedicated Christians. In fact they were my role models because they were leaders in their own right. Leaders in their religious Christian life, leaders in their cultural family lives.

Family upbringing was a powerful influence in shaping many of the women's views about what constitutes leadership. However, what is interesting is that most women drew on their fathers as examples of leaders rather than their mothers, and only a few of the women referred to their mothers as an example of a leader. Viewing their fathers as role models may be a reflection of the patrilineal social context as it was those from patrilineal lineage who mentioned these examples. The findings also illustrated the importance of observing leadership in a number of contexts such as home and the church; however, within each of the settings, family members were a common theme. Seemingly much power and authority

was vested with the males and thus, they were the main influential figures in the family.

Women's place in society

Traditional principles of kinship predicated domestic life, so women's roles were prescribed accordingly as caregivers, child bearers and the role of preparing food during feast. Some women spoke of how such cultural ascribed roles of women had impacted on how they were viewed as leaders in the institution. Silo discussed how it was difficult for women to show leadership as it challenged historical roles within the community. She commented:

From the cultural perspective, looking back into our traditional ways men always being the leader. Men always being the provider and the fighter (tribal wars). So women are only to bear and cook...women's place is at the kitchen and at the garden, bearing and rearing children. That is our culture so men come to workplace with that mentality.

This finding illustrated how cultural stereotypes and attitudes towards women showing leadership had not changed much. It demonstrated that gender stereotyping of women also overshadowed recognizing women's merit based on qualification and experience. This was reflected by Betty when she commented:

Some of the Papua New Guineans (male) have this thing about women; women who may be qualified but they still think that you are a woman [so] your place is at home in the kitchen.

Furthermore, Geno shared she had sometimes received negative comments from male counterparts who also disagreed with her current appointment where she had a leadership position. She elaborated by highlighting the existence of such cultural mentality within the institution and stated:

Even though Papua New Guineans are educated but this mentality of seeing women as second class or less superior to male is very dominant, it's still very dominant even in higher academic institutions in PNG.

It appears that the place of the women in society, where they are viewed as subordinates through traditional roles was evident in this higher education institution. Therefore women congregated at the lower level of the higher education institution hierarchy. Most women acknowledged the impact of cultural perceptions of their place and roles in the society and were adamant that such perception needed to change in order to achieve gender equality in PNG, for women to progress in their careers. Silo explained: *“The world has changed and it is not like what it used to be in the traditional times so culture (perception of women) should be put aside and we should look forward to go with the changes.”* In addition, some women also voiced concern on how women's ascribed roles played out at earlier stages in family circles, especially in such situations when parents were left with limited choice on which of their children should attend school due to financial constraints. Jill explained:

We have families who are low income earners and because of the culture, priority goes to the male ...because they will remain in the clan so they need to be educated to carry on roles and responsibilities like taking care of their families and being engaged in traditional expectations, for example feasts...while girls will marry and have their husbands responsible for them.

This view illustrated another element of male figures in the family having power over the females, and therefore minimizes career opportunities for women beginning at an early age. It also showed that women's ascribed roles and place in the society were evident at many levels such as from home to workplaces. The women's narratives illustrated that stereotyped roles and responsibilities of the women in the society that caused unfavourable attitudes towards them had not changed much since traditional times as Vavi reaffirms: *“It is in our traditional ways that first priority is given to men and then followed by women.”* Compounding to such views is that the women felt they were subordinates due to

the fact that traditionally leadership was and has being entitled to male attributes, I next discuss this as one of the findings in the following section.

Gender attributes

Gender stereotyping was the main factor influencing the perception of leadership, specifically in relation to differences in leadership attributes. This may have being due to the dominance of the big man leadership theory that has always favoured men as leaders in PNG society. All women interviewed agreed there were gender differences in the ways that man and women led in the institution. They believed women were seen to demonstrate good people skills, were more caring, sympathetic, more understanding, and flexible, and used democratic processes in their leadership practice, whereas men were described as being strict, aggressive and authoritative. It was believed by the women that the differences in the way men and women lead was based on gender stereotyped roles as Vavi described *'it's our (women) make up'* as she elaborated:

Yumi save filim sore pastaim na displa kain, olsem pasin blong mama (as mothers it is part of our nature to be sympathetic).

Similarly, Jill believed that women showed more compassion when they practiced leadership. For her, leadership demonstrated by women was inclusive and commented: *"leadership I see in women, it is for everyone, and they have the heart for their children. So when they excel in leadership roles, their consideration is for everyone."* She also saw a difference between how women and men lead and described these differences, and stated:

Men as fathers...are the head of family, they have authority over the family in so many levels so that's how they are in working environment, it's just naturally in them. They think [because they have power over women in the home that] they can have authority over women even in professional circles.

Samantha described herself displaying ‘*motherly approach*’ unconsciously by justifying: “*it is what and who you are as a mother.*” She believed she displayed those characteristics naturally without thinking about them. She elaborated that students saw her approachable while her male colleague in his students’ evaluation of him was described: “*he’s arrogant, being too strict and always giving orders.*” One advantage was observed by the aspiring women leaders and the women in formal leadership positions about the feminine attributes of a leader. The advantage of having women leaders was that they understood the concerns and the social issues brought to them because as women, they identified with the needs of the other women academics. Ade, a senior lecturer stated:

We might be giving women more chances if they stay away or are late if their children are sick. We are more sympathetic because we understand these family responsibilities that the females have. So I think women tend to bring in and think about the implications of their decisions on social issues much more than males.

It would appear from this finding that women’s stereotyped roles at home had influenced their experiences of leadership being different to men. Some women commented that although they were in leadership positions, they saw themselves as outsiders because leadership was portrayed as a masculine image in the male dominated institution. Tessy a senior academic, shares her experience:

One of the challenges that women face once they are in leadership position is trying to break through into men’s club; somehow getting there. That’s the big thing! You have to be really determined, be aggressive to reach that point. I have not been aggressive and that pushy.

It is important to note that gender socialization from the socio-cultural elements of PNG society had somewhat caused the division of behaviour between men and women, and by predetermining which gender are naturally perceived as leaders. Therefore, distinctively creating leadership as ‘men’s club’ which meant women needed an aggressive nature to be welcomed and recognised as part of the club, although they were leaders in their own styles and approaches of leading. Such a

finding demonstrates the strong influence of the socio-cultural context of PNG, which ultimately plays a role and influence in the leadership development and practices of the women. It is such process that ultimately maintains the practice of big man leadership in PNG, which I next discuss.

Impact of big man leadership

PNG is largely a patriarchal society although a very small percentage is matrilineal. Historically, leadership in the patriarchal society has been grounded on 'big man' leadership theory because "one earned the position of big man through hard work, fighting ability, and personal wealth...successful in settling disputes...a major contributor and organizer of feasts and exchange transactions for marriages, funerals, and public ceremonies" (Tivinarlik et al, 2006, p. 15). Therefore, women felt that they were being viewed through the socio-cultural norms of 'big man' leadership. Jill described how the big man leadership notion was as a barrier for women to access leadership positions or show leadership:

Culture (big man leadership) is a big problem, a constraint to women trying to get up there; in higher positions or responsibilities in leadership roles. So in terms of work employment women hold less leadership positions than men.

Daisy also pinpointed the influence of big man leadership on women's opportunity for leadership and more specifically the attitude of men towards women and stated:

It's being a Melanesian man, not just men, but it's being a Melanesian man. They don't want to feel that they will be devalued in front of their wantoks (smaller groups within cultural groups who are closely related and whose loyalty to one another is greater) tribesman; they want to feel they are up there all the time. So no matter how educated they are, the mentality has not changed towards women.

In PNG, it is a common view that men are suitable for leadership positions rather than women. It was therefore uncommon for women to be granted roles of leadership in public spheres. The comment above illustrated the powerful influence of the patriarchal system of 'big man' leadership. Therefore, being led by women may have seemed degrading for men who would rather see themselves in positions of power and authority. Jolly, elaborated referring to a male colleague who opted to work in isolation when she was appointed the head of division : *"Because of who and what he is [from a PNG region where traditional big man leadership was still persistent], he worked in isolation."* Many of the women's comments illustrated that some men did not like working under women's leadership due to the strong patriarchal cultural background and therefore actively worked to be uncooperative and unproductive. Vavi felt, the way forward to counteract such behaviour and attitude centred on 'big man leadership' was through gaining educational qualifications. Higher qualifications were seen vital to legitimize and validate women as leaders, as Vavi stated:

That is why women need educational merit (qualifications) to also use to substantiate their leadership positions so they are not looked down on but instead be treated with respect they deserve.

Furthermore, in contrast to patrilineal culture of 'big man' leadership, Vavi spoke about the positive impact of her matrilineal culture on leadership aspirations. She believed this culture gave confidence to women. The women's leadership in the communities through having opportunities to show authority over land and resources gave them a level of status alongside men.

It helps the women to advance because they are immersed in the knowledge that they are bosses of the land which is their livelihood and importantly an asset. So that gives them a leadership status in some kind of way. It also gives them power over men, meaning not to feel inferior to them.

It would appear that women from matrilineal societies were more advantaged in terms of self confidence and self perception because inheritance was passed down

from women and it gave them the status of a leader in the society. It is imperative to note that the majority of PNG is patrilineal and such culture is more prevalent in higher education institutions, thus women from matrilineal societies may face similar challenges as women from patrilineal societies, outside of their own communities. Ade drew attention to the importance of integrity as way for women to withstand challenges to their leadership. She stated:

I suppose integrity is very important because they (men) shoot women down very quickly if there is something questionable; real or made up. And so we have to be careful with how we conduct ourselves.

Her comments demonstrated that due to surrounding factors on how women were viewed in PNG, and because leadership in PNG was more associated with men rather than women, therefore women were cautious and mindful of their leadership practices. This may have impacted the women by silencing their voices in order to avoid more resistance from men towards their leadership practices. The persistence of big man leadership paradigm as usual practice in society posed many challenges for the women leaders who entered into what was known to be men's domain in PNG. Ultimately, such limitations within the socio-cultural context of PNG society influenced women's access to leadership roles and their career advancements in higher education. On one hand, the socio-cultural context also provided opportunities for women to practice informal leadership roles, which I next highlight.

Informal leadership roles

Many of the women indicated that there were a number of informal situations where leadership opportunities were available for women. Most women spoke about how their informal leadership roles at home and in the church had also developed their leadership skills. Vavi uses the analogy of an umbrella to illustrate the importance of good relationships which she experienced in her leadership role at the church:

Everyone has their own little area (divisions – disciplines) to look after and then we are under one umbrella (school). You are a family in one umbrella with people around you. That is why...having good relationships with people around you, with other disciplines and strands is very important...Leadership roles in the church has moulded me to where I am.

This finding illustrated that the church played a role in developing and preparing some women to embark on leadership roles in the workplace. The leadership roles in the church enhanced their views on some of the leadership attributes that seemed significant as part of their leadership practice, such as relationship building and collaboration. Additionally, for most women, their leadership began at home through family responsibilities. As Monica referred to her leadership role in the family:

I am the fifth of a big family but I have cared for most of my siblings' children... So every time something happens, they ask me to speak on behalf of the family to take lead and gather everyone together. They look up on me as somebody whom they can trust to do the job. Even while growing up, my father had this expectation of me being able to it. So I believe I started learning to be a leader starting from home and then later using some of that knowledge and experience.

Family roles and responsibilities were avenues most women used to nurture their leadership skills and abilities before embarking on formal leadership roles in higher education. On one hand, some women were happy to carry on being leaders in their families but not in their workplaces. Silo said:

From my families' perspective, my own brothers and sisters look upon me whether they are older or younger; they look at me as a leader. So I feel I belong there than my workplace where I've already got a leader.

The women may have had opportunity to exercise leadership at homes because of their jobs as academics which seemed prestigious in the family, and therefore they were respected and regarded as leaders amongst the families. On one hand,

although these findings indicate that women had opportunity to exercise leadership at home, it is not clear whether the leadership roles at home had the same extensive influence like the male figures in the family. It is possible that although they may have practiced leadership at home or in the church, yet, the power vested in the leadership roles may have been minimal. This may be because fathers were still the head of the families. Nevertheless, the women believed leadership opportunities enhanced their leadership practices in the higher education context. In the next section I present the women's understanding of leadership: what their values and beliefs about leadership were, and who/what had impacted their views of leadership.

Values and beliefs of qualities of a good leader

A person's perception of leadership varies due to individual values and personal experiences in various environments. As it can be seen from the previous section, the socio-cultural context had significant influence on the women's perception of their opportunities for leadership. This also shaped the women's beliefs and perception towards leadership. For many of these women, their values were derived from their religious beliefs which ultimately influenced their perception of leadership. Monica illustrates how she valued honesty as an important part of leadership. This was a result of her Christian belief:

What I see of myself as a leader is that I am honest. To be honest I have my Lord with me all the time and I fear him most.

Similarly, draws on religion Vavi and refers to 'honesty' derived from Christianity applied to her leadership in the workplace. Some women spoke about how they had blended Christian values and cultural values as a result of their family upbringing as this had impacted on how they viewed and practiced their leadership. Jolly exemplified this in her comment:

It (values) goes right back to my family upbringing; my mother and father were very dedicated Christians...We had to share whatever little my parents had with our cousins. Whatever garden my father made, he made

it for his wife and his sisters. They looked upon him as someone (leader) in the family. My mother and father were the ones who were looking after all the children in our clan, they would cook and bring the food to the little shelter, and all the children would sit down and eat together. So I grew up in that environment so what we did then became my values.

This finding also illustrated that certain cultural practices such as working together and caring for each other by sharing resources, based on the kinship system may have instilled the value of collaboration and care but also it reinforced the traditional family structures and responsibilities. Within Melanesia, the kinship system is based on communal values systems that encourage living together where males are head of the family. Men have the leading role to organise as a clan for cultural activities such as feasts and other significant activities that encourage Melanesian values: reciprocity and building relationships, showing loyalty, and respect. It also means that everyone shares resources within the family and the extended family. The importance of these family values was also reinforced by Rigo who commented:

I think my values came from how I was brought up. I always believe in honesty, doing things in a honest manner and always being respectful...I believe in sharing.

Commitment was one of the common values held amongst women. Women had family responsibilities alongside their academic responsibilities and regarded commitment to achieving outcomes at work and in the home as essential. For example, in their roles as academics they were required to conduct research and be involved in community development projects, and manage leadership responsibilities besides teaching. Thus, commitment as one of the key values enabled women to achieve the outcomes of their responsibilities. As Daisy remarked:

It is tough being a female, being a mother and a wife having to carry on extra responsibility. But then again, commitment counts...

Role modeling was a common perception of leadership and many of the women drew on the different areas where they believed role modeling to be important. Some of the women valued being a good role model to other women staff was salient as leaders. To illustrate, Anne believed in setting *“a good example to others, particularly the females coming up the ladder.”* Furthermore, women also saw their roles essential by being role models to female students as well. Taksy voices *“...half of the students here are female so you are already some kind of role model, like you are a leader in a sense.”* In a broader sense, some women also saw the importance of their role modelling in other public spheres such as in their local communities. Jill stated: *“I want to set an example to the younger ones, so women from my village, my province can see and learn from my experience and advance.”* It would appear that many of the women may have seen that they had a part in trying to encourage and influence other women positively within their societies through their roles. These findings illustrated how the women’s perceptions about leadership were influenced by Christianity, cultural values and beliefs, and their family upbringing. These findings demonstrated the major influence of the social context on the leadership practices, which, in turn, impacted on how women exhibited their leadership roles and responsibilities. I now present findings on the leadership experiences of the women specifically within the higher education context.

The Context of the Higher Education

Many of the women had informal leadership opportunities at home and in the church, however, leadership opportunities were limited within the higher education context. Instead, the women encountered many challenges that hindered their opportunities of gaining formal leadership roles through the organisational ethos, the appointment process, and women’s attitude to each other, lack of mentoring, discrimination, balancing family and work, and lack of confidence.

The organisational ethos

The organisational structure and ethos had roles in either advancing women to leadership roles or disadvantaging them. Most often the majority of the women

had limited access to formal leadership roles as voiced in their narratives. Ade who had been employed within her organisation for 35 years drew on her historical knowledge of this area and pointed out what had begun the male domain culture within the organisation when she stated:

This goes back to the hierarchal structure of our society in the past. So what was practiced before is now seen in this university. Because I started in the 70s up until now, I honestly will tell you there hasn't been much improvement with having more women as leaders.

Interestingly, although many of the women participants in this study call for more women leaders, Ade felt that increasing the number of women leaders would have little influence on the hierarchal structure of her university. This would be because the powerful and contextual nature of 'big man' leadership was interwoven within the hierarchal structures which were introduced through religion and colonization in earlier times. This comment illustrated the existence of such structures and ideologies in higher education institutions which preserved men's position at the top of the hierarchy of the organisation while women congregated at the bottom. Consequently, women felt their voices continued to be silenced as they were never in a position to make decisions or play an active role in decision making process. Tessy gave a suggestion for improvement and proposed:

Unless the university has a plan not only for females but for young people they take on because you can't just come and teach, teach, teach...there's really no progression in your career unless you do it yourself. But the mechanism is not in place for progression.

This demonstrated that many women experienced the organisational constraints for career progression and although many women were interested in advancing their career through further studies, the career pathways within the organisation did not provide the opportunity to do so. It also illustrated that high teaching demands limited women's opportunities of pursuing leadership roles, and as a result there was lack of progression for the women. For example, Samantha who was nearing retiring age had previously not being given positive response for her

interest in upgrading her qualifications by a former male head of division. She described the pathway for career advancement as a *'bottleneck.'* She elaborated:

There is no career pathway for us to follow by the staff development unit...that is why I am doing [studies] self sponsored. I describe it as a bottleneck where you want to advance in your career but you come to a stage where somebody says it's not possible.

At the time of interview Samantha was upgrading her qualifications. She was working fulltime and was self sponsored to study. Such actions confirm and exemplify what Tessy meant earlier on by saying there was: *"no progression in your career unless you do it yourself."* Therefore, this impacted on the overall distribution of leadership positions between male and female within the institution because women were still under represented in formal leadership positions. Additionally, the masculine culture within the institution further disadvantaged the women. I now highlight how the male dominant culture played out in the appointment process.

The appointment process

In this section I present the findings of the women's experience of the appointment process. First, the findings revealed that most women were appointed based on qualification and experience. Also, the women's narratives further illustrated that the lack of transparency through the formal and informal appointment process was often a barrier in accessing formal leadership opportunities. Moreover, the lack of qualifications was a recurring theme for promotions when women referred to the appointment process. The narratives also indicated that gate-keeping was prominent within the higher education system.

Appointment based on qualification and experience

For aspiring women leaders in this study, most of them had no difficulties in the initial appointments which were not leadership positions. This was illustrated by Daisy who stated: *"It was easy for me to come through because I had already had my Masters and I met the qualifications and had the experience.* Similarly, Taksy

also shared her experience: *“It wasn’t really a long process for me because ...they (discipline appointment committee) were quite happy because I was the first national female appointment (referring to her field).* The comments illustrated that the appointment of the aspiring women were based on experience and qualification, and therefore had less difficulties in accessing a career in the higher education. However, if the appointments were just based on experience and qualification, then women who were qualified but had minimal experience of working had limited opportunities for a career in the higher education.

Notably, all the women in formal leadership positions were internally appointed to those leadership roles. Monica, who had been promoted to be a strand leader claimed: *“I never applied for this position... and the position was given based on experience and qualification”.* Nevertheless, none of the women had any formal leadership qualifications except for Jolly who was already qualified in her area of expertise and also had a Masters in Educational Administration.

The internal leadership position appointments were based on their seniority and experience. Yet, some of the women were hesitant to accept further responsibility within their job. For example, Vavi who had initially refused her appointment stated:

The division had a meeting and nominated me. I refused and they said ‘no, you are the only senior officer here so we’ll take you...I don’t like the job because of its nature; it deals with sensitive issues, students’ affairs....so I feel very uncomfortable with it.

This comment illustrated that even though some women had leadership opportunities, they felt reluctant to take up positions due to the pressure of the leadership responsibilities. Furthermore, few opposed being a token woman just to project an image that women were represented in leadership positions. Instead, the women felt that their appointments to leadership positions should be based on their merits as an individual. Like in the case of Vavi:

I always oppose the idea of people suggesting “we are going to nominate a woman” I don’t like that! I want to be nominated because of my merit that I can be a leader and they see quality in me...because of something in me that I can contribute to the organisation or running of that particular work. I will appreciate that! And not because I am just mere woman! No, I don’t like it!

However, if the women felt this way, this may still be a concern because this probably resulted in fewer women leading which is a problem, perhaps more women leading would create more supportive environment for the women, and ultimately more opportunities for leadership positions. The next section discusses the lack of transparency in the appointment process.

Lack of transparency in the appointment process

Some women spoke of the informal appointment process they had been involved and the issues created a restricted timeframe and the need for someone to fill positions quickly. Jill talked about how she had not gone for the interview but because the strand had urgently needed someone, she filled in the position without the formalities. She stated: *“in fact, they gave me the formal letter (job offer) while I was into my 6-7 th week of working.”* Rigo, at the time of her academic appointment had just completed her Masters overseas and was handpicked because she suited the new position as a result of organisational restructure. So she did not formally apply for the position and described that: *‘was one thing held against me by some of my colleagues.’* As a result, six months after her initial appointment when Rigo applied for a 3 years contract she had encountered many challenges by both male and female colleagues, leading to her final appointment. Such actions illustrated lack of transparency in the appointment process. This sometimes created problems with colleagues where they resisted future reappointments.

Length of service, as opposed to being best suited to the position at the institution was sometimes recognised, and on occasions made the appointment process easier. As Betty illustrated:

I guess, my advantage was that I've been here pretty long enough and I've had the opportunity to work with other members from different divisions...they (appointment committee) were able to see how I worked or at least had that interaction otherwise they would not know anything about me. They personally told me if we had not known you, I believe 5years ago, if I had applied, I don't know how successful I would be.

It would appear from Betty's comment that building relationships and rapport with men and women over a longer period of time was advantageous as women would not be perceived as a threat to the status quo, and thus increasing the likelihood of appointments. Notably, although she was qualified and was there for 10 years, her designated position had been a senior tutor until a week before the interview she was told informally that she had been promoted. Lack of transparency both acted in a negative and a positive way for these women.

The practice of wantok system (a system based on kinship principles where people from similar tribes or ethnic groups show favour to each other, which is known to be a pitfall for nepotism) was a concern where few relatives were working in the same department or strand. Jill claimed: *"if they were to choose between me and them (wantoks), it's the wantoks over me."* Both informal and formal appointment process indicated the lack of transparency in the processes themselves. Notably, for women who had been promoted to leadership positions, their appointments were rather unplanned or not a result of systemic career planning.

Lack of higher qualifications

Most women believed they were appointed on merit through gaining qualifications and experience. However, they felt that their present level of qualifications were not high enough to place them at a more senior position such as Head of Department/Discipline or a dean of a school, even though they saw themselves capable of carrying the responsibilities of these roles. Daisy an aspiring woman leader made reference to men having more PhDs than women, therefore minimizing women's opportunities to access leadership positions. She commented:

I really believe to be a leader in this institution [you need higher qualifications]... you have all these men folk who are PhDs. So who are you if you don't have PhD and you are trying to be a leader? So to be a leader in an academic institution, you've got to be qualified like them.'

Similarly, Monica who was head of a strand also said: *"from working point of view, to be a leader you need paper (higher qualification) at the university."* From these comments, it is clear that there were more men with PhDs than women which made it difficult for women to progress to leadership positions, as in some cases the most highly qualified candidates were given first preference for leadership positions. Jolly who held the most senior position in her division and a member of the appointment panel for the division, confirmed that having qualifications was important for leadership roles appointments. However, she also asserted that personal qualities and skills were also important and stated:

Down the line we look at people's seniority, we look at the experience and their qualification at the different disciplines then appointment team leaders for different strands. Basically looking at your background, what sort of person you are. The qualities you have, you have to have human skills as well.

From the narratives, attaining higher level of qualifications and personal qualities, and skills of leadership were viewed by the women as vital to advance women to leadership positions in the higher education institution. Notably, only two women interviewed had PhDs as their highest qualifications. Interestingly, neither of them was a strand leader or a dean, instead, they were only senior lecturers, although one of them had been there for over 30 years of service in the institution. This may suggest that the women with such high level of qualifications were seen as a threat and therefore, were not offered the highest leadership roles in the institution. At the same time, it illustrated that although women gained higher qualifications, their chances of advancing to leadership roles were still minimal. One of the reasons was due to the role of gatekeeping in the appointment processes, which I next present.

Gatekeeping

One of the themes identified was the role men played as gatekeepers to leadership opportunities. They actively worked to suppress women's advancement in the higher education institution. When women were asked about their views on distribution of leadership positions between men and women in the institution, most responded there was gender imbalance in the institution. The comments illustrated that leadership was very much a male domain, and that male gatekeepers ensured that was maintained, as reflected in Monica's response:

There is no equality. Many of the positions such as acting deans, deans and chairpersons are headed by males even though they (male) know we are capable of doing that. I see that men are greedy because they do not want women to overtake them. But they are wrong if women have the merit then give them chance!...men still have that tendency of suppressing us (women) in this institution. It's just the culture of the organisation...that men are greedy!

Some of the women also experienced being constantly challenged and monitored by men once they were embarking on leadership roles. As Geno commented:

There is a big project myself and another female colleague are leading, and male colleagues keep challenging our work as if they are trying to see faults and not genuinely challenging with good intentions. They (male) look for every single loop hole to target us.

This finding reiterated that being a man and a leader was perceived as natural in PNG so when women are given leadership roles, they are challenged at many levels and scrutinized for faults. In other words, as the discourse of leadership has traditionally been and largely continues to be male, and consequently women continued to face challenges in establishing themselves and gaining creditability as leaders with male colleagues.

Some women shared concerns that the majority of the appointment committees for the five schools in the university were male dominated. The gender imbalance

was due to the under representation of women in the higher formal leadership positions, such as strand/discipline heads and deans. This is because the composition of the respective schools' appointment committee and the Governing Council that endorsed the appointments were based on seniority. As Ade stated:

There is no gender balance with appointment committees. If the lady is a female dean then she will go... and be part of the highest authority body for appointments (Governing council of the institution that endorses applications from all the schools)...it's done according to the seniority through positions.

This finding illustrated that the gender imbalance on the appointment committees influenced the decision making process on the appointments of women for some of the leadership positions in the institution. Some women felt may be this due to the limited number of the women in the appointment committees who had their voices drowned by the majority of the males on the panel. Surprisingly, in some instances, women also played the role of gatekeeping. Ade's experience of her attempt for promotion to a leadership position was an example this. Her initial application for the leadership position was contested and opposed by a woman appointment committee member whom she was working with. Ade explained:

She was in top management ...she was the one... objecting me being promoted to senior lecturer... I suppose women colleagues get intimidated especially by those who are really competitive and ambitious.

It would appear that women can also be key players at undermining other women's career paths and gaining of formal leadership positions. It also demonstrated when women exhibited what is believed to be traits of men 'competitive' and 'ambitious', it was viewed as a threat to other women's leadership positions. Ultimately, women cultivated negative attitudes towards each other, a common finding with only small amount of coverage in the literature. I address this next.

Women's attitude to each other

In the pursuit of advancing more women to educational leadership positions in higher education, interestingly, women consciously became barriers to the progress of other women in their career advancements. Ade described women's behaviour to each other as: '*always shooting each other down*', while Dora described women as: '*throwing stones at each other*' when she revealed:

One thing I have realised is that women are the enemies themselves...especially those in higher positions. Oh! They make life very difficult for you, so women we are our own enemies. I've had encounters with certain women in authority positions because of small, small things. We are not supportive of each other; we are the ones throwing stones at each other!

Some women felt that other women worked to find faults with each other to use to undermine women's leadership capacity. One of the reasons was because they did not want other women to prosper in their career, and were afraid that they could possibly be a threat to their own leadership positions. As Geno explained:

The senior female would not want to see a junior female rising up; it's not really rising up but they wouldn't want to see you taking the lead. And there is a senior female staff, for some reason hates my guts that if I'm debating an issue with a male colleague, she is always on the male's side although my argument makes sense and at the end, it results in my favour.

Viewing other women as a threat was also believed to be driven by jealousy, and labelled as an attitude problem. Jill explained:

They do not think big in terms of supporting women to advance to leadership positions once they are already there. We are jealous of other women and do not want them to excel because otherwise they will replace us. So that is an attitude problem that we have; we (women) are so narrow minded. Instead of thinking big to see that we all depend on one and another for help, for the progress and benefit of everyone in society.

It seemed that some of the women in leadership positions were not supporting aspiring women leaders to encourage and inspire them to advance in their careers. Instead, they erected barriers for others to progress to leadership positions. On the other hand, it illustrated that some of the women in leadership positions were cautious in their interactions with other women because they may have resisted their leadership, and were may be not supportive of their roles as leaders. Some of the women believed that such attitudes from women in formal leadership positions and aspiring women leaders could have impacted their networking amongst themselves and ultimately led to lack of mentoring.

Lack of mentoring

Lack of mentoring was a concern raised by the majority of the women in terms of grooming and preparing women for potential formal leadership positions. Most of the women who held formal leadership positions and aspiring women leaders had not undergone leadership training. As mentioned earlier, Jolly was an exception as she had her postgraduate qualifications in educational administration, even so, this was removed from PNG context. Majority of the women voiced concern that mentoring was lacking and that there was no networking amongst them, as Monica commented: *“there is no networking amongst women.”* Likewise, Ade shared similar sentiments: *“I don’t think mentoring is happening amongst women.”* Lack of mentoring amongst women illustrated that they overlooked the significance of mentoring to empower each other and that it had a role in increasing women’s representation to formal leadership positions within the institution.

It was also highlighted by women who held formal leadership positions and aspiring leaders that most often the senior women in the top management did not lead by example as leaders and did not work to actively mentor other women academics, as Jill stated:

There is no such thing as women leaders coming down to young aspiring women leaders, encouraging them to bring each other up. They are not showing that example. Or are they leaders by position that they occupy but

not leading by example? Women are in isolation... You don't find a network of women coming together to work in achieving common goal or common interest for the betterment of women.

This finding suggested that there were no formal leadership mentoring programmes available which could have supported women to mentor others. On one hand, women worked in isolation as well because there was minimal informal mentoring. Nonetheless, a few narratives indicated that some women had good relationships with other women, and as a result, they were informally mentoring amongst themselves.

Discrimination

Many of the women encountered challenges in the form of direct and indirect discrimination in the higher education institution. In some instances, women identified the beliefs, and attitudes about women and leadership held by many in a male dominated institution. This was highlighted by Geno, who illustrated how men reacted to her informal leadership role as a team leader of a project, she explained:

You send out emails out and ask them to submit this...so you can compile the report but nothing comes, you ask for suggestions and nothing comes, and you call for meetings and no one comes.

Nevertheless, Geno also experienced other forms of overt discrimination based on age and position when she was appointed team leader. She was aware that her other colleagues resented her appointment by making following comments of her: “*what does she know about it? She thinks she knows everything.*” She elaborated:

That's the kind of treatment you get ...age wise, you are younger and then in terms of position; from the male colleagues it's terrible.

This finding suggested that being young, single and a junior academic were compounding limitations to women's success in their career. Jill, who was a tutor,

further reinforced the above comment when she talked about her views concerning the students or the discipline not been taken seriously:

My views are not of consideration to them (male) because of gender...they have too much pride in them because of their positions, their superiority because they are male lecturers and I'm just a female tutor. I see this as a big challenge because you see from how they speak and do things around you.

This comment revealed that some women experienced direct discrimination based on gender and indirect discrimination based on position levels. It was further illustrated by Betty who experienced difficulties to attain her leave fares by highlighting:

Because we come from a male oriented culture, people say that a male has to be head of the household. And being a Mrs if you have M.R.S (spells it out), you miss out [because] your husband is working in another government department.

Likewise, in Geno's case she shared:

...when I was given a contract I was entitled to a house but I was never given one because I'm a female [and] single...I was to be sent to a workshop that looked at (names her field) and because I was a female, instead a male staff member was sent although it was not his area.

The women perceived that due to gender and stereotyping, opportunities were not extended to them. But at the same time, it demonstrated that discrimination was played out at the top management of the respective schools within the institution. This was even more evident during the appointment and promotion process. For instance, Silo who was told that she would be awarded 5 years contract, instead was given 3 years contract while she claimed: "my male colleagues were given 5 years contract." Discriminatory attitudes and behaviour displayed by men are

also influenced by the culture of the society that are entrenched in traditional roles and expectations of women and men respectively. As Vavi explained:

Most societies in PNG are patriarchal. Nobody in your culture will let you become a leader although you have the potential. They will always get a man to be a leader because leadership is seen suitable only for men as practiced during traditional days which impact this contemporary society.

However, in many instances some of the women were careful not to highlight discrimination in their interviews, although their narratives clearly indicated that. Betty, who was qualified to be teaching at a lecturer's position, instead had been teaching for 10 years on a senior tutor position while carrying out duties of a lecturer described, that she understood that the discipline head had other responsibilities and therefore did not follow up on her interest for promotion. She elaborated:

My former boss was actually surprised when I told him that I was applying for promotion. He said "I am so busy but yeah, apply for the next level. He had assumed that I had already applied few years ago. He was so busy... Oh! I can't blame him he has got his arms stretched out like tentacles everywhere, so busy I should have applied anyway.

Notably, a week before the time of the interview she had been promoted so given the timeframe, this may have impacted her view during the interview. From the interview responses there was no mention of discrimination based on ethnicity. Rather, women did highlight that the attitudes and behaviours displayed by men were those from patrilineal societies. But that is not to say that the behaviour and attitudes of men from matrilineal societies are any different to those of patrilineal societies.

Balancing family and work

The narratives of the women in this study were no different to women elsewhere in other countries in terms of balancing work and family. Some of women

balanced multiple roles, as caregivers, breadwinners and an academic. It was one of the challenges women educational leaders and aspiring women leaders encountered in managing their roles and responsibilities at work, and while at home, in their role as a mother, and a wife. Some of the women whose children by now have grown up recalled the difficulties when their children were young and had to play many roles, like in Jolly's case: *"I had to balance what I do at work, homework, family work, and family life and work life."* For instance, Monica and Samantha both mentioned playing the role of a mother and a father at the same time due to some circumstances. According to Samantha whose husband had a travelling job stated: *"It was difficult but somehow I manage [with the roles] I was playing back home and here at work."* For Monica, who had separated with her husband remarked: *"I knew I would be a man and a woman of the household to my children."*

Many women mentioned that their relatives were also a source of support which allowed them to some degree, to be able to balance work and family. For example, Monica described how her relatives had supported her:

I always had my family or wantoks assisting me to babysit although it was difficult at times when playing the role of a mother... On the other hand, trying to meet the demands of your job especially a teaching job that requires you longer hours at work and then you carry work back home to continue there.

Some of the women were explicit about how their husbands did not support them with household chores which made balancing work and family a challenge for them. Like in Daisy's case who saw herself doing 'double day duties' explained:

It is very difficult because my husband is not supportive in terms of household chores...like cooking, washing, doing laundry – Nil! Nil...so that's the challenge, so I end up doing double day duties. Double duties? Because I work here and I work at home...And you talk to him to only certain limit, how you can force him, he's an adult. You going too far can

end up in something else. So you want to live in harmony, concentrate on your career [and] your children.

It would appear that many of the women were tasked to manage household chores, take care of children, and in addition play the role of a wife. In order to avoid family conflicts or physical violence meant not contesting these responsibilities with their husbands, in terms of household chores and responsibilities within the home. When trying to manage time and expectations of different roles women play as a mother, a wife and as an academic, some women regarded their roles at home as mothers more important. For example, Jill gives priority to her role at home as she explained:

My true role and responsibility and that's in my traditional role as a mother and as a wife. My secondary role is my professional job...but my traditional role is a priority for the good of my family.

Although women saw the importance of their career in terms of advancing to leadership positions, balancing that with family was a challenge because in most instances prioritizing family took precedent over their career. But for others they decided to focus on their career by limiting their family size to find the balance between family and their leadership roles especially when their partners were not very supportive. Taksy commented:

I have only 1 child...otherwise I wouldn't have gotten to where I am today. So you have to sacrifice somewhere...So either you have a career or a family or you have to maintain the balance by limiting your family size. For me it did not work (laughs), having more children was not an option.

Betty also revealed the challenges of motherhood. Although she had support from her family members (mother and cousins) she states: “*my kids would not bottle feed so I had to keep running back and forth from work to breastfeed.*” She was not alone in her comments as many gave example of having to endure besides their domestic duties at home and their work as academics, in addition the child-care responsibilities with young infants, which in fact showed they were doing

triple duties. For most of the women it meant a dual role where they had to manage family at home and their roles and responsibilities of a leader.

Lack of confidence

Many of the women were not confident to demonstrate leadership. Some women lacked confidence and saw themselves as incompetent to show formal leadership in the institution. For some they were only happy to lead informally such as in family situations and church activities but not at their workplace where the stakes were high. For example, Vavi who use to be a church leader who had initially refused a leadership position because she believed there was much pressure with the role claimed:

Not everybody wants to be a leader. I mean I can be a leader in my little group but that does not mean that I can lead a big organisation or want to take on board other leadership roles and responsibilities.

In Vavi's case, she also felt that her current qualification level was unsuitable for the leadership role she undertook, and therefore it was her self perception that may be led to lack of confidence. Betty, an aspiring leader wanted to remain being a specialist in her field rather than taking leadership roles and stated: "[I did not want] to do administration or play a higher role in what I'm playing right now. I can't see myself as a leader." However, when further questioned Betty explained:

I feel inferior...I can look at other women leaders and admire them. My impression of a leader is someone who gains all the qualities...who is well rehearsed in the field even to do PhD. I feel inferior that I may not be adequately equipped to do the job or that other people know better than I am; I might make a fool out of myself.

The comment suggested that it was likely that some women felt inferior to both men and women because Betty believed having a PhD and specific qualities seemed more suitable for the leadership positions. In addition, women also perceived leadership as being defined by certain attributes rather than action

which they felt lacking. For example, Vavi says: “*women ...need the characteristics and attributes of a leader...to lead an organisation.*” The above comments may have also suggested that ‘big man’ leadership ideologies as being the norm may have had women thinking that was the leadership model that they had to comply to, and therefore felt inferior.

Harassment, violence and aggressive behaviour towards women by male colleagues also created fear in the women and caused some of them to doubt their ability to lead. Silo who formerly held a leadership position shared her encounter with a male colleague from Tari, an ethnic group prominently known for ongoing tribal wars and for their aggressive behaviour in PNG:

I find a person who wants to take over that leadership, being a man they are very aggressive over that...When people are aggressive they put that fear into you. Though I’m given the title, I’m given that status, I’m limited to perform because of the fear, because I was being harassed. This person has to bring his mob...his tribe to harm me.

In this instance, it was not because the woman lacked faith in her ability to lead. Instead, it was because of how she was treated and her safety concerns that changed their perception towards leadership opportunities. Silo continued: “*I don’t wanna work as a leader but I just wanna work as other subordinates who are working under another leadership.*” Additionally, Dora’s view was attributed to socialization, she remarked: “*women are not supposed to say a lot so they just keep quiet.*” This suggested that due to socialisation women tended to be passive, and were expected to show respect for men by being silent and obedient. Thus, women saw very little of themselves in term of leadership roles and responsibilities, and were afraid of failure once given the opportunity to lead because they were taught not to be assertive.

Leadership Approaches

The social context of the women’s upbringing influenced their leadership practices as stated earlier. This finding may explain how the majority of the

women in this study demonstrated collaborative and servant leadership approaches. Also, the women's perceptions of a good leader were interwoven with Christian beliefs, they believed that a good leader should demonstrate the Christian principles. As a result, collaborative leadership and servant leadership were the prominent leadership approaches exercised by the women. These approaches will now be discussed.

Collaborative leadership approach

Many of the women's comments reflected a collaborative leadership style which they all viewed as essential in how they displayed their leadership to achieve outcomes. Within each of their contexts, Silo explains the importance of teamwork through collaboration where "*the leaders should actually work together with the people and lead the people but work together with them, and get the job done.*" Likewise, Jolly shares what her role as a leader involves:

It's coordinating at the divisional level and liaising, and collaborating with other chairperson, the dean and the deputy. Then at our divisional level, I'm collaborating with discipline leaders.

Geno demonstrated collaboration by enabling followers to have a voice in decision making:

I allocate responsibility accordingly...being transparent telling them "okay based on your work, you will get this much" ...and then they have to agree to it. Be open; if they disagree then we start adjusting the figures. Being transparent and also do not overuse or abuse who is working under you. Respect their ideas whenever they say something.

These women's comments also illustrated an element of overlap between the task of management and actions of leadership. In other words, collaborative leadership was seen to be interwoven with the managerial aspect of their job in order to achieve outcomes. For many of the women, collaboration within the decision making process was important. However, they also acknowledged that time

constraints meant certain decisions had to be made without consensual decision making as Ade's comment illustrates:

Not afraid to consult with many people, accept their views or bounce off ideas with them. I am not authoritative kind (laughs) and so basically that is participation. Encourage participation whenever we can I mean sometimes it is deadlines and participation kind of consultation suffers.

This further illustrated the importance of participation and teamwork within personal relationships in order to be a successful leader. Leading by example was also important and Vavi's comment reinforced the importance of building these relationships:

It must be the person leading by example. And I think the other thing is the leader must also have good personal relationships with people because otherwise if there is no good relationship with people around you, it is going to be difficult in the areas of advice and assistance.

In the following comment Betty expanded on the notion of a good leader as leading by example:

You must be honest; you must be hard working... punctual most of the times, committed to whatever...they're going to do as a leader...moral behaviour must be the acceptable moral behaviour...so that you are a role model because we are in an educational institution. I think it's important to be a good role model not just as an academic but as a mother...I think to be a good leader if you have all those qualities, try to portray them on daily bases. Respect for one and other, even for non academic staffs and even for the staffs.

This view was also shared by Tessy when she addressed the notion of care when referring to students:

I would expect a good leader to show they have to be caring for who are under them but also be firm. You have to be firm so you can pull them up at the same time. You can't be goody, goody all the time to people and you fail to correct them...So being good and fair to people but at the same time exercising discipline if they need to be discipline.

Taksy shares similar view: “*whatever decision you make... You have to stand firm on whatever you decide.*” The two women’s comments illustrate the importance of being decisive, an attribute within PNG society that is more associated with men because men are regarded as decision-makers in family situations and when organizing traditional ceremonies such as bride price (a culture in PNG where the man’s family and relatives give food and money to the wife’s family), funeral arrangements, and other significant community feasts. The big man leadership approach emphasised decisiveness as a strength for a leader. I now present the findings on a more common leadership approach used by the women.

Servant leadership approach

Overall, the findings indicated that the servant leadership approach can be both advantageous and pose limitations for the women. The narratives portrayed a strong element of servant leadership. This leadership approach is based on the notion that interest of the others precedes the interest of the leader (Alston, 2005). One of the key characteristics is humility. Some of the women were explicit in their description of their leadership which they believed to be effective. Taksy remarked:

You must know first and foremost is that in order to be a great leader you must be a servant first. That's what I believe...you have to relate to these people. In order for you to relate to be them, you might as well get down to them. In the end, it's kind of like a service, you are serving them.

Similarly, Daisy stated:

To be a very good leader, you have to be a servant to your followers. Being a servant does not mean that you do everything for them [instead] you have to live by example so people will look and say “she is doing something, how come she’s higher than me, she’s working and I’m not, I better do something. You have to have charisma and empathize with those below you.

Servant leadership was seen as an avenue to build non-hierarchical relationships between the leaders and followers. The non-hierarchical relationships were encouraged by working collaboratively with others in the decision making processes. Additionally, to be able to empower others through sharing of leadership responsibilities, for instance, by assigning others to take lead in some of the activities. However, although servant leadership calls for humility, Samantha cautions:

But they (followers) also recognise that you are a leader. There is a fine line between you and them, and sometimes situations call for that line not to be crossed over. Otherwise people can go their own way and not bother to listen.

It is important to note that this leadership approach has attributes which reflect leading with a silent voice because being a servant leader placed women in secondary place. This is because the dominant big man leadership paradigm to some extent fosters autocratic leadership approach in PNG. It means the attributes of servant leadership such as humility and submissive can disadvantage women. Women practicing such leadership approach may possibly be not considered for future leadership opportunities due to this approach regarded as being passive whilst the characteristics of the big man leadership approach are sought after. On the other hand, this leadership approach may not challenge the status quo and therefore men will not feel threatened by women who demonstrate this leadership approach. At the same time, women can use this approach as a vehicle to encourage other women in the development of their leadership skills and to increase the representation of women in leadership positions.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has outlined the women's perceptions and values held towards leadership, and their experiences of leadership structures within the higher education. The first key finding demonstrated the powerful influence of the socio-cultural context of PNG and how power and control over women was evident at the many levels of the society. This was apparent through the powerful influence of the fathers in the families, and the women's place in the society as secondary compared to the men. Additionally, the differences in the gender attributes between women and men according to societal stereotyping influenced how women were viewed and treated as leaders. The differences in the gender attributes were prominent as many of the women described using 'motherly approaches' while men were referred to as being 'authoritative' in their leadership approaches.

Furthermore, the influence of the socio-cultural context was evident through the informal leadership roles the women embarked on within their families and in the churches. On one hand, the women's informal leadership roles in the church and in the families gave them the opportunity to develop and enhance their leadership skills. On the contrary, despite such leadership opportunities, males in the church and in the families were still the authority figures who had much power over the women. Lastly, the findings illustrated how the big man leadership impacted on the women. Such extensive power and control vested in men was embedded in the strong patriarchal values and patterns of behaviour which most often created drawbacks on how the women were viewed as leaders within the higher education context.

The second key finding demonstrated the persistence influence of the socio-cultural context on the women's beliefs and values held towards leadership, and that is, the Melanesian communal value systems through their family upbringings and Christianity. The leadership values highlighted were honesty, collaboration, respect, commitment and role modelling.

The third key finding illustrated the experiences of the women and examined what had influenced their access to leadership roles within the higher education context. Firstly, the aspiring leaders and women leaders' appointments were based on the qualification and experience. However, the lack of transparency in the informal and the formal appointment process was both positive influence and a setback for the women to advance in their careers. Additionally, while the men played the role of gatekeeping, on one hand, some women also played the similar role and further disadvantaged the women's progress to leadership positions. The women worked in isolation showing that there was minimal networking, and mentoring of women to leadership positions. The findings also indicated that the women experienced indirect and direct discrimination. Most of the discrimination was due to the cultural attitudes towards women. Furthermore, the cultural behaviour and attitudes held towards the domestic roles of the women made it difficult for them to balance work and family because their spouses were unsupportive in this area. Lack of confidence also impacted women's progress to leadership positions due to women's experience of harassment and the overwhelming leadership responsibilities in the higher education.

The fourth key finding illustrated women's values and beliefs subsequently influenced the leadership approaches employed by the women. Within their leadership approach they identified with many characteristics of servant leadership whereby the interest of others preceded personal interests. Collaborative leadership was also viewed as important in their lives as leaders or aspiring leaders especially in decision making processes.

In next chapter, I discuss key findings of this research in the light of relevant literature to enrich and add to the literature on women and educational leadership in developing countries, especially within the Melanesian context.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Fitzgerald (2006) has noted western values and practices homogenize, marginalize and silence women educational leaders from developing countries and of other cultures such as Papua New Guinea. Therefore, this research was designed to add to the growing literature on women and educational leadership in developing countries and the Pacific Islands, especially in the Melanesian region.

The research investigated the leadership experiences of women in formal leadership positions and aspiring women leaders in a Papua New Guinean university. This chapter draws on the findings of this study in Chapter Four and integrates relevant literature to explore the overarching research questions. First, this chapter presents the discussion of the findings specifically related to the context of Papua New Guinea to illustrate the powerful influence of the social context on the early socialisation of the women which has effected how they are viewed as leaders and how they practise their leadership. Also, how the PNG cultural norms, ideologies, and values systems influenced women's advancement in their career, by discussing the impact of family, women's place in society, differences in the gender attributes and the impact of 'big man' leadership on the women. The second part of this chapter explores the women's understandings of leadership by discussing the women's values and beliefs of leadership. In the third part of the chapter, I present how the higher education context in PNG: the organisational ethos, the appointment process, gatekeeping, lack of support systems and the discrimination women encounter which posed challenges and limitations in women's advancement to leadership positions. In addition, I discuss the difficulties of balancing family/work and how the lack of confidence impacted on women's aspiration for leadership roles in the higher education. In the final part of the chapter I examine the common leadership approaches the women mostly practice: servant and collaborative leadership approaches.

With a brief overview of what the discussion chapter entails, in next section I present the powerful influence of the PNG socio-cultural context on women's aspirations for leadership roles and how the society perceives women as leaders in the higher education context.

The Socio-cultural Context of Papua New Guinea

The socio-cultural context of PNG is unique because of the cultural diversity of over 800 languages and vast cultural practices with over 200 ethnic tribal groups. As mentioned in the previous chapters, PNG consists of both matrilineal and patrilineal societies. The latter is dominant in most parts of the PNG society. PNG is known as a patriarchal society and has produced multiple forms of masculinity through traditional and cultural practices which are the fabric of the society even today.

In this section, first, I discuss how the male figures in the family influenced the early childhood of the women through education and by being their roles models for a path towards a career and their aspirations for leadership roles. Second, the society's views of women's place as 'secondary' according to the cultural norms, beliefs, values, ideologies and expectations are explored to understand how these views are exhibited in the higher education context which impact the leadership experiences of the women. Third, the gender differences in female and male leadership approaches are discussed to highlight how this impacted on the women's aspiration for formal leadership roles. Fourth, I discuss the impact of 'the big man' leadership and its implications on women as educational leaders. Finally, the findings on how the socio-cultural context through the church and family setting offer informal leadership opportunities for women and enhances their leadership skills will be discussed. With this brief outline, I now present the discussions on the early impact of the family on the women in this study.

The impact of family

Families in PNG are an important part of the Melanesian communal value systems that is tightly embedded in the kinship system. The predominant patriarchal social

context of PNG positions fathers as the head of the family. Therefore, in this study most of the women referred to their fathers as role models and key influential figures who believed and allowed them to develop leadership potential while growing up. Similarly, Cubillo and Brown (2003) found in their study of women from nine male dominant countries that irrespective of the different societal cultures of the women, a commonality was that fathers were an important “influence in their early education and subsequent careers” (p. 285). In this study, only few women saw their mothers as role models but they still referred to their fathers as the main key influential figure for their leadership aspirations.

In contrast to a study in the US exploring the childhoods of women university presidents regarding their own parents’ positive influence it was found that predominately extended family members such as aunts and grandmothers were mostly their role models (Madsen, 2006). One explanation for the contrasting findings in the two contexts (Melanesian & Western) is that the nature of the social context impacted on who the authority figure is within family spheres. PNG is still a very conservative culture where men are assertive and many of the women are positioned as passive, to listen and follow the directions of their husbands. This pattern of behaviour frequently leaves women in a position of no authority and silences women in the family. On the contrary, the women in the US and other western cultures to some extent, experienced a higher degree of autonomy. The autonomy for women in PNG varied and was limited for the Melanesian women because there are many constraining cultural factors that posed challenges to having voice in the family. The domination of the patriarchal and cultural values and norms in PNG, unquestionably places fathers as the authority figure in the family. This is supported by research in Melanesia that “In most islands...men make decisions and have the final say and women are silent (Strachan et al, 2010, p. 69). Similar sentiments are echoed by Cubillo and Brown (2003) when referring to the participants in their study:

A parental support may have been a consequence of the strongly patriarchal societies into which many of these women were born and socialised, wherein the supremacy of the father within the family is representational of the nature of the society itself. (p. 285)

A significant finding from this study was that the women's fathers and brothers ensured that they were on a path leading to a career. The liberal and egalitarian family values expressed by the women do not necessarily reflect the predominant PNG patriarchal values. However, on one hand it may be possible that exposure through media and technology saw education as a necessity and an integral part of women's development while growing up. There may be a possible explanation for the stance taken by the male family members. That is, due to the knowledge that education opens many doors of opportunity for success, male family members may have felt that it was important for their sisters and daughters to go through formal education because at the end, everyone would benefit. It was a 'give' and 'take' situation between family members. It means that the favour will be returned to those that helped. Support and decisions by the male family members were based on the cultural value systems of the kinship system social structure and functions. For example, traditionally every member of the family, clan or tribe had a responsibility within the system to support each other with the understanding that support is reciprocal. Nongkas and Tivinarlik (2005) have stated that "the rationale for much of the moral behaviour in traditional PNG depended upon the overall welfare of the community" (p. 3). Nevertheless, there is a downside of the cultural value of reciprocity. For example, if the women failed to give support back to family members, then it may cause some strain on their relationships. Family support for the women in this study for education potentially provided "structure of opportunities to support individual aspirations" (Hall, 1996, p. 44), and enabled women to aspire to a successful career in the university.

Women and culture

The women perceived that the males' views held towards their academic roles and their ascribed roles in the society had not changed much over the last decade despite the introduction of gender equity policies in their workplaces. The stereotyped attitudes of male colleagues were entrenched in cultural norms, values and beliefs, and ideologies regarding the place of women in the society. Traditionally PNG women have been multi-tasking as child-bearers, caregivers, maintaining domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning, and assisting with

food preparation for cultural activities: bride price, funerals and other feasts. Therefore, the traditional views held towards women portrayed them unsuitable for leadership roles in the public spheres because the traditional roles place women 'secondary' in society. These findings are consistent with literature from a Melanesia context (Akao, 2008; Gustafsson, 2003; Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2000, 2006; Warsal, 2009).

Warsal (2009) in her study in Vanuatu with secondary school women leaders conceded that "in the urban schools these cultural practices and beliefs about women's prescribed roles may have changed over the years due to modernization and western influences" (p.103). In contrast, this study which was conducted in a city found that women perceived that the cultural stereotypes and attitudes towards women were evident in male academics at many levels despite the women holding leadership positions. For example, a participant received negative comments from male colleagues about her appointment saying that she was incapable of carrying out the job responsibilities because she was young and a woman. Furthermore, such cultural gender stereotyped attitudes undermined women's access to leadership roles despite their relevant qualifications and experiences which enabled them to earn those leadership positions on merit. Instead, societal ascribed roles rather saw them more fitting to perform roles at the lower academic positions.

Women's comments also indicated concerns on how the society plays a pivotal role of socialisation in the early years of the children's education by contributing to the lower status of women in the society. There are several possible explanations that are based on the traditional views. First, in PNG patrilineal societies, males are seen as more important members of the family because hereditary is passed down to them while it is believed that females after being married will be looked after by their husbands therefore are not given a priority. Such a belief plays a preferential role for boys to access education when encountering financial constraints. Very recent information from the PNG Department of Education reported that financial difficulty is a major drawback in PNG that accounts for 47 per cent of the school-aged children not attending

schools (PNG Post Courier News, 2009). Although precise figures for females are not given, inevitably more boys than girls will be attending school.

Second, about 70% of the population live in rural areas where traditional PNG life is normal. Therefore, young girls are taught and socialised to meet the cultural expectations of their roles and little attention is given to the importance of education as means of future independence for all individuals regardless of gender. From a Melanesian perspective, Warsal (2009) confirms that ascribed roles of the women in the rural areas are typical especially where patriarchy dominates. Therefore, when women see the value of performance in their traditionally ascribed responsibilities, sometimes it can be difficult for them to see their roles or status beyond traditional spheres (Cox et al, 1988). This influences how women think and interact with the knowledge that they must abide within cultural prescription of behaviour and interaction, according to the societal expectations of a woman.

This raises the question of what needs to be done when views held towards the role of the women in the society are engrained in cultural beliefs, customs and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. How can gender equity policies be effectively implemented and achieved when the aspects of culture undermining these policies are part of daily life in PNG society. One way to achieve the objectives of gender equality legislatives and polices in PNG is to change male's perceptions towards women's traditional roles and place in the society. As Pollard (2000) asserted, "basic changes in some fundamental attitudes, values and beliefs" (p. 6) need to be made about a women in Melanesia. Tuaru (2005) stated that although "to change attitudes and mentality may be a gradual and a slow process but it is in the right direction if men and women are to achieve equality" (p. 100). Tuaru further claimed one way of approaching this is to begin gender education in the homes where parents have a major role in the socialisation of their children. This means parents need to take responsibility teaching their children about equal roles between their children to adapt to the changes of what gender equality means in order to avoid cultivation of stereotyped attitudes that later come to play in adult life. While the schools ensure that there are gender awareness programmes for students, teachers and parents to

change stereotypical attitudes. But most importantly, there are mechanisms within the school systems and the higher education institutions to monitor the implementations of the gender awareness programmes. Likewise, higher education institutions could help to break down the stereotypical attitudes towards women through gender awareness workshops for students and academics to support gender education for everyone to be open-minded about the changing roles of women in today's PNG society.

Gender attributes

The findings of this study showed that gender and leadership in Melanesia are socially constructed and culturally bound. Much of the difference between women and men's leadership approaches were based on gender stereotyped scripts underpinned by the society's socialisation process. This finding aligned with the combined experiences of Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal (2010) who stated that in Melanesia "men and women learn and practice a set of scripts within their feminine and masculine roles as part of socialisation" (p. 68). Furthermore similar research indicates "because of the socialization process, women have developed values and beliefs that translate into specific behaviours arising in their leadership styles" (Trinidad & Norman, 2005, p. 577).

The majority of the women in this study indicated that their feminine role as mothers in caregiving and nurturing made them empathetic, caring, compassionate, flexible, being more understanding and open, and preferred democratic processes in their leadership approaches. One participant described herself naturally using 'motherly approach' without thinking about it and stated her reason as 'it is what and who you are as mother'. However, Coleman (2002) in the UK highlighted the main disadvantage is that the nurturing and caring image of women associates women with supportive roles whereas men occupy the leading ones. In PNG society, men as the dominant figure and their authoritarian role as the head of the family perpetuated such attributes in the workplaces. Having power over women at homes transcended similar behaviour and attitudes towards women in higher education institutions, and thus, women were given supporting academic roles to men. Also, this research showed that women in

leadership positions were more understanding and open to women's concerns and social issues, for example, when women took time off to attend to their sick children whereas, men were referred to as being strict, aggressive and authoritative. The above findings are consistent with previous research in western contexts that examined issues of contrasting attitudes and behaviours of men and women regarding leadership practice (Blackmore, 1998; Hall, 1996; Oplatka & Atias, 2007; Reay & Ball, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). Eagly and Johannesen (2001) in the US confirmed gender roles stereotypical roles influence the leadership behaviour within organisations and results in comparison between the female and male leaders. It is within such comparison that lays the continuous domination of men in formal leadership positions in PNG higher education. This is because the traditional perception and practice of leadership in PNG society is based on a masculine construction of a leader and therefore reinforces the cycle of stereotyping gender and leadership with men.

This research did not provide any evidence that leadership style is independent of gender because only women were interviewed, unlike other studies which also involved men (Coleman, 2005; Ozkanl et al, 2009; Powell, 1990). However, these findings support the argument by Hoff and Mitchell (2008) in the US that stereotyping of leadership approaches is based on gendered socially constructed norms, which according to Hofstede (1980) causes the division and classifies leadership styles based on gender. This is true in Melanesian context because the roles of the men and women are distinguished according to cultural norms and expectations, and therefore marginalise women in Melanesian societies (Aka, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Strachan, 2009; Warsal, 2009). Furthermore, the findings mirrored research results from Eagly's (2007) study in the US where it was found that due to cultural stereotypes women face a 'double bind'. Women are expected to be collaborative and caring because of gender socialization but at the same time expected to individualist, decisive and authoritative because of the expectations inherent in masculine image of leadership. Nevertheless, women in this study did not indicate adhering to the masculine image of leadership but revealed how gender socialization and cultural scripts did not view them capable as leaders. This confirms the argument from a western perspective by Coleman and Pounder

(2002) that the true value of leadership and gender related debate lies in its ability to reveal factors rather than to reinforce gender stereotyping. In other words, there are factors such as family upbringing, cultural values and beliefs, religion and westernization that contribute to viewing women as unlikely candidates for formal leadership roles. In next section, I reveal how the big man leadership practice in PNG contributes to the under representation of women in formal leadership roles in the higher education.

The impact of 'big man' leadership

The findings in this study indicated that the practice of 'big man' leadership continued to marginalise women in the higher education institutions. These findings are congruent with recent studies on women and leadership in Melanesia (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009). In her groundbreaking research in Australia, Blackmore (1989) posited that at specific historical moments, traditional patterns of behaviour promoted the masculine image and traits of leadership entrenched in cultural practices. This is true in Melanesian contexts because the 'big man' leadership has been historically practiced in the patrilineal societies within Melanesian countries particularly PNG, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, and has become a traditional practice. In today's society, there are several ways the notion of 'big man' leadership comes to play in the higher education context.

Firstly, women's comments in the study showed that due to the traditional social construction of leadership based on the masculine image, the women perceived that some of the male academics had negative attitudes towards aspiring women leaders and those in formal leadership positions. This illustrated the powerful influence of the patriarchal system of 'big man' leadership. Likewise, studies indicate that the big man leadership ideology and knowledge conceived such a mentality that men are leaders while women are subordinates (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009), and therefore provokes negative attitudes by men towards women in leadership positions. As a result, women felt isolated in Melanesia (Strachan et al, 2010) and according to Schmuck (1996) in the US,

although “their positions as administrators makes them ‘insider’ to the organisation, their ‘abnormal’ status as women makes them ‘outsiders’ in their organisations” (p. 365). For example, few women commented that due to the strong patriarchal background of some of the men where ‘big man’ leadership was still traditionally practiced, men under their leadership actively worked by being uncooperative and resisted women’s leadership. Furthermore, men worked in isolation and discarded working in collaboration with women as their leaders. In some instances, women experienced verbal harassment by men. Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal (2010) described this as “behaviour typical in big man society. If women tamper with the big man’s ego ..., he will do everything in his power to shame the woman” (p. 73).

Secondly, the aspect of communal value system organised and based on the kinship that perpetuates ‘big man’ leadership and also Christian principles elevated men’s social standing in public spheres, and disadvantaged women in having minimal power and authority. It is therefore uncommon for men to be led by women leaders in higher education institutions because it may seem degrading for some men who hold strong traditional views of women’s place as ‘secondary’ in society. This study is in contrast to the studies of Kilavanwa (2004) and Akao (2008) who both presented the ‘big man’ leadership as a deficit model whereby women educational leaders were sometimes drawn towards meeting the expectations and complying with the masculine leadership image. For example, Kilavanwa (2004) found in her study that women adopted roles and behaviours of masculine paradigm of power, control and authority in their leadership practice.

This was not the case in this study as briefly discussed earlier that women’s perceptions, values and beliefs, and practice of leadership were ‘women centred’ approaches (Blackmore, 1998). This means the women may use big man leadership as a vehicle to draw on women’s voices as a subversive subculture in mainstream organisation to recognise and embrace ‘women’s approaches of leadership’. Nevertheless, Trinidad and Norman (2005) highlighted “recognizing women’s styles of leadership represents an important approach to equity as long as they are not stereotyped as ‘the’ ways women lead but ‘other’ ways of leading” (p. 575). This requires networking among women and organizing of workshops

for both women and men, to ensure women's values and beliefs held towards leadership are brought to the forefront as part of mainstream leadership in PNG and additionally, to seek ways to develop leadership learning opportunities for women. An inclusive approach is an important process of awareness to understand that feminine leadership approaches are no better or worse than traditional male-oriented ones, they are just different. Shakeshaft (1993) highlighted:

The point of examining these differences is not to say one approach is right and one is wrong, but rather to help us understand that males and females may be coming from very different perspectives, and that unless we understand these differences, we are not likely to work together. (p. 105)

In PNG women leaders are believed to be sensitive to the social constraints that surround them (Kilavanwa, 2004). This study highlighted that one of the ways to withstand the influence of the big man leadership and a way forward to counteract the negative attitudes of men was by gaining higher educational qualifications such a PhD. As suggested, higher qualifications were seen as a way to legitimize and validate women as leaders and be treated with the respect they deserved. Additionally, it also revealed that upholding integrity was viewed as vital to withstand challenges to women's leadership practices. The women were mindful and cautious of their leadership practices to avoid male scrutiny and therefore limited to perform in their leadership roles otherwise likely to encounter more challenges imposed by men. Ultimately the women did not receive much support and at times felt isolated in their leadership roles. As studies in PNG, in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have illustrated that women are undermined in formal leadership positions because it was culturally perceived to be men's place, and hence women were not supported in leadership roles (Strachan et al, 2010).

In contrast to the women from patrilineal lineage, the study indicated that the women with matrilineal background had opportunities to display leadership over land and resources and this, in turn rewarded the status accorded to the 'big man'. This is similar to a perspective from the Solomon Islands by Pollard (2006) that there is such a notion as 'big women' because they lead informally in churches

and through matrilineal lineage. Such level of status alongside men gave women some degree of confidence and positive self esteem. Nevertheless, it is important to note that big man leadership is more prevalent in PNG society, and thus women from matrilineal societies would be confronted with challenges outside their own communities.

Informal leadership opportunities

This study found that women had leadership opportunities in the private spheres, particularly in the church. This finding aligns with Melanesian literature (Warsal, 2009; Pollard, 2006; Strachan et al, 2007; Strachan, 2009). Women's comments indicated that their leadership skills were developed and enhanced through leadership opportunities in the church, and applied in the workplace. Pollard (2006) highlighted the Christian beliefs and values can limit women's status and role in society, yet, it is an arena that offers leadership opportunities. Pollard elaborated that although women are given informal leadership roles in the church and villages, the respective roles of men and women are complementary but still distinctive. For example, the majority of the leaders in the church are male. If women held informal leadership roles, most of them were complementary roles to the most senior positions in the church held by men. So the leadership trend that plays out in the public spheres is reflected in the private spheres, and is vice versa. Nevertheless, Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal (2010) have highlighted "many Melanesian women have found Christianity liberating and a source of empowerment" (p. 70) through the informal leadership opportunities in the churches.

Another feature in this study was that the family was an arena where women also practiced leadership. The positive impact of the family members as discussed in the first part of this section may have developed leadership skills that saw the women worthy of a leader to exercise leadership in the families. In addition, the professional career and academic leadership roles may have given the women some recognition and status within the family. For example, it may be that the salary linked to the career provided monetary support to fulfill cultural obligations such as providing feasts, and their role in looking after extended family members

may have earned women a leadership status in the family and they therefore were given respect and treated as leaders from family members. Likewise, Tivinarlik and Wanat (2006) found in their study with PNG high school principals that women leaders in their communities were given respect due to their leadership positions at the workplace. However, in the context of this study, it was illustrated that although women were given opportunity to be leaders in the family, at the same time, leadership was earned through family obligation performances and professional status in the public sphere. It is important to note, within many of the women's family comprising of a spouse and children, the husbands were the overall leaders of the family structures, and the women managed the maintenance of the household chores.

Informal leadership roles in the church and family settings enhanced women's confidence, and helped them to develop and prepare for formal leadership roles in the university. As some of the participants commented that they had started learning to be a leader at home with the positive influence of their fathers, and later used that knowledge and experience at the workplace. In contrast, one of the women in this study commented that although she had practiced leadership at home, she did not see herself as a leader in the workplace, after experiencing harassment at the workplace. These findings align with other studies in Melanesia (Kilavanwa, 2004; Strachan et al, 2010; Warsal, 2009). This may mean that some women felt more comfortable and safe in their informal leadership roles either at church or at home where challenges from the male were minimal compared to the unfamiliar territory in the university which presented many challenges. In next section I present the women's values and perceptions held towards leadership, and address the influence of the socio-cultural context on those values and beliefs.

Women's values and perception in leadership

The women had values and beliefs which impacted their view of leadership. Their values and beliefs were derived from two underlying factors. First, a commonality in the women's values held towards leadership was constituted on Christian beliefs and principles. These results were consistent with recent studies in Melanesia by Akao (2008) and Warsal (2009) through their account of how the

women participants perceived leadership. For example, women in this study valued the Christian principle of honesty. For some of the women, fearing God meant practising honesty in how they dealt with issues as leaders, and also believed it was morally a right to do. Begley (2002) confirms that it is important to understand that values are held in response to a range of motivations. He draws on the example on honesty by stating:

A person might subscribe to honesty as a value to avoid the pain of sanction for dishonesty, or because this is a shared community orientation, or because the consequences of widespread dishonesty is social chaos, or because it is the right thing to do at an ethical level. (p.53)

In the context of this study one possible explanation may be that being immersed and rooted in a strong Christian society influenced women's values which were seen as important features in their leadership decision making process and overall work life. The women viewed that upholding the Christian values in their leadership practice was important part of exercising their Christian beliefs. Similarly, Warsal (2009) found that the Christian values of forgiveness enabled women to forgive discriminatory behaviour and attitude towards of others. However, the downside is that this value can be taken advantage of by others who can use it to manipulate the women with continuous ill treatment towards them if they observe that based on this Christian principle, women endure the challenges without much course of actions taken against the perpetrators.

The second commonality this study revealed is that family upbringing instilled certain values based on cultural value systems such as respect and caring for nuclear and extended family (cousins, aunts, uncles & grandparents) by sharing resources with them, which signified the importance of family/clan unity, and also collaborating to support each other for everyone's success and wellbeing. One possible explanation for such societal function is that it is fundamentally based on the kinship system (Sanga et al, 2005) which prescribes how people in Melanesian societies live together and defines their social interactions. Nongkas and Tivinarlik (2005) have elaborated that "the governance of the community reflects communal values in particular, 'sharing' for the common good" (p. 3) of the

people. So the women in this study blended Christian and Melanesian cultural values that influenced their perception about leadership.

It is worth noting that the cultural values and Christian values are inseparable; the values of caring, honesty, respect, sharing, commitment and collaboration all correlate and are interwoven, and form the foundations for family values in PNG. The social contexts of the women such as the family, the church and the community (village) which they associated with, impacted on their values of leadership. Such a finding extends the work of Begley (2002) who argued that there are various sources whereby values are encountered, learned, or adopted. He referred to the sources of values as from a group (e.g. family), organisation (work place), community (society) and culture. Although common, nevertheless, these sources sometimes provide value conflict. He exemplifies such by stating that “personal values may conflict with those of a community, or professional values may conflict with those of the organisations with which people associate with” (p. 54-55).

In PNG higher education institutions, women’s values and beliefs about educational leadership have not been shared in detail in the organisations. Instead, the dominant masculine organisational culture invokes a hierarchal view of leadership which fails to acknowledge ‘women centred’ approaches (Blackmore, 1998). In other words, the personal values women hold towards leadership are not accommodated within the leadership structures of the institution, and therefore, the voices of the women are frequently silenced.

The study revealed that most of the women valued role modeling to female students and other women academics. This finding is in with agreement with a recent study by Kezar and Lester’s (2009) in the US, that role modelling fosters leadership skills in the academia. In the context of this study, because women’s representation in leadership positions was scarce it was important that women educational leaders encouraged and inspired female students and women academia to increase their representations in leadership roles. As suggested, due to the patriarchal nature of the PNG society where leadership is more associated with men, it was significant to demonstrate that women were capable as men in

their leadership roles and responsibilities in higher education, and also for the wider community such as their provinces and villages to recognise the value of education for young girls. The women in this study showed that their values and beliefs engrained in Christian and Melanesian principles through family upbringing acted as a compass in setting the direction for their leadership practice. As Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa and Warsal (2010) highlighted “the influence of family in developing values that are carried through into leadership actions is central to the process of learning leadership in Pacific contexts” (p. 71). The next section addresses the challenges women academics encountered which contributes to the under representation of women in formal leadership positions in the higher education.

The Context of Higher Education

The social structure and systems in the university posed many challenges for the women educational leaders and aspiring leaders. I address these challenges in this section by examining the organisational ethos of the university which was predominately masculine, the impact of the appointment process, gatekeeping, and the lack of support systems in terms of mentoring and networking among women and for women. Evidence of discrimination within the structure of the university will also be discussed. Finally, the findings on women’s narratives on balancing work/family and their lack of confidence are discussed to understand Papua New Guinean women educational leaders and aspiring women leaders’ experiences within the higher education context. I begin with the discussion on the organisational ethos of the institution.

The culture of the University

This study revealed that organisational culture had an impact on the women’s career advancement. Within this context, culture is referred to the deeply embedded patterns of behaviour and the shared set of assumptions, beliefs, values or ideologies that are shared by the members of the organisation and is influenced by its past and the environment (Kezar et al, 2002; Rutherford, 2001; Trinidad et al, 2005). As such, this study showed that increasing the number of women in

formal leadership positions had little influence on either how women were positively viewed as leaders or increased the number of more women in leadership positions. This finding may be indicative of the powerful religious values and colonization which introduced bureaucratic and hierarchal structure. These structures have complemented the notion of ‘big man’ ideologies, which are deeply embedded in PNG masculine culture. According to Kilavanwa (2004), new organizational structures in the society weakened women’s position. In so doing, it has upheld the masculinist dominant culture in higher education institutions.

In the context of this study, one way in which the organisational masculine culture played out was how the career pathway within the institution provided limited opportunities for women to pursue further studies for higher qualifications or leadership training. As such, the career advancement pathway was described as a ‘bottleneck’ because women had minimal formal learning opportunities. Thus, women tend to pursue studies at their own accord through private sponsorships and overseas scholarships with less support from the institution. This finding aligns with Akao’s (2008) study that in Solomon Islands women also do not have similar access for leadership training as men do due to the androcentric nature of the organisations. For this study, it seems possible that these findings may explain that women are viewed as least expected to be interested in advancing their careers because of family responsibilities, and also are less likely to take the opportunity if considered because their spouses might not support them. Such assumptions are engrained in societal norms of women’s role which the organisational culture reinforces through its functions and preference for men. Mabokela’s (2003) study which investigated university organisational culture and its impact on South African women academics, highlighted “organisational culture provides cues on how to behave and reinforce expectations to influence organisational members” (p. 132) which further disadvantages women as they are expected to comply with the work norms that establishes rules and regulations based on the male dominant culture.

Another significant finding was that the masculine culture of the organisation was evident through the uneven distribution of leadership positions between male and

female academics. One possible explanation is because generally women academics make up a small proportion in PNG institutions. Thus, their chances of progressing to formal leadership positions are limited especially when appointments are based on seniority, that is, longer service in the institution and by holding formal leaderships in departments. So what chances would women have if the majority are placed at the lower positions within the university hierarchal structure? Research has shown that the gendered nature of universities have positioned women to compete in a hostile environment and therefore make little impact on the masculine organisational cultures and hierarchal structures (Bagilhole et al, 2005; Fletcher, 2007; Harley, 2003; Shaw et al, 2007; Weyer, 2007 White, 2003). Notably, the exact figure of women in leadership positions or whether leadership positions are evenly distributed between the genders was difficult to source due to unavailability of current statistics. This may indicate a lack of monitoring on gender equity issues by the respective institution and the PNG Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology.

On one hand, recent research in Melanesia shows that scarcity of women in educational leadership positions is due to some of the factors such as lack of mentoring and networking among women, leadership training and development of leadership programmes (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Strachan et al, 2007; Strachan, 2009; Warsal, 2009). What constitutes these factors is the organisational culture. This may be so because if the organisation recognised and valued women's presence and contributions in higher education institutions, it would embrace and foster gender inclusive approaches in all aspects of the organisation's functions in order to empower and inspire women to leadership positions. However, the male dominant culture has not made this possible for the women academia. Thus, the term 'chilly climate' (Sandler et al, 1986) used to refer to women's experiences within western university culture (Curtis, 2005; Copper et al, 2006; Sandler, 1992, 1993) is also evident in PNG. Young (2005) in the US noted that the notion of patriarchy extended beyond the family structure into social structures, and facilitated discussions in both the formation and maintenance of patriarchy culture that operates in educational organisations to the disadvantage of women. Part of maintaining this culture in higher education occurred through the appointment process.

Appointment process

The findings in this study showed that the majority of the women leaders accessed leadership positions without much difficulty because appointments were believed to be based on experience and qualifications. This also included aspiring women leaders' appointments. These findings are in agreement with studies in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Akao, 2008; Warsal, 2009). Nevertheless, the some of the women's comments also showed difficulties they encountered within the appointment process. One of the main factors is the lack of transparency through the informal and formal appointment process.

This study found that lack of transparency had two aspects: it can be a 'blessing in disguise' as described by Akao (2008) and also confirmed by Warsal (2009) because women accessed leadership positions either without formal interviews and non advertisement of the positions. However, on one hand, this study also found that lack of transparency was a slippery process because it also prevented women from progressing to leadership positions. The latter findings are consistent with western literature that indicated that women face challenges to advance to leadership roles in higher education institutions because of lack of transparency in the recruitment and selection process (White et al, 2006a, 2006b; Wyn, 1997). In PNG each university administers the selection and appointment processes through their respective schools that make recommendations for the university Governing Council to endorse the appointments. Sometimes lack of consistency in the appointment processes creates an opening for lack of transparency that disadvantaged women. It is important to note that within the context of this study, the informal appointments done in the various disciplines or the respective schools were also prerogatives of the strand heads and school deans. The informal appointment process posed difficulties for women's renewal of contracts and promotion to leadership positions. For example, a participant who had initially been appointed informally encountered resentment from the majority of the appointment panel in her department. Similarly in Australia Wyn (1997) noted, the informal appointment processes can disadvantage women academics. For this study, there are some reasons to explain lack of transparency process in the informal and formal appointment process was a 'blessing in disguise' in how the institution enabled women to advance in their career. First, some of the women

had been appointed during the period the institution was undergoing restructuring that created new positions and so particular persons were sought after because of their expertise in the newly introduced programmes, who coincidentally were women. Second, as a result of another institution that had merged with the university, it was seen vital for the continuation of the programmes from the previous institution by those who (women) were already teaching, leading and managing those programmes. Third, due to the urgent need to fill in vacant positions some women did not undergo the formal appointment procedures. This finding is similar to that of Akao (2008) where it noted that Solomon Islands “principals and Education Authorities did not want the work involved in looking for another replacement. So may be they chose the next available candidate” (p. 104). As studies in Melanesia have claimed, women educational leaders do not plan their career (Akao, 2008; Warsal, 2009, Strachan et al, 2010), likewise, this is certainly the case for the women in this study that the factors for women’s blessing in disguise had been a pathway leading to an academic career that was unplanned systemically.

Another important feature in the findings was that length of service was sometimes more recognised as opposed to whether a person was best suited to the leadership position. In such cases, it may be suggested that it seemed vital for the university to appoint someone who was familiar with the culture of the institution for the maintenance and continuity of the systems. Furthermore, building relationships and rapport with men and women over a long period of time was advantageous because women were not seen as a threat to the status quo, and therefore increased the likelihood of their appointments. This finding aligned with the work of Blackmore, Thomas and Barty’s (2006) in Australia who referred to such cases as covert incumbents where length of service and reputation in the institution are considered for appointments. They argued that appointments are based on the expected normal identity of educational leaders who equates to the culture and systems of the institution. In other words, for women in PNG higher education institutions, exceptions were made for those who led with a silent voice, and who were unlikely to disrupt the management and leadership culture of the organisation. Therefore, all the leadership positions women held were through internal appointments. However, the downside of ‘covert incumbents’

appointments is that they disadvantage women applicants outside of the institution. They stand little chance of accessing leadership positions as outsiders when the universities are already male dominated in PNG.

Although there is evidence of internal appointments of women's leadership positions, still there was no substantial progress for women accessing leadership roles in the university. Instead it has been a snail pace for women and they are still under represented in formal leadership positions in PNG institutions despite gender equity legislatives in the government and policies within the institutions. But more significantly, in Australia Blackmore (1989) has asserted that it is not about increasing the number of women in educational leadership but going beyond that. It means that in PNG context, it is vital to identify and examine other factors that impede women's appointments in order to increase women in leadership positions so women's voices can be heard in the forefront as they draw strength from each other in unity to pave way for other women to advance to leadership positions. As Akao (2008) elaborates, "their visibility will hopefully encourage other women to think of themselves as leaders. Seeing more women in leadership positions may hopefully motivate and inspire more women to take up leadership positions" (p. 107).

The findings showed that the women resented being selected as a 'token woman' just to show that women were represented in leadership positions to fulfil the institutional gender equality policies. Instead, they felt that their appointments should be based on individual merit, that signifies they are worthy of the leadership positions. These findings are congruent to western literature that found women regarded themselves as token woman because they were encouraged to apply for leadership positions to make the shortlist diverse (Bagilhole et al, 2006; Bagilhole et al, 2008; Ozkanl et al, 2008, Marshall, 1993). Similarly White (2003) in her study of senior academic women in Australian higher education, on the implications of token women due to male hegemony in leadership positions stated that:

The presence of the women in leadership roles in higher education does nothing to further the position of the majority of women, although it could

be argued that token women have symbolic importance of demonstrating that some women can reach senior positions. (p. 51)

This study found that women believed they were appointed on merit, yet, they felt that present level of qualifications may constraint their access to higher posts as Head of Department/Discipline, or a Dean's position. One possible explanation is that majority of the leadership positions in the institution were held by men who had PhDs as their highest qualification; therefore women felt they had minimal chances of accessing these leadership positions with only a Masters qualification. Also, it may seem that in some cases, the most highly qualified applicants were given first preference for the positions so men, who hold a higher percentage of postgraduate qualifications are four times more likely to access leadership positions than women. In contrast, women in the United States are twice likely as men to hold a doctorate, yet, their narratives are similar to the women in this study, and that is men are more than five times more likely to lead school districts (Grogan et al, 2009).

In PNG context, it may be that women do not have many opportunities for further studies as women in western contexts due to the limited number of the universities in the country, so women may have to travel abroad to acquire a PhD. Also, it is possible this makes their situations more complex because of their role and responsibilities in the family. The opportunity to do further study also depends on how supportive spouses are as it seems in many cases they normally make the final decision. As Akao (2008) discovered in Solomon Islands, a woman missed out on acquiring further qualifications although she had been "offered a scholarship for postgraduate studies overseas but because her husband had a job promotion and he did not want to accompany her" (p. 99), she was expected to support him and did not take up the scholarship. It is circumstances such as this that make the decision making process difficult for the women because decisions may lean towards the interest of the husbands, and women miss out on study opportunities. Other studies in Melanesia confirm that men normally make the final decisions in the family emphasising perceived male superiority over the women (Strachan et al, 2010).

The socio-cultural context played a significant role in influencing women's opportunities for leadership. Within this context is the role of the wantok system in the informal and formal appointment processes. This finding is consistent with a study in PNG by Tivinarlik and Wanat (2006) who found the wantok system, created pitfalls of nepotism in the selection and appointment process. Their study revealed that the wantok system contributed negatively to the appointments of school leaders and teachers as relatives were preferred over other applicants. In contrast, Warsal's (2009) study in Vanuatu indicated that the wantok system provided women with a path leading to a "gateway to occupying leadership roles" (p. 116). However, in the context of this study, the drawback of the wantok system is that it encourages nepotism which may increasingly influence the appointment decision-making process, thereby erecting more barriers for women to advance to leadership positions. The wantok system becoming a part of an organisational culture is concerning because in PNG, the higher education is male dominated and so this may mean that are likely to be biased in their appointments. So it may seem even more difficult for women applicants when men whose relatives are in the appointment committees are also applying for similar leadership positions. It signifies the role of gatekeeping by the men which I next discuss.

Gatekeeping

One further key finding in this study was the role men played as gatekeepers – those who had influence in the selection and appointment processes. In the context of this study, it is important to note that the highest leadership post within the university for respective schools, is a dean's position or even deputy dean were all held by men, with the exception of one female professor dean. Also, the majority of the other leadership positions were held by men therefore, based on seniority they dominated the appointment committee panels within respective schools in the institution and the highest authority body that endorses overall appointments, the Governing Council of the institution.

The findings of this study are similar to that of western literature that indicates the power and the influence male gate-keepers have to impede women accessing

leadership positions (Acker, 1994; Bagilhole et al, 2008; Blackmore, 1993; 1999; Blackmore et al, 2006; Coleman, 2007, 2009; Hall, 1996) and literature from traditional patriarchal societies such as Uganda (Sperandio et al, 2008; Kagoda et al, 2009), China (Coleman et al, 1998), Nigeria (Uwazurike, 1991) and Vanuatu (Strachan et al, 2007). Within the PNG context, it may seem that the rules intended to guide, and protect standards of the status quo are constituted on the 'big man' leadership model. It also means that the socio-cultural context plays a detrimental role in the appointment process through male gatekeepers. In a way, the male gate-keepers try to maintain the 'old boys' network (Acker, 1994) which means to ignore and discourage women seeking leadership positions within the university.

This finding supports the claims of recent studies in Melanesia that men are key players in gate keeping (Akao, 2008 & Warsal, 2009). Women in the study were vocal about the male gate-keeping roles due to the fact that they were hugely under represented in the majority of the formal leadership positions within the institution. This claim is supported by Christman (2003) in the US in her synthesis of literature regarding the women in the academia, and the barriers that hinder their success. She pointed out that "we must view the under representation of women in the academy as a problem" and one way of looking at it means "we must look at who the gatekeepers are and the power that they wield" (p. 9). As research in Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Portugal, Ireland, and South Africa show, gatekeeping has the roles of excluding and controlling who should be promoted within educational organisations, and at the same time facilitates the distribution of information and opportunities for all members of the organisations (Ozkanl et al, 2009). It is in such maintenance of control and the overall process that minimizes women's leadership career advancements.

In the context of this study it may appear that male gate-keeping controlled and silenced the voice of women in formal leadership positions. The women spoke of how they encountered problems to their career progress through male gate-keepers who dominated the appointment committees. One participant had difficulties in her re-appointment despite having the necessary credentials for the position was closely monitored by male gate-keepers. This may mean that the role of male gate-keeping was not only during the appointment process but was

continuous because women's performances were constantly monitored after the appointment stage. In PNG society, being a man and a leader is perceived as natural so when women are given leadership roles, they are challenged at many levels and scrutinized for faults. The discourse of leadership has traditionally been and continues to be a male domain and so women face challenges in establishing themselves as leaders with male colleagues. The masculine big man discourse of leadership in PNG society could mean that women may feel they have to prove they can do everything to attest their leadership roles. Most often the society expects women to display the leadership attributes of men such as aggressiveness and authoritarian in order to recognise them as leaders amongst the male dominated leadership arena.

Furthermore, this finding indicated that in the context of this study, the male gate-keeping roles were entrenched in the socio-cultural ideologies, beliefs and value system discourses that were evident in the division of labour and socialization. It may seem that masculine characteristics and leadership attributes were most sought after. Additionally, woman's place in the society as 'secondary' naturally places them at lower academic positions while men naturally are seen more suitable for leadership positions. Women are further disadvantaged in progressing to leadership positions due to the many layers of barriers within the PNG socio-cultural context. Additionally, the masculinist culture of the organisation reinforced the role of the male gate-keepers, and discriminating women through such process. This sort of discrimination is supported by literature from Australia (Bagilhole et al, 2008; Blackmore et al, 2006; Ozkanl et al, 2008; White et al, 2000b), UK (Acker, 1994; Coleman, 2005, 2007, 2009; Hall, 1996), New Zealand (Brooking, 2005) and USA (Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993).

Another significant feature of this research, which is not abundant in the literature is that some women were also key players in gate-keeping. For example, a participant's initial application for a leadership position was opposed by a woman on the appointment panel. It was only after this woman had left the institution that the appointment panel had advised this particular woman to apply and her application was successful then. It would appear that in some cases women safeguarded their leadership positions by ensuring that other women did not

advance in their careers. Instead of being the voice of the women in the panels, they created difficulties for other women to access leadership positions in the university. This finding is similar to Copper and Strachan's (2006) study that examined the experiences of women academics in three countries: US, New Zealand and Romania. They found that in one case, a department woman chairperson was trying to sabotage another woman's tenure application. The woman applicant confronted the woman and also filed a personal grievance to her faculty union. However, in this study the women had legitimate grounds to contest certain decisions by gate-keepers, yet they chose not to take further actions. This is one of the few studies which mention such a concept within educational settings. I believe by not challenging this system perpetuates a cycle of social injustice against women. Women have a role to bring such experiences to the forefront because they are issues that need to be dealt with in order to break the social injustice cycle, and the silence of the women.

Lack of support systems

In the context of this study, the lack of support systems was referred to as the lack of mentoring and networking due to women's attitudes towards each other and the nature of the higher education social structure and systems that perpetuate masculine culture. First, a significant finding in this study was women experiencing lack of formal mentoring especially from women in formal leadership positions. This aligned with previous research (Christman, 2003; Hoff et al, 2008; Mabokela, 2003; Sperandio et al, 2008). The majority of the women in this study who were in formal leadership positions had advanced without formal mentoring. Enrich (2008) defines formal mentoring as initiated within the organisational system to determine the match between mentor and mentee to groom aspiring leaders. For this study, there are a number of possible explanations for lack of formal mentoring amongst women.

Firstly, women's comments illustrated that when internal leadership promotions were made, there was tendency that women displayed negative attitudes towards those promoted, and were uncooperative under their leadership. This may have created some tension in professional working relationships and therefore, women

in leadership positions were unable to mentor other women academics. This is congruent with the findings of Sperandio and Kagoda (2008) in Uganda, who found that women leaders were overwhelmed with issues created by resentful colleagues, both female and male who are unwilling to accept a woman 'boss'. Observing such attitudes and behaviour can discourage other women from undertaking leadership roles to avoid experiencing similar ordeals. Also, the negative attitudes from females created the tendency for the women in leadership positions to carefully tread throughout their leadership journey by being cautious in what they either said or did. It is confirmed by Mabokela's (2003) study with women leaders in South African higher education institutions that "lack of support placed woman in a tenuous position" (p. 138). All these actions may have perpetuated a cycle of silence causing PNG women's voices to be excluded from decision making processes in higher education.

A second explanation is that women in leadership positions saw aspiring women leaders as a threat to their leadership roles and therefore they were reluctant to mentor them. These thoughts cultivated negative attitudes towards each other, and resulted in no networking among the women to support and to encourage one and other to increase numerical representation of women in leadership positions. To illustrate, one aspiring woman leader mentioned how a particular senior female academic was always challenging her views and ideas, during meetings and opposed her involvement in overseas conferences. This signified that women did not recognise the significance and the value of networking as a means of accessing leadership positions (Sherman, 2002) and therefore worked in isolation. Grogan (2002) in the US has noted, "mentoring leads to networking" (p. 125) and so lack of networking results in isolation.

These findings are consistent with a recent study by Hoff and Mitchell (2008) in the USA that investigated administrators' (male & female) perceptions of the barriers in advancing to school leadership roles. Their study found that women felt isolated and that women in leadership positions did not seem to be assisting with the developments of networks and support mechanisms. Hoff and Mitchell (2008) stated, instead of 'sisterhood' women described each other as 'undercutting' and 'backstabbing' (p. 9). Similarly, the women in this study

referred to each other as ‘always shooting each other down’ and ‘throwing stones at each other’. A participant in Tuaru’s (2006) study in two PNG universities reinforces that “other women bosses have hindered the professional advancement of other women” (p.7). Overall, the negative attitudes to each other by being unsupportive reinforced the cyclical pattern of silence, and that also explains why women may be less likely to advance in their career because they create their own barriers for advancement. It is obvious to some researchers that women academics and the social systems in the higher education have failed to recognise “mentoring... is vital if women are to gain entry into the ranks of leaders who are best positioned to act upon the injustice in the systems at both micro- and macro-levels” (Grogan, 2002, p. 126) to empower and elevate women to leadership positions. Interestingly, dualism characterizes women’s earlier claims about their values as role models to inspire students and aspiring women leaders that were discussed in the section women’s values and perceptions in leadership, and yet they lacked mentoring and networking with other women and that is contradictory to their earlier claims.

Thirdly, another possible explanation for lack of mentoring is that the academia is male dominant, so a junior woman lecturer may find that either she is one of the first or perhaps the only woman in her department/strand. Ultimately being the only women academic makes one invisible (Acker, 1994) and isolated without a female role model and mentor. Interestingly, although some women mentioned informal mentoring by some men at the initial stages of their academic career, however, there was no indication of male academics mentoring women for leadership positions. This may be due to the masculine culture of the university as discussed earlier, where men were preferred as leaders, and hence women were not mentored for leadership positions. Nevertheless, some women’s narratives indicated that building personal relationships with certain women in the departments that flourished into friendship made room for informal mentoring.

There are a few downsides to lack of formal mentoring among women. Firstly, as stated earlier, minimal or no mentoring among women leads to working in isolation, and secondly lack of networking means the status quo – the dominant leadership discourses in the institution are not challenged. Thirdly, the formal

mentoring programs within the institutions normally perpetuate the status quo by reproducing and maintaining approved behaviours, ideas and values of leadership practices and policies within the systems (Grogan, 2002), and therefore if networking and mentoring is lacking among females, there is a tendency of women being immersed within the formal organisational mentoring programs that perpetuates the status quo. Grogan (2002) argues:

To this function of mentoring (maintaining status quo) the dark side is to draw attention to the fact that... the status quo ...not serve woman aspirants to leadership well in the past and is not likely to serve them well in the future. (p. 125-26)

For that reason, women need to work collaboratively to be able to - 'think outside the box' - on the functions of the status quo, in order to recognise and be critical of the formal mentoring programmes within the social structures. Overall, effective mentoring programmes need to be developed for women in higher education by collaborating with women from other departments within their respective schools in the universities, in order to enhance women's success in the organisations. As Shakeshaft (1993) claimed one of the reasons women do not access leadership roles is that "they lack the support systems to help them... [and] women are much less likely than men to have formal and informal networks" (p. 50).

The topic of discussion could be subject for further research to rectify the issue and develop some support mechanisms for women in all the higher education institutions in PNG, and importantly for women educational leaders to be able to network across the country. As it may seem up to date, such an initiative in PNG is yet to be developed and taken into action. Also a recent study in the US by Kezar and Lester (2009) observed that there may be a lot of mentoring programmes in institutions, however, little research has been conducted that focuses on how well the programmes develop leadership potentials of individuals in the academia. If this research indicated lack of mentoring amongst women in a developed country, then how would this be different in PNG context when

majority of the systems within higher education sector replicates the functions of the institutions in the western context?

Discrimination

The findings of this study revealed that the women had experienced overt and covert discrimination showing consistency with other research from developed countries (Acker, 1994; Brooks, 1997; Coleman, 2007, 2009; Hall, 1993; Hearn, 2001; Shakeshaft, 1987) and developing countries (Addi-Raccah, 2002, 2006; Aladejana et al, 2005; Brown et al, 1996; Brown et al, 2000; Celikten, 2009; Kagoda et al, 2009; Sanal, 2008; Turan et al, 2002). Such a finding is similar to recent studies conducted in Melanesian contexts; Solomon Islands (Akao, 2008) and Vanuatu (Warsal, 2009) where women encountered discriminatory attitudes and behaviours especially from male counterparts based on gender. Stereotyped roles of women naturally saw them unfit for leadership roles, and these findings supports the idea of Coleman (2002) in the UK that gender stereotypes in educational leadership fits in the natural order portrayed by male leadership and female subordination. For this study, a possible explanation for such findings is that the key influential factor for overt discrimination was as a result of the entrenched cultural beliefs, values and traditional ideologies regarding the role and the place of women in PNG society.

One form of covert discrimination the findings revealed which is in agreement with Coleman (2005) was based on age. The findings further showed not only being a younger women but also being a junior staff member undertaking informal leadership roles such as leading projects meant facing discriminatory attitudes and behaviours from men. This illustrated that being young and a junior woman academic were dual limitations to accessing formal leadership roles because in many instances preferably older, and the next senior person should be first considered for leadership positions. Therefore, even if younger women academics displayed leadership potential yet their chances of gaining access to formal leadership opportunities were limited.

Findings also indicated that some women were in denial of experiencing discrimination although their narratives showed some indications of it. In one instance, a participant had been promoted a week before the interview so this may have impacted her view on not experiencing discrimination. Interestingly, she had been promoted after 10 years of teaching at a tutor position but doing the work of a level 1 academic. This finding aligns with other studies (Coleman, 2007, 2009; Rusch et al, 2006). Possible explanations of denial are offered by Coleman (2007) that denial of discrimination could show lack of consciousness about it, while Shakeshaft (1989) conceded it as a survival mechanism in organisations. Seemingly women's denial perpetuates the status quo because they did not offer a different voice to challenge that. Ultimately denial results in career immobility and women's invisibility (Marshall, 1985; Rusch et al, 2006) in PNG higher education. As stated earlier, due to male domination in the appointment panels, women's denial was a strategy for survival in male dominated working environment. However, this research indicated that their denial may contribute to the under representation of women in formal leadership positions.

The findings also showed that discrimination frequently led to the harassment of the women. One possible explanation for the prevalent of harassment against women in higher education institutions was due to the ineffectiveness of the anti-discriminatory policies within the organisation. Questions need to be raised about when the policies were last reviewed and what are the penalties for any act of discriminatory behaviour against women. Because in the incident mentioned, there were no firm actions taken against such discriminatory act. The findings indicate that there is a need to investigate different forms of discrimination that undermine the rights of the women academics in higher education institutions.

Balancing work and family

The narratives of the women in this study confirmed claims that balancing work and family was challenging, as also found in work by other researchers (Court, 1994; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998; Ho-Sui Chu, 2009; Grogan et al, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1993). It was a challenging experience for women to manage their role as an academic, and at home as a mother, and a wife. Besides these roles

single mothers also played the role of a father. Changing opinions which can result in role conflicts due to the multiple roles women played claimed by Ozkanh and White (2008) was not evident in this study. However, women found seeking a balance between the multiple roles at home and work problematic. Single women parents admitted it was more difficult to strive a balance with different roles which is in agreement with Chisholm's (2001). In the US Shakeshaft (1993) noted, women are usually responsible for the majority of childcare and homemaking, besides work life. This means women leaders in PNG higher education were doing 'double duties' similarly, Acker (1994) refers to it as 'double shift'. The findings also revealed the challenges of motherhood indicating that women were doing triple duties. The findings aligned to other studies in western contexts (Acker, 1994; Court, 1994; Ozkanh et al, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1989). The women perceived that juggling academic teaching duties, along with leadership responsibilities and trying to maintain family at home through their as duties as wife and a mother were challenging. For example, a woman had to do two - three home trips while at work for her children during early infancy stages because they refused bottle-feeding. The women felt this was one of the major impediments for their progression to formal leadership roles.

A sentiment also shared by a participant as an alternative, and a way forward for women enduring 'triple duties' is for the institution to recognise and value the contributions of the women, and to support their work by providing child-care facilities nearby. In addition, the PNG government needs to adopt the framework of 'family friendly' policies that are used in western context (Coleman, 2007) but modify to suit the socio-cultural context of PNG so that 'family friendly' policies can be implemented at higher education institutions to assist women in managing family and work with minimal difficulties. It is also necessary to advocate the awareness of work-life balance issues as an open discussion matter for families and educational organisations in PNG to highlight this as an issue. The findings in this study indicated that the source of support with extra responsibilities at home was from extended families. The extended family network gives women the support for domestic duties and child caring. These findings were congruent to a study conducted in Indonesia that extended family members helped with childcare responsibilities (Hasibuan – Sedyono, 1998). It showed that in a way, the women

in developing countries such Indonesia and PNG are supported by extended families through the kinship system.

Akao's (2008) study revealed that some women mentioned that their spouses were supportive but did not specifically describe the nature of support in terms of domestic duties. In contrast, this study found that women were specific about the type of support they did not received from spouses in terms of household chores. One reason for women in this study having unsupportive spouses with domestic chores was because according to the society, the domesticated duties were the sole responsibility of women. This argument is supported by research in Melanesia (Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2000; Strachan et al, 2010; Warsal, 2008) that traditionally women in Melanesia have had their roles ascribed as a mother, caregiver, nurturer of children, and the role in preparation of food during feast. It is therefore culturally inappropriate for men to be domesticated based on the following reasons. Firstly, allowing a husband to do domestic chores in PNG is a sign of disrespect from the wife which can bring shame to her as it will be talked about as an issue within extended families. There will be questions raised by the extended family members concerning why the husband performs domestic duties because according to the Melanesian culture it is the women's role and responsibility. Secondly, a man in PNG society that performs household chores which according to custom is a women's job can have a man labelled as 'man olsem meri' in PNG pidgin which means 'he is like a woman'. This can compromise a man's social standing because domesticated household chores were traditionally signs of subordination and viewed as secondary in the society, which still reinforces stereotypical roles in the family. On one hand, the women might face possible problems with the husband's family and her family for letting the men to do what is known as women's work. It is therefore the societal cultural expectations and prescribed role of the women to maintain her duties at home and at the workplace. Also it is believed that "support from the partners is their survival as educational leaders. To maintain that support, they must not neglect their womanly duties" (Strachan et al, 2010, p. 71). These findings are in agreement with other studies in developing countries that traditional patriarchal societies left no room for negotiation of dual responsibilities with spouses in domestic spheres (Brown et al, 1996; Sanal, 2008). Otherwise, as revealed by one

participant in this study that it could end up in family conflicts or even worst physical violence. Such finding is consistent with Melanesian literature on women and violence that if women go beyond the boundaries of their prescribed roles, for example by being not submissive to men according to the cultural norms, consequently there is violence against women (Donald et al, 2002; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009).

The findings confirm Melanesian literature on balancing work/family (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Warsal, 2009) that women saw domestic duties as their 'cultural obligation' and that such 'traditional role' at home was a priority over professional lives due to the gender socialised roles within the Melanesian socio-cultural context. Additionally, Warsal (2009) asserted "Christian socialisation that women should be submissive to men as heads of the home by doing domestic chores, may have reinforced their work-life balance difficulties" (p. 112). Interestingly, the above findings of putting family first and then fitting their jobs around family for most women is in agreement with western literature in UK by Coleman (2007) as one of the three routes she described women in England took when balancing work and family. The second route was women delaying motherhood to focus on their career. This confirms that "combining a senior position at work with motherhood is a difficult prospect that may lead to make choices about which to prioritize" (Coleman, 2009, p. 17). This study found that instead of focusing solely on their career, some women limited their family size to having just one child to be able to progress in their career. The third route which the majority of the women in this study took as discussed earlier is managing a dual household with shared responsibilities. However, in PNG context it is important to note that women carried on with the 'double duties' and 'triple duties' submissively with a silence voiced as a cultural discourse. As stated earlier, it was perceived to be the work of the women in PNG society and therefore this impacted women's career advancement for leadership roles in the higher education.

Lack of confidence

The study found that some women lacked self confidence in their leadership roles which is a common theme in western literature (Coleman, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2005, Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993) and very recent studies in Melanesia (Akao, 2008; 2009). However, the findings of this study indicated that some of the women were confident to be leaders in the church and family situations but lacked confidence to undertake formal leadership roles in the university. A possible explanation for this finding portrays the influence of early socialisation, and that is, the disparity of Melanesian cultural socialisation which identifies women with the private sphere (domestic roles), and the men in public sphere. Shakeshaft (1989) highlights low confidence for women in educational leadership positions can result from a:

...[a] system that keeps women separated from experiences that would help build confidence in the public sphere...women have self confidence in areas in which they have experience [private sphere functions], whereas men have self confidence in areas in which they have been allowed to participate [public sphere functions]. (p. 84)

The culturally ascribed role of the women in PNG reinforced silence and passiveness which impacted on women's confidence to undertake formal leadership positions. This finding is in agreement with recent Melanesian literature (Akao, 2008; Kilavanwa, 2004; Pollard, 2000; Warsal, 2009) and other developing countries (Brown et al, 1996; Kagoda et al, 2009; Turan et al, 2002) which are traditionally male dominant countries. Akao (2008) discovered in the Solomon Islands that the "influence of their cultural socialization patterns from an early age" (p. 108) may have conditioned women to follow the cultural scripts. This is reaffirmed by some of women's comments in this study that they felt inferior to men and were unwilling to make themselves look foolish in case they did not meet the leadership expectations. Therefore, it appears that 'fear of failure' (Cubillo et al, 2003) cultivates low self esteem and confidence in their ability to perform outside the prescribed roles. However, the impact of socialisation attributed to women's lack of confidence and the women believed they needed certain leadership skills and attributes before embarking on leadership roles. One

possible explanation may be that in a PNG, cultural society centred on male hegemony and autocratic leadership approach, the women viewed the dominant masculine leadership image 'big man' as the norm and felt inferior.

Another finding attributed to women's self esteem and confidence was the pressure of leadership responsibilities which the women described as overwhelming to deal with. This was due to the lack of leadership training to prepare women for leadership roles. Aspiring leaders' comments showed that not having acquired PhD dimmed their self perceptions of becoming leaders. These findings are congruent with those of Warsal (2009), who found differences in the level of confidence between women in leadership positions and aspiring women leader in her study. However, what is interesting is that although the women felt gaining higher qualifications was an important pathway to leadership opportunities, their lack of confidence in seeking further education and the barriers presented to them was a barrier.

One of the significant features in this area therefore was the attitudes and the behaviour of some of the men towards women. The comments showed evidence of women experiencing harassment and aggressive behaviour from male colleagues. For instance, a participant was unwilling to undertake future leadership positions because in her previous leadership role, a male colleague had brought his relatives to the workplace to intimidate her when she had disagreed with certain decisions concerning him. It is important to note that such actions may have caused emotional, psychological trauma and potential physical harm to the women. Safety concerns and as a result of previous unpleasant experiences it affected the confidence of the women to lead. Likewise, a study in PNG by Tonissen (2000) discovered that violence of all forms creates an environment of fear, uncertainty and psychological effects on the women. In such instances, it was not 'fear of failure' as claimed by Cubillo and Brown (2003) but rather 'fear of their safety' that limited their leadership aspirations due to physical and verbal harassments. Likewise, Sperandio (2009) claims "women may face harassment from their male peers or superiors in the workplaces that discourages them from pursuing a career" (p. 148). For other women who observed how women leaders were harassed may have caused them to be reluctant to aspire for leadership

roles. The next section addresses the common leadership approaches women associated with in their leadership practice.

Women and educational leadership approaches

A significant feature of this study was that women associated with collaborative leadership approaches. This style of leadership as stated earlier is believed to be identified with women because of their nature of caring and collaboration, and this finding complements western literature on women and educational styles (Blackmore, 1998, 2002; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Collard, 2005; Court, 1994; Hall, 1993, 1996; Ozkanl et al, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989) and very recent studies in Melanesia (Akao, 2008; Warsal, 2009). An important aspect of collaborative leadership approach was the aim to build good relationships at professional and personal levels with others because it was believed to encourage participation, team work and for women to be supported in their leadership roles. Blackmore (1989) confirms that a sense of connectiveness at a personal level as a powerful tool in leadership is strategic, especially to equalize the relationship between the leader and the followers.

This finding is interesting because the collaborative approach to leadership fits well with the Melanesian value system which embraces reciprocity as a tool in building relationships (Sanga et al, 2005). Such values ultimately set the foundations of a relationship based on trust and loyalty, and therefore guarantees support to the respective leader who had initiated that relationship building. The uniqueness of the Melanesian value systems of relationship building pose an advantage in women's collaborative leadership approach for participation and consensual decision making processes. Communication and involving other people in the decision making processes were believed to be fundamental for democratic leadership practice. For example, one participant described that her leadership role meant coordination and collaboration with other discipline leaders, chairpersons and the dean and the deputy, and most importantly those directly under her leadership. While another participant mentioned the importance of establishing external linkage with the community such as donor agencies, public

and private research consultation agencies, cooperate and government bodies to facilitate the collaborative process for the institution. As Akao (2008) emphasized that an essence of collaborative leadership approach is involving the wider community and all members of the educational institutions. Moreover, the democratic processes in collaborative leadership agree with other research that it provided opportunity for women to practice their leadership values of caring and respecting others (Lyman et al, 2009).

A significant finding in the area of leadership approaches highlighted that the women valued putting other people's interests and the needs over their own. This approach of leadership is believed to be linked to servant leadership (Alston, 2005; Green, 1991; Parolini et al, 2009) and this finding agrees with other research that is a prominent leadership approach in Melanesia (Akao, 2008; Pollard, 2006; Sanga et al, 2005; Strachan, 2009; Strachan et al, 2007; Warsal, 2009) where "leadership is about service, helping and supporting others" (Akao, 2008, p. 122). Women in this study viewed that this leadership approach was about empowerment and role modelling to women. However, what is interesting is that although the rhetoric of the women voiced the importance of empowering other women, many of their practices failed to demonstrate this. In many cases, they worked against other women gaining access to leadership opportunities within the institution. Servant leadership facilitated achievement of a shared vision through the personal development and empowerment of followers (Stone et al, 2004). It may mean that one way of empowering others was to work side by side with the followers by coming down to their level and sharing power with them rather than having power over them as resembled in typical PNG bureaucratic leadership. Such a finding also implied that it may be a strategy to deconstruct male hegemonic inequalities in the bureaucratic systems and the social structures of the higher education because of its non hierarchal approach.

The women's collaborative and servant leadership approaches appear to have been influenced and shaped by the Christian and cultural value systems, and women's feminine attributes. First, Strachan (2009) argued that the servant

leadership characteristics such as service to followers, submission, humility, honesty and respect reinforced the women's stereotypical ascribed roles within the Melanesian society. Similarly, in previous research by Strachan and Saunders (2007) that involved developing leadership programme in Vanuatu, they asserted that "those women whose leadership is servant leadership are more likely to be accepted as leaders because they are less threatening" (p. 42). The findings implied that adhering to the servant leadership based on Christian principles may have minimal impact to challenge and change the status quo of the hierarchal and bureaucratic organisational structures, systems and leadership that have been so long the male domain. Therefore, Strachan (2009) expressed "role of Christianity and traditional practices as constraining/or liberating forces for women" (p. 104).

Educational leadership in PNG is contextual because social context and culture influences leadership approach. The narratives in this research showed that leadership was not just learnt through leadership programmes, but the mechanisms of society, as well as the identities and intrinsic nature of the individual women shaped their leadership practice. The socio-cultural context of leadership in PNG, in terms of family upbringing, Melanesian cultural values and belief systems, religion and westernization influenced women's values and beliefs about leadership which was exhibited through collaborative and servant leadership approaches. This demonstrated that leadership is a process of social influence because the socio-cultural and the political environment in PNG impacted the leadership practices of the women. The ideological and cultural knowledge and societal expectations that have been passed down from generation to generation, and shared through social systems in the society, impacted the women's beliefs and practice of leadership. However, because culture evolves over time and leadership is a process of social influence (Shad, 2009) may mean that there is a tendency that leadership practice will also evolve. Consequently, women will increase in numerical representations and that their approaches of leadership will share the similar platform of mainstream leadership to be recognised and acknowledged in PNG.

Summary

The discussions in this chapter have examined the experiences of the aspiring women leaders and women in educational leadership positions in a PNG university. First, the discussions have highlighted that the PNG socio-cultural context has few implications on women educational leaders and aspiring leaders in the higher education. During their childhoods, many of the women academics were influenced by the male figures in their families. This illustrated that the male members of the family had much power and control over the female members of the family. At the same time, the societal culture that fostered male domination compounded by the cultural prescription of women's patterns of behaviour as subordinates, and the notion of 'big man' leadership, instigated negative attitudes towards women in the university by some of the male academics. On one hand, the social context provided informal leadership opportunities for women in the churches and in their family settings which enhanced their leadership skills, while on the other hand restricted the women's access to formal leadership opportunities in the workplace. I argue that educational leadership is contextual because this study found that the women's values and beliefs about leadership that impacted their leadership approaches were embedded in the socio – cultural context which was founded on Christian beliefs and principles, cultural norms, values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour and ideologies. Consequently, women tended to practice collaborative and servant leadership approaches in the higher education.

Finally, the discussions have revealed that the culture of the PNG higher education institution was also shaped by the socio – cultural context and the values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour, and ideologies, posed many challenges and limited women's access to formal leadership positions. The findings reaffirmed much of the discourse on the theory and practice of women educational leaders. However, more specifically it has identified and explored PNG women's experiences in the masculine culture of the institution, the appointment process, gatekeeping, and lack of support systems for women and how women are discriminated in the institution. Also, the challenges women encounter to balance work/family and including women' lack of confidence.

Overall, this chapter has revealed that PNG women educational leaders in higher education institutions have continued to be marginalized due to many factors, and therefore women remain significantly under represented in formal educational leadership positions, even though there is government legislative and gender equity policies in the workplaces. This may mean that gender equity policies, although present may not be effectively implemented and monitored in the institutions and such an area calls for further study.

In the next concluding chapter, I present the summary of the research, further suggestions for research and the limitations for the current study and include the recommendations for action to address the issues that have emerged as a result of this research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study has shown that the socio-cultural context of PNG can be a powerful influence in many aspects on the aspiring women leaders and women leaders' career advancement to educational leadership positions. This context also impacted on women's beliefs and values held towards leadership in the higher education context and in the community. In this final chapter, first, I present the summary of this study from Chapter Four. Second, based on the findings of this study identify issues and highlight some of the possible areas for further research. I then make recommendations to address the social justice issue of under representation of women educational leaders in PNG higher education. Finally, I present concluding remarks on the actions women educational leaders could take for addressing this issue. I begin by summarising the significant results of this study.

Summary of the research findings

There are important findings that have emerged from this study which (a) complement literature on women and educational leadership and (b) indicate the significance of the Melanesian context which impacts women educational leaders in higher education and influences women's aspirations for formal leadership positions.

Firstly, one aspect of this study has highlighted and confirmed that the socio-cultural context which includes religious and cultural norms, values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour, and ideologies of a country (Dimmock et al, 2002) and family values may have influenced the women's leadership values and beliefs, and consequently determined how they practised leadership in higher education. As such, women in this study associated with the collaborative and servant leadership styles. Nevertheless, it raised an issue of whether 'women's ways of leading' is problematic because the discourse is that there is a possibility of further silencing the women's voice in using this leadership approaches in PNG. It

is suggested because this study has highlighted that the societal culture and male domination is the fabric of the society at many levels such as in the political environment, public service and private sectors, in all the communities, for example, the church and the villages, and in family circles. Therefore, the attributes of leadership approaches women employ such as 'caring' and giving 'serve to others' reaffirms the society's stereotypical views of roles of the women, and they are not respected by men as leaders in their own right. Instead, such leadership approaches reinforces women having a place in the shadows and also lessen their voices in the formal leadership positions and management structures of the universities because the status quo remains unchallenged. However, on the positive side, if the women are able to collaborate and network among themselves to support each other, may be possible that PNG women's approaches of leadership can change the perceptions that people hold towards leadership that lean towards the traditional hierarchal and autocratic nature of leadership in most of the educational settings in the country.

Secondly, the findings indicated that the diversity and complexity of PNG culture had significant influence on the women and their leadership practices in higher education. One way in which this occurred is through the cultural socialisation during the women's childhood. The women in this study highlighted opportunities provided by male figures in the family: brothers and particularly fathers influenced their education for a successful career, and gave them opportunity to practice leadership in the family. It may mean may mean that there are some families with liberal and egalitarian family values despite the dominance of patriarchy that still prevails in the society. However, women voiced concerns that cultural scripts of their roles in the private spheres and the notion of 'big man' leadership were prominent in the higher education through the stereotyped attitudes from men academics that continued to marginalise women. Therefore, unless such discriminatory attitudes and mindsets of the men change, progress for women is possible.

One way to counteract such negative attitudes is to adopt an inclusive approach on awareness workshops for students and academics on gender issues in the higher education sector for everyone to develop an open mind about the importance of

gender equality. This study also revealed that the social contexts for the women in their families and church settings offered informal leadership opportunities and impacted their confidence and self esteem, and also developed leadership skills. However, such opportunities did not extend in the higher education context. Instead, women encountered many challenges in their leadership roles and in their career advancements for the following factors.

Firstly, the masculine culture of the university impacted on women's opportunities to show leadership. Much of the patterns of behaviour and the shared set of assumptions, beliefs, values or ideologies are embedded in the patriarchal culture of the society and the hierarchal structure of the organisation. The masculine culture of the organisation resulted in minimal opportunities for women's career advancement and support for further studies and leadership training. Thus, women had to organise and fund such opportunities for themselves. This culture created an uneven distribution of leadership positions for women academics, and that majority of the women were placed at the bottom of the hierarchal structure of the institution while men dominated the more senior leadership positions.

Therefore, based on seniority, this study found that male academics dominated the appointment panels and played the role of gatekeepers. This maintained the masculine culture of the organisation which further disadvantaged women. On one hand, the findings showed that women were also key players in gate-keeping, subsequently erecting barriers for other women's advancement to leadership positions. The appointment process lacked transparency in the informal and formal process which enabled some of the women to progress to leadership positions and at the same impeded others. Women resented being a 'token woman' to imply that the institution was complying with gender equity policies. The women also noted that lack of higher qualifications (PhDs) was of the factors that contributed to their unsuccessful attempts for gaining appointments in leadership positions. Nevertheless, in this study the appointment of women to leadership positions, as positive as it may seem, did not alter the broader cultural and social forces that perpetuated women's secondary status socially and economically.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the organisational structure and social systems failed to provide support systems for women in terms of mentoring and networking. The most obvious reason as stated earlier was due to the masculine culture of the university. But more significantly, this is because of some of the women's negative attitudes to each other driven by jealousy and resentment of other women's success and leadership. Therefore, mentoring and networking was lacking amongst women within the institution, and subsequently women worked in isolation. The findings indicated that women experienced covert and overt discrimination based on stereotyped roles of a woman, age, and level of position. While some of the women denied experiencing discrimination, seemingly, as a survival mechanism. Their denial may have resulted in invisibility and end career mobility because their voices were unheard on this matter.

Due to the PNG culture that associated women with domestic duties, the women's spouses were hesitant to support them in that area and hence the dual role of balancing work and family was challenging for the majority of the women. But the women received support from extended female family members with childcare responsibilities which reflects the collaborative value of the culture. Women viewed their domestic roles as being a cultural obligation as a wife and a mother, and chose to fulfil these roles without challenging them in order to avoid domestic violence. The study also showed that some of women had practised leadership at home and church settings as stated earlier, yet, they lacked confidence to lead in public spheres because they felt inferior to men and were afraid of failure. The fear of failure was due to male hegemony in leadership that posed certain expectations of leadership, and the overwhelming pressure and responsibilities of the leadership roles. Also, few women experienced verbal and physical harassment by male academics which caused safety concerns and affected their confidence, and self esteem.

The findings of this study add to the small, but increasing body of literature literature on the experiences of women and educational leadership in developing countries especially in the Pacific region, focusing on the Melanesian context and particularly PNG. This study casts light on the socio-cultural context PNG society the factors which influence the leadership experiences of women educational

leaders. As such, this study has explored the experiences of Melanesian women in PNG to enhance our understanding of their experiences as aspiring women leaders and women leaders, and what are their beliefs and values of leadership in a male dominated working environment. This research also paves the way for other women researchers in PNG and Melanesia as a whole to continue to voice issues and highlight the challenges women educational leaders experience to ensure that gender equity in the region is achieved. As more research is conducted it will help to rectify the current and future situations of women educational leaders in Melanesia.

Limitations of this study

Researching is expected to be an open, an accountable and a verifiable process because the process is a highly complex intellectual activity with potential limitations (O'Leary, 2004). Therefore, upon reflection, there were limitations of this study which must be considered. First, this study was conducted in one particular university situated in the city and therefore it would be inappropriate to generalize the findings of this study. However, most of the issues raised are supported by those identified in other studies. A second limitation was that, previous and current data on the statistics of women leaders in PNG higher education institutions was unavailable at the Office of Higher Education to substantiate the comparison between the male and female women educational leaders for this study. Instead, in Chapter One the statistics only showed the overall population of women academics in all the PNG higher education institutions which revealed a huge difference in the representation between men and women academics; and consequently meant women were under represented in leadership positions as already stated in Chapter One. In addition, the university where this research was undertaken was unable to provide the data on male and female academic population and their designated positions for me to use in the research for comparison relevant to this research.

The third limitation is that the women had consented for their participation in this study, however, they did not participate in the focused groups. While I am only speculating, one possible reason could be that the participants did think it was

necessary for their participation in two data collection methods which they may have felt was time consuming and not turn up on the appointed dates/time of the interviews. Finally, it was obvious that few of the older women in formal leadership positions were cautious in responding to the interview questions while the younger aspirant leaders and those in leadership positions were more open and shared some sensitive experiences. It is possible that some of the women's long service to the institution and may be out of respect for colleagues, and also to safeguard their positions in the institution were mindful in sharing their experiences. Which means this may have had effect on their viewpoints on certain issues that arose from the questions, and therefore to some degree may have presented biased information.

Implications for further research

There are important issues that have emerged from this research which are worthy of consideration for future research in Papua New Guinea. First, this research has revealed how the socio-cultural environment influenced the women's leadership experiences. Thus, these are worth exploring to seek culturally appropriate approaches to develop relevant gender implementation strategies and also identify how some aspects of PNG cultural value systems can be a vehicle to empower women in educational leadership. Culture is an important aspect of the people's everyday life and influences attitudes towards women, and so there is a possibility that we can integrate certain cultural norms, beliefs, and ideologies with gender implementation strategies to elevate the status of women in society.

Second, this research has highlighted the need for research to examine mentoring programmes and how can we measure the effectiveness of those programmes. But the question is: how does a mentoring programme looks likes, sounds like and feels like in the higher education in a PNG context? Such questions are raised because this study showed women referring to informal mentoring and no reference was made to formal mentoring. If there are no formal mentoring programmes in the institutions, then what sort of indicators can be used to develop gender inclusive programmes? Additionally, this research has raised the issue of lack of mentoring and networking among women which means that this needs

further research to understand ways to improve the situation for women. How women can network and identify strategies to maintain and encourage the continuity of the women's network once established.

The third significant area of focus for further research is exploring the Melanesian world views on research. As this study showed that as a researcher, I was confronted with a dilemma in to trying to uphold the western research principles and the some aspects of the Melanesian value systems. This means there is a need to seek, develop and apply appropriate cultural principles of research to be able to acknowledge the cultural protocols of the society. How can one uphold the ethical principles of research in a diverse cultural environment that has its own sets of protocols, patterns of behaviour and expectations that might compromise the ethical aspect of the research? How can researchers weave in western principles with cultural and social aspects of research? And more importantly, should they? Furthermore, the initial research design that involved focus group with the primary aim to triangulate data did not eventuate within the context of my study due to some reasons stated in the Chapter Three. Therefore, one may have to ask what sort of research methods are more appropriate when conducting sensitive topics for feminist research in one research site. Is it possible that focused group would have worked if data was to be collected in different research sites because the participants would not know each other so feel free to participate? What are the experiences of researchers in Melanesia, those of the culture and those conducting cross cultural research? In essence, many other aspects of conducting research in Melanesia do need further investigations to enhance research data collection methods, ethical principles and the research process itself.

Lastly, having conducted this research in one university, this calls for further research on women and educational leadership in PNG to be continued in other PNG higher education institutions, in the cities and other provinces to broaden the scope and width of this research topic to capture the diverse experiences of women educational leaders in PNG. In addition, more studies are needed to examine the policies and practices that address strategies to attain gender equity and seek ways to create a supportive environment for women in the higher education.

Recommendations

This study has highlighted several theoretical implications for future practice to support the aspiring women leaders and women in formal leadership positions, and also to increase women's representation in leadership positions. These are the following recommendations:

The first recommendation I would like to suggest is that a network of women be formed by women for women within all the higher education institutions for support, to be able share ideas together, to discuss and talk through the issues they encounter as women educational leaders. Women's demonstration of such unity will represent their strength as a group to be agents of change to inspire and encourage women to embark on leadership positions. Additionally, such women's network should expand beyond respective institutions to join hands with other sisters across the country, and with the support of the government, and non-governmental organisation such as the donor agencies to fund workshops, conferences which will examine issues on women and educational leadership in PNG. One of the aims for such network is for women to be able to have a voice in the arena - women and educational leadership in PNG.

The second recommendation I would like to make is that once women educational leaders in PNG have formed a network across the country, then the next step is that it has a responsibility as the biggest country with human and financial resources, and as the leading country in Melanesia in its implementation of gender policies to join hands with other Melanesian sisters from Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands to address the social justice issues on gender and educational leadership in the region. Their collaboration as Melanesian sisters is paramount in networking to seek strategies using 'The Melanesian Way' to rectify the current issues they experience due to culture, for example, male dominance in these societies due to cultural structures and systems in educational organisations. Although in many instances, the cultures across these four countries may vary but to a larger extent, the literature shows that the challenges they encounter are very similar. So it may be useful to work together to learn and encourage each other, be

empowered and disseminate information to other women educational leaders in their respective countries.

The third recommendation I suggest is that gender equity committees are formed, monitored and maintained at all PNG higher education institutions. The committee members should be gender balanced comprising of a member of the overall institutional management team, academics representing respective schools within the institutions, and the student leaders' representatives. One of the roles for this committee is to monitor and to ensure the effective implementation of the institutional gender equity policies. It is also significant that such a committee be formed to also organise gender awareness programs/fun activities (seminars, drama, plays etc) for both students and all academics to change the negative attitudes towards women and to support the notion of gender equity. In addition, the committee in collaboration with the Governing Councils of the institutions will address gender discrimination matters. There needs to be an effective process of sanctioning those who discriminate women.

The fourth recommendation I suggest is based on the assumption that institutions have formal mentoring programmes, and that all the higher education institutions review their existing mentoring programmes to ensure that they employ gender inclusive strategies. Also, there is a need to develop gender inclusive leadership mentoring programmes which can be delivered optionally through cross-gender or of similar gender partnership. In essence, the cross-gender approach can be a tool to change the cultural attitudes and perceptions held towards women as leaders during the mentoring process. However, in the event that there are no formal mentoring programmes, then the institutions have a responsibility to develop mentoring programmes. Meanwhile, more emphasis is required on informal mentoring amongst women through the establishment of women's network in respective faculties/strands and the overall institution.

The fifth recommendation is that the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, and the Department of Education, Department of Community Development through its divisions: Gender and Community and the Office for the Development of Women and the National Council of Women

collaborate to monitor and ensure that the government legislation and gender equity policies are addressed at all levels of education (primary, secondary & tertiary sector). One of the issues for the three bodies to address is the under representation of women educational leaders and the development of leadership programs for women teachers/academics and potential female student leaders. Monitoring should be conducted annually for consistent progress in the implementation of the gender policies. Also, current data on women and educational leaders in PNG is gathered and updated annually.

Summary

The narratives of the thirteen women in this research have highlighted what educational leadership for women in PNG looks like and feels like for women. It seems that the women have encountered many challenges in leadership, both in the past and the present. Papua New Guinea women educational leaders face the similar challenges of social injustice as other women in developing countries experience. This research concludes that many aspects of these challenges are engrained in the socio-cultural context: specific cultural and religious beliefs and values, and socio-economic factors which are the fibre of the society that, in turn maintains male hegemony in the higher education sector. It is only when we as researchers and those of PNG culture begin understand the interrelation of all these factors, then a clear picture of what and how we can support and empower women to increase their representation in educational leadership positions can be created. This is due to the knowledge that these barriers continue to contribute to the under representation of women educational leaders in the higher education institutions.

So the question is what is the way forward for women educational leaders and aspiring women leaders? The recommendations above are just one perspective and suggested in the hope that change will occur as a way to move forward because the social policy towards women are yet to be translated to real gender equity and empowerment in higher education. On the other hand, to simply emulate best practices that are operating in western cultures would not be adequate without incorporating such approaches within the Melanesian cultural

context for reference. Also, relying entirely upon the institutional gender policies to address the under representation of women educational leaders is not enough. Instead, the most influential tool is that, the power and the ability to bring change for women is by women. This calls for a greater need for women educational leaders in the society to stand together and have a voice as a group to bring life to those gender policies in the institutions, as agents of change for women in Papua New Guinea.

On one hand, there is the question of how can gender equity be achievable in a society that still upholds cultural norms, ideologies, beliefs and value systems, that to some degree undermines the status of women in the society and is still persistent in all the workplaces. How can we change the cultural stereotyped attitudes towards women? A fundamental approach is to take certain aspects of the Melanesian cultural value systems and use them as a vehicle on the path towards addressing social justice issues centred on women. Instead of working against the male hegemonic culture in the organisations which may only increase resistance for change, it is important adopt culturally appropriate strategies and approaches by using the values of respect, the importance of communal living, and dependability on each member of clan for the function of the kinship system, and reciprocity to recognise the significance of women's role as a leaders in PNG society. The main objective is to use such cultural values to highlight the important role and functions of the women in today's society for the country's social and economic growth. More importantly, using cultural appropriate strategies to address gender equity issues, the role and the place of women from a traditional perspective will change, making allowance for women to increase in the formal leadership positions in PNG higher education institutions. Overall, culture has to be seen in another light to achieve gender equity policies in the Melanesian region of the Pacific.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Access letter to the research site

Name and address of the institution

RE: SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON ‘WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS’ IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Dear Sir,

I am a Papua New Guinean student who is currently enrolled in the Masters of Educational Leadership at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. As part of the program I am required to undertake home – based research to complete my Masters thesis on a chosen topic and therefore, I am seeking permission to conduct my research in your institution.

My research topic is Women and Leadership: Experiences of Women Leaders in Higher Institutions in PNG. As a young aspiring woman leader, I have keen interest in finding out the experiences of women leaders through this study to develop a better understanding on the notion of educational women and leadership in PNG.

The research intends to explore perceptions and views of ten women who either currently hold leadership positions or are aspiring women leaders. The ten prospective participants will be involved in face to face focus group and semi structured interviews. The research will be adherent strictly to the University of Waikato’s Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (2008) located at <http://calender.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalConduct.html> <<https://webmail2k.waikato.ac.nz/exchweb/bin/redirect.asp?URL=http://calender.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalConduct.html>> and University of Papua Guinea Ethics Regulation.

All information will be strictly confidential, and every effort will be made by use of pseudonyms for the institution and participants to remain anonymous. The information obtained will only be used for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of Masters of Educational Leadership.

I anticipate conducting my research in April, 2009 should I be given access to your institution and prospective participants upon their consents. The meetings will be conducted outside the official business hours.

This research project is under the supervision of Rachel Saunders at the University of Waikato and for any queries, her contact details are: Telephone: (64) 7 – 8384500, Facsimile: (64) 7 – 8384555 and Email: rachs@waikato.ac.nz. If you wish to contact me, my contact details are: kv13@waikato.ac.nz and mobile (64) 7 – 0211012466.

Yours faithfully

Kerren Vali
Masters of Educational Leadership Research Student

Appendix 2 Participant invitation letter

Date: 27 April 2009

Dear _____

Subject: AN INVITATION FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I wish to invite you to participate in a research project that I am currently undertaking as part of my thesis in Masters of Educational Leadership at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

The research project is titled: **Women and Leadership in Higher Institutions in PNG**. The research aims to explore what the experiences of women leaders are. What are your views and perceptions of leadership as a woman? It is hoped that this research will bring to light how leadership is perceived by women in PNG. In addition what are the influences that either had an impact in your advancement to present leadership positions or were challenges in your career pathway?

As an aspiring woman leader it is my aim that I develop a better understanding of the notions of educational women and leadership in our country. And I believe that this research project is one way to enhance my understanding within our context from your shared experiences.

I have further elaborated about this research project on the attached *participant information sheet*, including what your roles and rights are if you wish to participate.

If you wish to participate, please refer to the attached *informed consent form* and indicate your voluntary participation by signing the form by 07 May 2009.

Yours faithfully

Kerren Vali

Masters of Educational Leadership Research Student

Appendix 3 Participant information sheet

THE RESEARCHER

I, Kerren Vali from Papua New Guinea am currently pursuing Masters in Educational Leadership in the School of Education at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand. It is part of my studies that I am required to conduct research for my Masters thesis. I have a Diploma in Primary Education from Gaulim Teachers College in East New Britain Province, PNG and a Bachelor of Education from Auckland College of Education, Auckland, New Zealand.

RESEARCH TOPIC: Women and Leadership in PNG Higher Institutions

The parameters of this research are based on these questions:

- What are leadership experiences of women leaders in higher institutions in PNG?
- What influences women's access to leadership roles and careers advancements within their current leadership structure?
- What are the beliefs and perceptions hold towards leadership?

I will reiterate that the aim of the research to explore what the experiences of women leaders are. What are your views and perceptions of leadership as a woman? It is hoped that this research will bring to light how leadership is perceived by women. In addition what are the influences that either had an impact in your advancement to present leadership positions or were challenges in your career pathway? It is also my intention that this research will contribute to the body of literature on educational women and leadership.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS A POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT?

You will be asked to participate in two separate interviews; an individual and a focus group interview. The individual interview duration will be approximately an hour. The focus group interview will comprise of 5 participants and be duration of 90 minutes. All individual and focus group interviews will be held at a mutually agreeable time and place. Granted by your permission, the interviews will be tape recorded so that your responses may be accurately recorded. No attempts will be for interviews unless you consent voluntarily to participate in the research project. It is essentially important that you are kindly asked not to disclose the identity of other members in the focus group. Additionally not to disclose any information, instead all shared information should be keep strictly confidential so that no one is harmed in any way.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE USED?

The data gathered from this study will be analyzed and be published to fulfill the requirements of a Master's thesis in Educational Leadership at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. It will also be used as a reference source for presentations at academic presentations and seminars, including publications in academic journals and future theses. You will be sent a copy of the thesis upon completion via email.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you agree to participate in the interview, you have the following rights before, during or after the interview:

- a) To refuse to answer any particular questions, or to withdraw from the interview at any time.
- b) Right to withdraw from the research up until 1 st August 2009.
- c) To ask further questions about how the information will be used, or the research project up to period of 2 months after the interview.
- d) Examine any information you have provided either to amend any part you wish to, or request that certain information be withheld and not be used, up to the period of data analyse after the interview.
- e) Examine the transcript to confirm that it is a true representation of your responses.
- f) Information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and that every effort will be made to keep you anonymous by use of pseudonym.
- g) To raise any complaints regarding the interview or the research project to the School of Education Human Research Committee: University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, 3240 or contact my thesis supervisor whose details are as followed:

Rachael Saunders

Telephone: (64)7-8384500

Facsimile: (64) 7-8384555

Email: rachs@waikato.ac.nz

RESEARCHER'S CONTACT DETAILS

You can contact me should there be any quires regarding the study and/ or its procedures.

Kerren Vali

The University of Waikato

Private Bag 3083

Hamilton, New Zealand

Mobile: (64) 7 – 0211012466

Email: kv13@waikato.ac.nz / kv_ali@hotmail.com

c/-Silo Aleva

P.O Box 2335

Boroko-N.C.D

Ph: (675) 3232135/3257722

Appendix 4 Consent form

I _____ have read and understand the nature of research study on women and leadership and what my role is as a participant.

I also understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to decline answering any particular questions during interview or to withdraw from the study up to the point at the beginning of the analysis stage of the data on 1 st August 2009.

I also understand that identity of my institution and all information obtained shall be kept strictly confidential and that I will remain anonymous when quoted. And I also agree to for my interview to be taped recorded.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5 Semi structured interview schedule

Welcome statement

Welcome to this interview. The purpose of this interview is to be able to find out what your experiences are as a women leader. In other words, what are influences that have impacted on your leadership roles? I will reiterate the following rights you have as participants of this research. You have the right to decline to answer any particular questions, or even to withdraw from the interview at anytime.

1. How long have you worked in this university?
2. What are your responsibilities in your role here? (HOD, strand leader etc)
3. Tell me something you do in your role which is a rewarding experience?
4. How long have you been in this leadership role?
5. What are the qualities of a good leader?
6. What are your values and beliefs of leadership? (For example, what do you perceive as important in how you display leadership?)
7. What are some of the challenges you encounter within the organisation in a leadership position? (E.g. colleague views, decision making process)
8. Tell me about the selection/appointment process for this leadership position. What was it like? What were your experiences?
9. How do you view the distribution of leadership positions between men and women?
10. Who has supported you in your leadership role? (E.g. colleague, family etc)
11. What are your aspirations for leadership roles?

Prompts

Tell me more about....?

Can you explain...? Or can you clarify...?

What do you mean by that...?

What is an example of ...?

In what ways...?

Why is it...?

Note: List of inductive questions.

Appendix 6 Focus group interview schedule

Welcome statement

Welcome to this focus group interview. The purpose of this interview is to be able to find out what your experiences, attitudes and feelings are as a women leader. In other words, what are influences that have impacted on your leadership roles? I will reiterate the following rights you have as participants of this research. You have the right to decline to answer any particular questions, or even to withdraw from the interview at anytime. It is important that group confidentiality is upheld by every member.

1. How does it feel to work in a male dominated working environment?
2. What are some ways in which this institution or faculties have advanced women to leadership positions? (E.g. institutional gender policy)
3. What do you think are some challenges women face when advancing to leadership positions?
4. Brainstorm what improvements would you suggest to assist women to develop leadership and be further represented in leadership roles?

Prompts

Tell me more about...?

Can you explain...? Or can you clarify...?

What do you mean by that...?

What is an example of ...?

In what ways...?

Why is it...?

Note: List of inductive questions.

Appendix 7 Timeline of activities

| Week/Date | Task |
|--|--|
| Week 1 27/04/09- 01/05/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain permission for access through site authorities (letter/formal appointment). • Information session with participants about the research. • Completion of consent forms. |
| Week 2 04/04/09- 08/05/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information session with participants about the research. • Completion of consent forms. • Negotiation with participants for dates of interviews. • 1x individual interview (A) • Transcription of interview A |
| Week 3 11/05/09- 15/05/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x individual interview (B) • 1x individual interview (C) • Transcription of interview B and C • 1x focus group session (1) |
| Week 4 18/05/09- 22/05/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x individual interview (D) • 1x individual interview (E) • 1x individual interview (F) • Transcription of interview D, E & F |
| Week 5 25/05/09- 29/05/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x individual interview (G) • 1x individual interview (H) • 1x individual interview (I) • 1x focus group session (1) • Transcription of above interviews |
| Week 6 01/06/09- 05/06/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x individual interview (I) • 1x individual interview (J) • Transcriptions of interview I & J • All transcriptions are given to respective participants for crosschecking and authenticity. • Attend to participants' feedback on their transcripts. |
| Week 7 08/06/09- 12/06/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x focus group session (2) • Organisation and analysis of data • Preparing and organizing the data phase |
| Week 8 15/06/09- 19/06/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing and organizing the data phase • Data exploration phase and data reduction phase |
| Week 9 22/06/09- 26/06/09 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data exploration phase and reduction |

Note: This initial timeline was subject to change to accommodate the preferable dates of the participants and also to include the additional three individual interviews.