THE CAREER ADVANCEMENT EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE MANAGERS IN THE ICT SECTOR

by

Zolile Londiwe Nosibusiso Zikode

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SUPERVISOR: PROF BENNY OLIVIER

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I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and endurance to complete this study.

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SUMMARY

A considerable amount of research effort has been invested in investigating the under-representation of women and their career advancement in traditionally male dominated sectors. Although it is widely recognised that females' participation at all levels of management as well as in the economy has increased substantially over the years, more than half of the economically active women in South Africa are still found in occupations which are extensions of the traditional female role. The technology sector is regarded as one of the vital sectors to the economic development and sustainability of any country, therefore, attracting and retaining women in the sector is an imperative. Despite initiatives to address inequalities in the workplace, attracting and retaining women in the ICT sector nevertheless remains a challenge. Thus, the aim of this research was to explore the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.

An exploratory qualitative study approach was adopted to gain insights into the said career advancement experiences of female managers at different levels in an ICT company. Semi-structured interviews were administered to ten female managers in the company. Insights from the interviews formed the basis of the data analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Integrating the participants' experiences with pertinent literature provided an in-depth understanding of female managers' career advancement experiences. Literature and findings of the research indicate that various factors combine to give effect to the so-called glass ceiling, which denies women access to opportunities crucial for their career advancement. Lack of role models, mentoring and networking opportunities, work/family conflict, working hours, training and development and organisational culture were identified as factors that inhibit the advancement of women into senior leadership positions. In addition, the findings further revealed that commitment to ongoing development, mentorship, an enabling organisational culture and flexible work environment are career advancement enablers.

The outcome of the study confirms that there is an imbalance in the representation of women at senior management levels in the participating organisation (at the time the study was done) and, while numerous studies have sought to analyse the trends in employment and retention, in South Africa very little is known about the factors that influence the retention and advancement of women, specifically in the ICT sector. The study thus highlights the interventions required to attract, develop and retain women in the ICT sector as a means for organisations gaining a competitive advantage.

Key words:

Career advancement, experiences, ICT sector, male-dominated, senior leadership, transformation, under-representation, women

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CHAPTER 1: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background and motivation for the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the research aims, the paradigm perspective and the research design. As part of the research design, the research approach, research strategy and research method are discussed. The chapter then concludes with the layout of the dissertation's chapters.

1.2 Background and Motivation for the Study

Since the beginning of the 20th century, women have increasingly entered professions and occupations previously reserved for men (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015). However, two decades after the new political dispensation in South Africa, the legacy of the apartheid system and the historical oppression of women is still reflected in some of the key economic sectors in the country. As a result of both the legislative and non-legislative discrimination associated with the past, there are still professions that are predominantly male-dominated, with few women holding managerial positions, especially in the ICT sector (James, Smith, Roodt, Primo & Evans, 2006).

The technology sector is regarded as one of the vital sectors of economic development and sustainability in any country (Pretorius, Mawela, Strydom, de Villiers & Johnson, 2015). Hill, Corbett and Rose (2010) state that attracting and retaining women managers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce will maximise innovation, creativity and competitiveness. Despite initiatives to address inequalities in the workplace, attracting and retaining women managers in the ICT sector remains a challenge (Fouad & Singh, 2011).

A considerable amount of research effort has gone into investigating the under-representation of women managers and their career advancement in the traditionally male dominated sectors (Fouad & Singh, 2011; Hill, Corbett & St. Rose, 2010; Pretorius et al., 2015). The definition of career advancement differs from individual to individual however, ranging from reaching a top position at a particular company to gaining experience in multiple roles. Zunker (2002, p. 34) defines career advancement as a "lifelong process which involves career growth". Perhaps the most inclusive meaning of the concept of career advancement is provided by Louie (2013) when he states that a workplace that promotes opportunities for career advancement would typically include expanding employees' skills sets, giving them additional responsibilities that lead to an evolution or a changing of their roles, acknowledging accomplishments through raises and promotions as well as offering a tailored career advancement plan for each employee that aligns with his or her professional goals. Career advancement is one of the most important elements for employee satisfaction and retention. Numerous studies have revealed a link between career advancement prospects and employee satisfaction and ultimately, retention (Thurasamy, Lo, Amri & Noor, 2011; Munjuri, 2011). Therefore, a commitment to career advancement of female managers by organisations would enable steps toward attracting and retaining women managers in the sector.

Although it is widely recognised that women's participation in all levels of management and in the economy, has increased substantially over the years, more than half of the economically active women in South Africa are still found in occupations which are extensions of the traditional female role such as nurse, teacher and administrative workers (Michie & Nelson, 2006). Gender stereotypes and negative perceptions about the role of women managers in the ICT sector are still prevalent (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015).

Today, one of the greatest challenges that Human Resource (HR) practitioners face in the ICT sector is to identify response strategies through which women managers can address career advancement challenges (Orser, Riding & Stanley, 2012). This will involve designing viable talent management programmes that enable women managers to

advance their career paths, thereby ultimately retaining these valuable employees (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015). In this respect, career advancement is seen as a strategic tool to develop women managers at different levels in the organisation, to enhance engagement and ultimately, loyalty to the organisation (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2004).

1.3 Problem Statement

Since 1994, the South African government has adopted a strong gender equity approach, encouraging and compelling employers to prioritise the appointment, development and advancement of women managers in various sectors (Pretorius, et al., 2015). Most companies in the ICT sector have implemented graduate programmes to make it easy for young people, particularly female graduates to be absorbed in the sector (James et al., 2006). Despite all these efforts, women managers in the ICT sector still face career advancement challenges and are hard to retain (Fouad & Singh, 2011).

With about just 20 percent of the entire ICT workforce being female (James, et al., 2006), HR practitioners are faced with challenges of understanding factors that affect the retention of women managers as well as factors hindering their career advancement. Understanding these factors will improve how organisations approach these complex issues and assist them in how best to design people management strategies - to achieve a competitive advantage.

Continued exclusion of women managers in the ICT sector - deliberate or unintended - not only implies that women managers will continue to have few opportunities to influence the ways in which the sector should transform, but also means that companies will remain under pressure to deal with equity discrepancies without implementing proper strategies of how to overcome them. If the reasons for appointing, retaining and advancing female managers in the ICT sector are not accurately identified and overcome, the sector will continue to lose female managers and remain dominated by male managers.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated based on the background and problem statement:

1.4.1   Central research question

How do female managers in the ICT sector describe their career advancement experiences?

1.4.2   Research sub-questions

1.4.2.1   What enablers and inhibitors of career advancement are experienced by female managers in the ICT sector?

1.4.2.2   What are the suggested strategies that organisations can implement to recruit, develop and retain female managers in the ICT sector?

1.4.2.3   To what extent do opportunities for the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector affect their loyalty towards their organisations?

1.5   Aims

1.5.1   General aim

The general aim of this study is to explore the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.

1.5.2   Specific literature aims

The specific literature aims for this study are as follows:

1.5.2.1   To conceptualise and understand career advancement as a construct.

1.5.2.2   To conceptualise and understand the career advancement of female managers.

1.5.2.3   To conceptualise the enablers and inhibitors of career advancement for female managers.

1.5.3   Specific empirical aims

The specific empirical aims for this study are as follows:

1.5.3.1   To explore the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.

1.5.3.2   To explore the enablers and inhibitors of career advancement experienced by female managers in the ICT sector

1.5.3.3   To identify suggested strategies that organisations can implement to recruit, develop and retain female managers in the ICT sector.

1.5.3.4   To explore to what extent opportunities for the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector affect their loyalty toward their organisations.

1.6   The Paradigm Perspective

1.6.1   The meta-theoretical (philosophical) paradigm

This study adopted an interpretive paradigm and a constructivist view to explore the experiences of individual participants (Flood, 2010). The constructivist view is based on the assumption that there is no single objective reality, but multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a commonality of interest in a particular phenomenon

(Krauss, 2005). Knowledge is thus established through the meanings attached to the phenomenon studied. The interpretive paradigm views reality and meaning-making as socially constructed and holds that people make their own sense of social realities (Tubey, Rotich & Bengat, 2015). According to Terreblanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), the point of departure for this paradigm is that social phenomena, such as employees' experiences, are best understood from the subjective perspective of research participants. As this study was concerned with the subjective conscious experiences of women in ICT, the constructivist view and the interpretive paradigm were deemed the most appropriate perspectives.

1.6.2 The theoretical paradigm

This study was conducted within the discipline of Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) and is related to the sub-disciplines of Career Psychology and Organisational Development (OD).

1.6.2.1 Industrial and Organisational (I/O) Psychology

IOP, as a sub-discipline of psychology, focuses on the practice of psychological principles, theory and research in the scientific study of human behaviour in work and /or organisational settings (Coetzee & Van Zyl, 2014). IOP psychology has two main objectives: firstly, to carry out research in an endevour to gain more knowledge and understanding of human behaviour in the work environment; and secondly, to apply that knowledge to optimise individual, group and organisational functioning (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010).

1.6.2.2 Career Psychology

Career Psychology is concerned with studying of career development and career behaviour as an essential part of human development (De Villiers, 2009). According to Coetzee and Van Zyl (2014), at the centre of this this sub-discipline of psychology is the

provision of models and psychological explanations for organisational and career-related phenomena, as per below:

- Individuals' job related preferences, interests, motives and values

- Person-environment congruence and job or career satisfaction

- Work identity and identity at work, psychological career preoccupations relating to career or life stages and career development

- Psychological factors that influence retention

- Employability, job embeddedness, experiences of career well-being, career agency and adaptability, career counselling and guidance, early work history, occupational or organisational or job choice and career movements after organisational entry, work or family issues, career plateaus and retirement planning.

1.6.2.3   Organisational Development

The sub-discipline of OD comprises the long-range efforts and programmes aimed at improving an organisation's ability to survive by changing its problem-solving and renewal processes (Brown, 2014). The purpose of OD interventions is to assist organisations to assess themselves and their environments and rebuild their strategies, structures and processes in order to improve its effectiveness and the effectiveness of its members (Cummings & Worley, 2015). The researcher focused on the role that OD can play in developing interventions to attract, develop and retain women in the ICT sector.

1.6.3   The methodological paradigm

This study followed a qualitative research approach. Such an approach attempts to increase understanding of why things are the way they are in the social world and why people act the way they do (Tubey et al., 2015). The study was designed from an

interpretivist perspective, with a philosophical orientation of both hermeneutics and phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology entails contextual research and is concerned with making sense of human experience (Terreblanche et al., 2006).

According to Thomas (2010), the most fundamental principle of hermeneutics is that all human understanding is achieved by repeatedly considering the interdependent meaning of parts and the whole as they form. As a mode of analysis, it suggests a way of understanding the meaning- or trying to make sense of textual data which may be unclear in one way or another (Thomas, 2010). In contrast, phenomenology is about the study of phenomena - or things as they appear in our experience (Thomas, 2010). Both these approaches are relevant to this study and were used to make sense of the meaning of data collected from the participants, in order to understand and interpret their career advancement experiences.

1.7 Research Design

Research designs are the plans and steps for research and consist of conclusions concerning broad assumptions and specific techniques of collecting and analysing data (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2003) defined research design as "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research question and, ultimately, to its conclusion." Research design can thus be considered as a guideline that a researcher should take from the beginning of the research to its conclusion, and consists of the research approach, the research strategy and the research method (Creswell, 2014).

1.7.1 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. Creswell (2014) defines a qualitative study as an inquiry process which seeks to construct a framework or picture. Schurink (2003, p. 3) viewed qualitative research from a holistic standpoint, stating that "qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich,

contextual, and detailed data." Based on these descriptions, it can therefore be inferred that more emphasis is placed on 'holistic' forms of analysis than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations. A qualitative approach enabled the objective and holistic study of female participants' subjective experiences as they construct multiple realities in their daily lives (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). This stance is supported by Mason (2010) who states that qualitative research is mainly about exploring experiences and not about formulating specific research hypotheses. As this study focused on exploring and understanding their views of career advancement in the ICT sector, from the perspective of the participants, a qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate.

1.7.2   Research strategy

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 600), a research strategy is "the general plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research questions." These authors (Saunders et al., 2009), state that the selection of a suitable research strategy is informed by research questions and objectives, the existing body of knowledge on the subject area to be researched, the resources at the disposal of the researcher and the philosophical underpinnings of the researcher.

In this study a case study strategy of inquiry was used in which the career advancement experiences of female ICT managers was explored (Creswell, 2014). In-depth individual interviews were utilised to gather detailed information from participants while interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the information in order to understand the career advancement experiences of female ICT managers (Willig & Stainton-Rodgers, 2007).

1.7.3   Research method

1.7.3.1   Research setting

The study was conducted in an ICT company in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa. The selected company operates in the Contact Centre, Unified Solutions and Telecommunication environments. This study was conducted solely on female managers in the chosen company.

1.7.3.2   Entrée and establishing researcher roles

At the time of research, the researcher was an employee in the organisation where the study was conducted. The HR Director at the organisation gave consent for the study to be conducted in the organisation. Once permission to conduct the research had been obtained, the researcher initiated engagements with potential participants to explain the purpose and the benefits of the study. Participants who were willing to participate in the study signed a consent form to confirm their willingness to contribute to the study. The researcher emphasised that information would be kept in the strictest confidence.

1.7.3.3   Research procedure

In order to gain access to the participants, permission was obtained from top management of the said organisation to conduct the study with female managers of different levels. The motive for the study was highlighted and participants were made aware of the benefits that the study would have to the organisation.

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The researcher identified a Human Resource representative as a gatekeeper of the study who was then responsible for facilitating access to respondents and logistical arrangements. The context and purpose of the study was clearly explained, and

confidentiality was assured to all participants. Interviews were scheduled at a convenient location and time for all parties.

Participants were given the participation information sheet and were asked to complete the consent forms. After obtaining informed consent, the researcher explained that they could withdraw from participating at any time. She then asked the participants to read the instructions carefully and fill out the demographic section of the interview. Once each interview session was concluded, participants were asked if they had any questions and thanked for their participation. All sessions were audio taped.

1.7.3.4   Research participants

Whitley (2002) states that when research is designed, the results are intended to apply to a certain target population of people. This target population can be as broad as everyone in the world or as narrow as the workers in a particular job in a particular factory. Gray (2004) amplifies this by stating that the totality of people, organisations, objects or occurrences from which a sample is drawn is a population, in which the concept of totality means everything or everyone. According to Creswell (2014), research populations are composed of all the individuals whom the researcher intends to study.

In this study, the population consisted of all 20 female managers in the company. These managers were of different race groups, genders, age groups, occupational categories, educational levels and managerial levels. According to Creswell (2014), sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too small to make data saturation difficult, and not be too large to make a deep, case-oriented analysis difficult. Thus, a purposive sample of 10 junior, middle and senior-level female managers was drawn from the population on the basis of their knowledge of the topic being investigated (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

1.7.3.5   Data collection methods

Interviews are by far the most common way of collecting data in qualitative research because the real time interaction with the participant gives sufficient flexibility for the researcher in facilitating the participant to explore their lived experience (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method as information was obtained first-hand from the participants with the purpose of allowing interviewees an opportunity to offer their interpretations of reality. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), this is a useful data collection method, especially during the exploratory stages of the research. Due to the nature of variables involved in this study, secondary data sources, such as Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and employee turnover records, were also consulted to validate the information.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), semi-structured interviews, which were used in this study, are so labelled because the interviewer does not enter the interview setting with a planned sequence of questions to be asked of the respondent. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) further suggest that in-depth interviews allow the researcher to make interpretations which reflect the interviewees' accounts based on the responses of the participants, providing insight into experiences, rather than statistically significant relationships.

When developing the questions to be asked during the semi-structured interviews the researcher incorporated the funnelling technique (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013), which allowed the researcher to form impressions of the situation from open-ended questions. This involved a transition from broad to narrow themes. In order to establish credibility and rapport during the interviews, the researcher evinced a genuine interest in the responses, allayed any anxiety, fears and suspicions or tensions that cropped up or emerged in the process. The researcher stated the purpose of the interview in a sincere and straightforward manner and, as mentioned, assured participants of complete confidentiality in the study.

1.7.3.6 Recording of data

According to Terreblanche et al. (2006), interviews are often recorded by taking down notes, audio and video recording. The use of a tape recorder is vital for conducting interviews, as the tape-recording process enables the researcher to capture a large amount of information from many participants over a very short space of time (Gray, 2004). Therefore, to capture the data, the researcher obtained permission from each participant to record the interview with an audio recording tape, while taking notes. All data was stored in a secure place and kept confidential; and as indicated, participants were made aware of the process for the recording, storing and processing of data.

1.7.3.7 Data analysis

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013) the analysis of qualitative data is not straightforward. The problem is that, in comparison to quantitative data analysis, there are relatively few well established and commonly accepted rules and guidelines for analysing qualitative data.

The primary data analysis approach of this study was based on the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology, which aims to identify the meaning(s) behind participants' experiences (Willig & Stainton-Rodgers, 2007). The data analysis process outlined by Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) was followed. This entailed reading the transcribed text a number of times and dividing it into meaning units so as to identify commonalities, differences and contradictions across a number of participants describing the same phenomena. Then themes that were reflected in each section of the text were identified and labeled. Subsequent to that was a more analytical process aimed at connecting the themes which produced a cluster or table of themes highlighting the main concerns of the participants on the particular topic of interest. Subordinate themes evolved out of the initial themes identified by the researcher. The data was then prioritised, which eventually produced definitve main and subordinate themes as

identified in each transcript. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the data analysis process that was followed.

Step 7: Writing up

⇧

Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

⇧

Step 5: Moving to the next case

⇧

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

⇧

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

⇧

Step 2: Initial noting

⇧

Step 1: Reading and re-reading
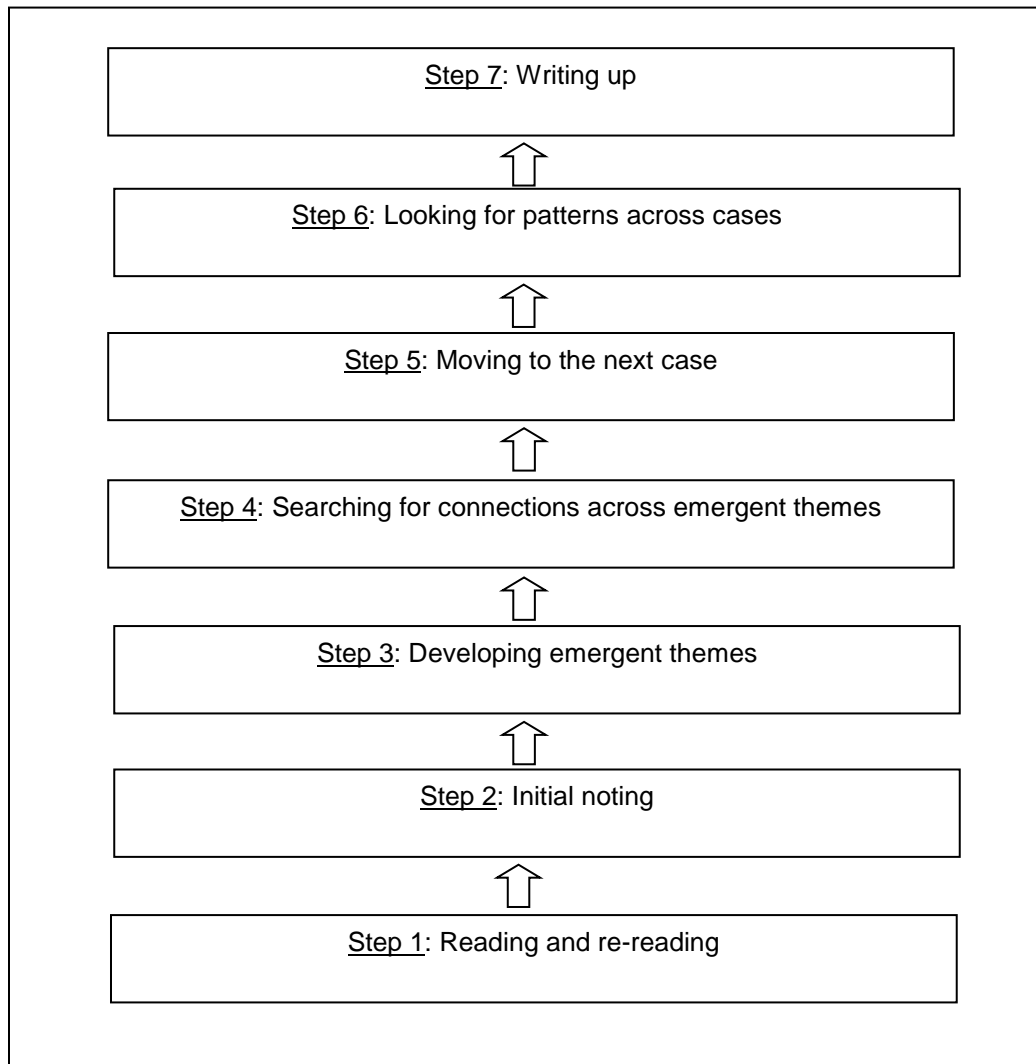
Figure 1.1: The qualitative data analysis process Source: (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009)

1.7.3.8   Strategies employed to ensure quality of data

Various steps throughout the process were adopted to ensure the quality and integrity of the data. The quality of the data and the rigour of the process was assessed to ensure that the generated findings were credible, transferable, dependable and conformable.

- Credibility is defined as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is the criterion used to demonstrate the truth of the findings by establishing whether the researcher has made a clear link between the research findings and the original views of the participants

- Transferability can be defined as the extent to which findings derived from the research process can be applied to other contexts and with other participants (Babbi & Mouton, 2001)

- Dependability refers to the stability of the findings over time

- Conformability refers to the degree to which two or more independent researchers can corroborate the accuracy of the results of study (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

These methods are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Each participant was given the typed transcript of his or her interview and the findings, and was requested to confirm that the data had been interpreted accurately.

1.7.3.9   Ethical considerations

According to Saunders et al. (2009), "ethics refers to the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the study or those affected by it". In this study, ethical guidelines on privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were emphasised and adhered to throughout the study. Informed consent

was obtained verbally and in writing from all participants and data gathered was stored safely to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Written approval to conduct the research was obtained from the Human Resources Department of the participating organisation. Ethical clearance for the study was then requested and obtained from UNISA's Ethics Committee before commencement of the empirical study.

1.8. Chapter Lay-out

The chapter lay-out of this dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Scientific orientation to the research
Chapter 2: The concept career
Chapter 3: The career advancement of female managers
Chapter 4: Research methodology
Chapter 5: Findings and discussion
Chapter 6: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the background and motivation for the study as well as the problem statement, the research questions, the research aims, the paradigm perspective and the research design. As part of the research design, the research approach, research strategy and research method were discussed. The chapter then concluded with the chapter layout of the dissertation.

The concept career is examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONCEPT CAREER

2.1 Introduction

The concept career is discussed in this chapter. Starting with careers in the contemporary world of work, the discussion then explores contemporary career perspectives, which include the boundaryless, the protean, the global and the kaleidoscope career perspectives. Thereafter career meta-competencies are examined, followed by career development, career choice, career wellbeing and satisfaction. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the stages of and factors affecting career advancement.

2.2 Career in the Contemporary World of Work

2.2.1 Evolution of the concept career

A review of the literature made it clear that there are different views of what a career entails, depending on the context. The term 'career' is often used in different contexts and suggests different meanings (Coetzee, 2006; Schein, 2006). In a general sense, the on-going relationships that form between people and their work creates a link between individuals and organisations and are commonly known as careers (Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012). Traditionally, the notion of a career spanned a duration of employment doing the same type of work in the same organisation (Schein, 2006). According to Currie, Tempest and Starkey (2006), the concept of careers was defined as work done over a lifetime or succession in terms of a definite sequence of post levels and subsequent improvement in salaries and responsibilities. The traditional career systems evolved around one or two firms and an employee was likely to stay with the same organisation for a period of time (Verbruggen, 2012). Baruch (2006) further adds that traditional careers were based on a hierarchy, whereby employees competed for limited promotional prospects and considered promotions as the critical indicator of success.

In modern times this view no longer holds as technological advancements and competitive pressures have compelled organisations to downsize their workforces and adopt more organisational structures and they can no longer offer long-term stability and career progression for their employees (Enache, Sallán, Simo, & Fernandez, 2013). This view is supported by Lyons, Ng and Schweitzer (2014) who state that due to downsizing, employers in the 21st century world of work no longer provide long-term employment and promotional opportunities. Over the years, the most common explanation that has come to be used is that a career is the amount of progressive moves (promotions) throughout the course of one's working life (Schein, 2006). As organisations continously evolve, increase in flexibility, reduce structures, outsource services and employ more freelancers, the traditional view of careers as upward movement has shifted to viewing careers in terms of lifelong learning (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) consequently define the notion of career in terms of the modern-day perspective: that it is any sequence of employment-related experiences.

This definition is supported by Hirsh (2007), who states that the term 'career', in the context of the workplace, can be most simply considered as the sequence of work experiences an employee may have over time. These work experiences take place within and outside an organisation during an individual's life and they may involve moving from one job to another, but may also incorporate the changing nature of work within a single job and the experience of working on different projects (Hirsh, 2007; Lyons et al., 2014). Baruch (2006) defines a career as a process of development of an employee along a path of experiences and jobs with multiple organisations. He adds that employees should view their career as a journey made up of multiple phases. According to Hall (2013), there are four different meanings that are associated with the concept of "career": firstly, career can be taken to mean advancement. Secondly, career can be seen as a profession, thirdly as a series of work experiences, and lastly career can mean a sequence of role-related experiences over one's lifetime.

2.2.2 Contemporary careers

The current career landscape has been characterised as turbulent, unpredictable, and challenging by MacDonald and Hite (2016) who state that several interconnecting factors have contributed to this changed environment, including globalisation, competitive pressures, technological advances, a more diverse workforce and governmental policies as well as societal influences. Schreuder and Coetzee (2016) state that the changes within the work context have affected careers and career management in significant ways. Technological, economic and societal developments have triggered changes in the 21st century world of work, which has created an unstable organisational context resulting in the shift of careers from the traditional career to the 'new' or contemporary career (Enache et al., 2013). The traditional career, which was once regarded as the norm, has given way to contemporary career outlooks that attempt to define the various aspects of the modern career (Sullivan, 2013). The new career or contemporary career is described as a career that accommodates individuals to meet the changes in the 21st century.

Individuals within the 21st century world of work are less likely to experience frequent promotions and the fast-tracking of their upward mobility as organisational hierarchies are horizontal in comparison to the traditional organisational hierarchies (Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot, & Baruch, 2012). Scholars, in the contemporary view of careers, indicate a move from career relationships that are long-term to more transactional and short-term relationships that evolve between employees and their employers (Baruch, 2004). Chudzikowski (2012) describes the modern career as one characterised by frequent individual career moves within and across organisations, where employees have experienced decreased levels of job security and have reduced levels of loyalty to the organisation. This view is supported by Lyons et al. (2015) who add that the new career is characterised by individual agency, flexibility of career paths and increased mobility across jobs and careers. Verbruggen (2012) adds that individuals are no longer guaranteed life-long employment and an employee changing employers or even professions is no longer considered uncommon.

Lyons et al. (2015) states that in response to the changes in the labour market, individuals have adapted by accepting more non-traditional work arrangements involving numerous changes in jobs, careers and occupations. They (Lyons et al., 2015) further add that high career mobility is normal for an individual in the 21st century world of work and is the only way an individual can remain employable. In contrast to the traditional career, where career-related milestones were age-related, the modern career is typified by learning-related milestones which are not age-related and which are recurring (Savickas, 2013). Furthermore, Ng and Feldman (2014) are of the view that in the context of the contemporary career, success is no longer seen in terms of promotion or salary, but rather as the subjective judgements that individuals make regarding their career satisfaction and career wellbeing. Another important distinguishing factor between traditional and contemporary careers is that employees in the 21st century world of work are responsible for their own career management and engage in continuous learning to develop their employability (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012).

According to Savickas et al. (2009), individuals in the 21st century are likely to feel insecure with regard to the world of work and must therefore become life-long learners who can keep up to date with technology, embrace flexibility, develop and sustain employability and create their own opportunities. Employability in the 21st century world of work is achieved through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by organisations, and may thus be regarded as an important factor in understanding career success in the contemporary career (Van Der Klink, Van der Heijden, Boon, & Van Rooij, 2014). De Vos and Cambré (2016) add that contemporary career management needs to focus on supporting individuals in their career development.

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the main differences between traditional and modern career outlooks.

Table 2.1 Differences between Traditional and Modern Career Outlooks

Career variable	Traditional outlook	Modern outlook
Employee/Employer relationship (Briscoe et al., 2006)	Loyalty in return for job security and stability	Development in terms of performance and adaptability
Boundaries (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2004)	Single organisation	Multiple organisations across multiple geographies
Skills development (Sullivan, 2013)	Organisation specific skills	Skills transferrable across organisations
Career success (Kidd, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2014)	Salary and promotion	Career satisfaction and career wellbeing
Career management responsibility (Arthur, 2014; Briscoe et al., 2006; Savickas, 2013)	Organisation	Individual
Career goals and milestones (Savickas, 2013)	Age-related milestones and goals	Learning-related milestones and goals, recurring at different ages
Training and development (Sullivan, 2013)	Class-room training	On-the-job training
Career environment (Sullivan, 2013)	Stable	Dynamically changing
Career direction (Ng & Feldman,2014)	Linear	Multidirectional
Career hierarchy (Ng & Feldman, 2014; (Hall, 2013)	Vertical ladder	Horizontal

2.3 Contemporary Career Perspectives

Numerous career theorists have attempted to define the modern career from a number of different perspectives. As pointed out earlier, the concept is no longer constrained by the structures and frameworks of organisations, but has instead become boundaryless, more self-directed or protean, global, entrepreneurial, kaleidoscopic and adaptable (Hall, Lee, Kossek, & Las Heras, 2012; Savickas, 2013). In the last decade, two models have

been at the centre of literature on careers: the protean career and boundaryless career (Baruch, 2004; Briscoe et al., 2006; Hall, 1996). According to Clarke (2009), the suggestion of protean or boundaryless careers is appealing with regards to integrating the career needs of individual employees into the employers' organisational needs. Briscoe et al. (2012) found that individuals who adopt protean and boundaryless career attitudes are able to develop skills to effectively cope with the erratic career milieu and uncertain economic environment. Four different career theories are discussed in more detail below.

2.3.1   The boundaryless career

The boundaryless career emerged as a result of unpredictability and ambiguity in the organisational environment of the 21st century world of work (Yildiz, Beskese, & Bozbura, 2015).

A boundaryless career can be defined as an arrangement of work opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of one employment setting (Greehaus, Callanan, & DiRenzo, 2008). According to Greehaus et al. (2008), the boundaryless career is characterised as one of separation from, rather than reliance on traditiona career arrangements. This type of career challenges the hierarchical structure of a traditional career and its theorists postulate that individuals take responsibility for their own careers when making decisions concerning their employment (Inkson et al., 2012). Sullivan and Arthur (2006) describe a boundaryless career as one that involves varying levels of physical mobility (for example, moving across jobs, occupations, countries, and so forth) and psychological career mobility (the capacity to move as seen through the mind of the career actor). According to Arthur (2014), a boundaryless career is typified by the building of professional networks outside of the current employer, thus providing diverse work opportunities that extend beyond the confines of one employment setting. This perspective is supported by Briscoe et al. (2012) who state that an important aspect of the boundaryless career is that individuals are not constrained by the boundaries of organisations and that this allows them to seek meaningful work elsewhere.

According to Inglis and Cray (2012), individuals who adopt a boundaryless career focus on outcomes, such as meaningful work, skill development, work/life balance and fulfilling relationships and are more satisfied and productive workers. Inglis and Cray (2012) state that with a boundaryless career individuals are in control of their personal career-management process so as to remain employable and be open to opportunities that are available. The boundaryless career also results in a change in the psychological contract between the employee and employer (Culié, Khapova, & Arthur, 2014). With this new psychological contract, employers can no longer commit to providing their employees with secure jobs, but rather focus on providing employees with multiple skills to increase their individual employability that will be useful in securing employment (Baruch, 2006). Table 2.2 summarises the six key features of a boundaryless career as identified by Arthur (2014).

Table 2.2 Characteristics of the Boundaryless Career

Number	Characteristic
1	Moves across the boundaries of separate employers
2	Validation is obtained externally and not only from the present employer
3	The career is sustained through networks outside of the organisation
4	Traditional organisational boundaries and hierarchies are broken
5	An individual rejects career opportunities for personal/family reasons
6	Leads to a boundaryless future

Source: Arthur (2014)

Currie et al. (2006) identified several benefits of the boundaryless career, including lower internal labour costs and increased flexibility for both employers and employees. Furthermore, Colakoglu (2011) indicates that experiencing a boundaryless career increases the individual's opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of their self-identity and accumulate skills and knowledge that are transferable to other employment settings. Boundaryless careers therefore offer opportunities for personal and professional development and career advancement (Currie et al., 2006).

2.3.2　The protean career

Hall (2013) introduced the concept of the protean career and defined it as a new career, in which the individual takes responsibility for the management of his/her own career and does not depend on the organisation to guide his/her career path. The protean career differs from the traditional career by its cyclical nature which is evident in that instead of portraying a one-way journey through pre-ordained sequences of career stages or positions, the protean career involves multiple and possibly independent cycles of career exploration, learning and mastery (Hall, 2013; Valcour & Ladge, 2008).

The protean career outlook postulates that in the contemporary career, individuals autonomously manage their careers based on their own psychological career needs and are not constrained by career structures enforced by the organisation (Hall, 2013). The protean career comprises two dimensions: firstly, a values driven dimension, meaning that an individual's internal values drive how they view their career and its development; and secondly, self-directed career management, suggesting that an individual is responsible for his/her career choices and development (MacDonald & Hite, 2016). According to Gubler, Arnold, and Coombs (2014), protean and boundaryless careers overlap significantly, but the focus of the protean career is on an individual's motive to follow a particular career path, whereas the boundaryless career outlook is mainly concerned with different forms of mobility.

Briscoe, Hall, and DeMuth (2006) state that individuals with a protean career attitude tend to be more proactive and independent in terms of managing their careers and they tend to value freedom and autonomy in terms of making career-related decisions. Briscoe et al. (2006) also maintain that individuals with a protean career attitude tend to value continuous learning, strive to achieve a high level of self-awareness, challenge themselves to achieve individual psychological success, value employability rather than job security and take personal responsibility for their own career progression. A protean career attitude is thus driven by the needs of the individual rather than the organisation. Hall (2013) supports this view by adding that the transition to a protean career is driven

by the desire to pursue careers that offer a good personal fit for an individual.

Hall (2013) maintains that a protean career allows individuals greater flexibility, a better perspective on their overall lives and the opportunity to advance their own career management. Furthermore, Hall (2013) proposes that protean careers offer three forms of flexibility. Firstly, protean careers provide a new way of career thinking in terms of which individuals are sufficiently flexible to move between different lines of work. Secondly, it gives individuals flexibility in terms of career space, thus allowing them to address both work and family issues simultaneously and no longer see them as separate entities. Thirdly, the protean career allows individuals to develop a greater balance between their careers and other aspects of their lives (Hall, 2013).

Individuals who have adopted the protean career are adaptable, flexible and independent and are easily able to adjust to changing circumstances (Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot, & Baruch, 2012). They are motivated by psychological success, continuous self-directed learning, autonomy, flexibility and self-fulfilment (Inglis & Cray, 2012). Furthermore, Baruch (2013) adds that these individuals are able to utilise their knowledge and skills to fit the changing work environment and to maintain their employability.

A summary of the key characteristics of an individual adopting the protean career as defined by Briscoe and Hall (2006) is provided in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Key characteristics of an individual adopting the protean career

Number	Characteristic
1	The person is value driven – the individual's internal values provide the guidance and measurement of success for his/her career
2	The person is self-directed – the individual has the ability to adapt in terms of performance and learning demands

Source: Grimland et al. (2012)

2.3.3   The global career

Tams and Arthur (2007) state that in general, people's careers have become increasingly global. This is supported by Inkson et al. (2012), who challenge the notion that protean and boundaryless career outlooks encapsulate the true nature of modern careers. Recent research has found careers are now able to move beyond the boundaries of both organisations and national borders (Arthur, 2014; Inkson et al., 2012). Brewster, Bonache, Cerdi, and Suutari (2014) support this notion by stating that the globalisation of international business has resulted in the globalisation of careers and created the opportunity for individuals to build their careers on an international platform. According to Baruch, Dickmann, Altman and Bournois (2013), global careers are careers that span two or more countries and which may take on a number of forms. Thus, Baruch et al. (2013) state that global careers involve boundary-crossing – at least geographical and cultural boundaries, with a large and growing number of people opting for careers that transcend national borders. According to Baruch et al. (2013), global careers may come in various types and forms, with several dimensions helping to draw distinctions across different types of global careers. Being proactive, adaptable and mobile assists individuals to be employable and to have successful and meaningful careers in today's modern globalised workplace.

2.3.4   The kaleidoscope career

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) use the kaleidoscope as metaphor for careers as they found contemporary careers to be both unique and complex and resembling the rotating patterns formed by a kaleidoscope. According to Sullivan, Forret, Carraher and Mainiero (2009), boundaryless, protean, global, and entrepreneurial career outlooks do not necessarily encapsulate all the complexities and changes related to individual career management within the contemporary world of work.

The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) postulated by Sullivan et al. (2009) described the emphasis given by employees to create careers as they make decisions based on factors

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such as challenge, balance and authenticity, over their lifetime. Kaleidoscope careers are created based on the individual's own terms, defined not by a corporation, but by the individual's own values and life choices (Sullivan et al., 2009). Like protean careers, kaleidoscope careers are self-directed (Sullivan et al., 2009).

According to the KCM, individuals evaluate the choices and options available through the lens of the kaleidoscope to assess the best fit among work demands, constraints and opportunities as well as relationships and personal values and interests (Sullivan et al., 2009). The three parameters identified by Sullivan et al. (2009) in decision-making were:

2.3.4.1   Authenticity

Hereby the individual's inner values are associated with his/her external behaviours as well with the values of the employing organisation (Sullivan et al., 2009). Authenticity leads people to look for work that is compatible with their values. Sullivan et al. (2009) state that authenticity is often displayed through behaviours resonant with personal or work strengths or involvement in activities for personal pleasure that genuinely reflect the inner nature of that individual. Furthermore, authenticity is also manifest in refusing to go along with 'politics' in organisations, following one's passion for art or culture or, simply speaking truth to power (Sullivan et al., 2009).

2.3.4.2   Balance

This occurs where the individual strives to balance work and non-work (for example, family, friends, elderly relatives, personal interests) demands. To meet a need for balance, individuals may choose certain contingent career assignments that allow them to restrict work hours or slow down career progression to integrate family life with work (Mainiero, 2018). Mainiero (2018) further advances that there are several ways to rebalance work-family management priorities, such as adjusting work time through part time employment, opting out of the workforce temporarily, taking turns with spouses, arranging workloads in accordance with family situations or finding ways to meet both demands simultaneously.

2.3.4.3   Challenge

Challenge refers to the need to participate in intrinsically motivating work, to grow and develop one's skills and to make progress in one's career through lateral progress, skill-based programmes or linear advancement (Mainiero, 2018). It is the desire for autonomy and responsibility, as well as an interest in learning and growing. According to her (Mainiero, 2018), challenge may be represented in a variety of ways: one's desire to climb the career ladder, discovering opportunities to retrain and develop a new skill set or a new set of job tasks.

The KCM suggests that each of these parameters, authenticity, balance and challenge, are active as signposts throughout one's career and would play different roles or take priority at different points of time in one's career (Sullivan et al., 2009). Just as one turns a kaleidoscope to see new patterns, so career patterns evolve in response to changing life priorities, as certain issues dominate at different points in the life span, usually with one parameter taking centre stage while the remaining parameters remain active but take on a secondary role at that time (Sullivan et al., 2009). The kaleidoscope career perspective thus attempts to explain that individuals tend to change their career patterns at certain times in both their lives and their careers (Shaw & Leberman, 2015).

2.4   Career Meta-Competencies

2.4.1   Background on career meta-competencies

Career meta-competencies are defined as the combination of career resources that individuals use to proactively arrange and manage their career development, affect their socio-occupational environments and self-regulate their behaviour in order to achieve career success in the contemporary work setting (Coetzee 2008; Converse et al., 2012; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). According to her (Coetzee, 2008), an individual's career meta-competencies consist of their career preferences, career values, career drivers, career enablers and career harmonisers. Kniveton (2004) proposes that individuals' career

motives, values and psychological resources have an effect on their career decision-making and their psychological attachment to an occupation. A well-developed psychological career resources profile enables an individual to proactively manage their career development and has been proven to enhance their dedication to the organisation (Coetzee, 2008; Ferreira, 2010).

2.4.2   Psychological career resources

Coetzee (2008) argues that the development of psychological career resources will become more important than the traditional career development approach due to the challenges imposed by the 21st century world of work. People who have a variety of psychological career resources have been shown to be flexible to changing career conditions and the probability of them being more engaged and committed to their job, work, career, occupation or organisation, is high (Converse et al., 2012; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Psychological career resources are work meta-competencies that allow individuals to adjust to changing work environments (Coetzee, 2008; 2013). Coetzee (2013) suggests that individuals need abilities in five key spheres of psychological career resources in order to proactively engage in agentic work/career behaviour: (1) clear career preferences and (2) career values; (3) skills that enable effective and proactive career planning/self-design, reinvention and development (career enablers); (4) intrinsic career motivations that drive individuals' career actions and intentionalities (career drivers); and (5) psycho-social career meta-capacities that facilitate resiliency and adaptability within individuals' unique social-cultural contexts (career harmonisers). These five psychological career resources are discussed below.

2.4.2.1   Career preferences and career values

The significance of a career to the individual is determined by his or her preferances and he or she values (Driver & Brousseau, 1998). Coetzee's (2008) model of psychological

career resources postulates that career preferences and career values are seen as the foundation for the forming of thought patterns regarding the career choices that an individual will make. According to Brousseau (1990), career preferences influence the career direction that an individual chooses, while career values present the reason for the career preference. Career preferences and career values reflect the distinctive perceptions that each individual holds about the course they envision for their careers (Coetzee, 2008). Coetzee (2008) goes on to add that career preferences and career values are cognitive in nature and form part of an individual's deep-seated psychological world view- the foundation from which an individual assigns meaning to their work life. In essence, these career preferences and values will assist individuals to make career-related decisions (Ferreira, Basson, & Coetzee, 2010).

Coetzee (2008) identified four career preferences based on the career orientation model:

- *Stability/expertise*: This refers to how an individual views careers that provide security and possibility for development in a field of expertise

- *Managerial*: This refers to individuals who view vertical mobility with more responsibility, decision-making power and influence as career success

- *Creativity/variety*: This career preference describes individuals who prefer various assignments that require a wide variety of competencies (knowledge, abilities and expertise) in new or original ways

- *Autonomy/independence*: This career preference refers to individuals who see the perfect work environment as one where they have freedom from disturbance from external sources.

Work-related values have been found to influence the meaning that individuals attach to work, career choice, career wellbeing and career satisfaction (Ferreira & Coetzee, 2014). According to Coetzee (2008), career preferences are promoted by two central career

values. The growth/development career value refers to the significance that one places on personal and professional growth opportunities (Coetzee, 2008). The career value of authority/influence refers to the significance that one places on the responsibility for other individuals, having authority over others and being influential when it comes to essential organisational tasks or events (Coetzee, 2008).

The above-mentioned author (Coetzee, 2008) further suggests that individuals consider their unique career preferences and career values when making decisions regarding their career progression. Individuals with well-differentiated career preferences and values tend to have higher levels of subjective career wellbeing (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2012); career adaptability and job embeddedness (Ferreira, 2012) and devote more resources (time, energy, attention) to their jobs, occupations and careers, thereby increasing their chances of objective career success (Coetzee, 2013).

2.4.2.2   Career enablers

A career enabler is a group of technical, creative or self/other skills that allow an individual to perform tasks that are related to his or her career development effectively and which help him or her to accomplish the desired and expected career outcomes (Coetzee, 2008). According to Sternberg (2003), career enablers refer to transferable technical, creative, self-management and interpersonal skills that assist people to succeed in their careers. They assist individuals to incorporate new opportunities and make sense of their lives. Coetzee's (2008) model of psychological career resources differentiates between two types of career enablers, that is, practical/creative skills and self/other skills that assist individuals to be more successful in their jobs. Coetzee (2008) states that an individual uses practical/creative skills when they apply their theoretical knowledge in their work-related activities in a novel way. Additionally, Coetzee (2008) states that self-/other skills are transferable skills such as social skills, creativity and conscientiousness that can assist an individual to obtain career satisfaction.

2.4.2.3   Career drivers

Coetzee (2008) views people's career drivers as the internal forces that determine what an individual desires or needs from his or her employment. Career drivers are made up of people's career purpose, career directedness and attitudes towards venturing in their careers. These attitudes drive people to try out other career and employment options based on their views of who they could become or the potential working roles they could experience (Coetzee 2008). This view is supported by Ferreira et al. (2010) who state that career drivers encourage individuals to explore different career opportunities whilst taking into account their perception of their current and potential work-related abilities. According to Coetzee (2008), individuals who incorporate these career drivers have been found to have higher levels of motivation and success in their work. Career drivers thus assist individuals to realise their intrinsic career-related goals (Ferreira et al., 2010). Coetzee (2008) describes career drivers as resources that influence an individual's career purpose, career directedness and attitude towards career-venturing, which are discussed in more detail below:

- *Career Purpose*: Career purpose is also referred to as career calling, which can be viewed as an individual's enthusiasm about his or her career (Coetzee, 2008; Ferreira et al., 2010). One's sense of purpose is determined by the confidence that they have in themselves and their personal beliefs, which they have the ability to accomplish through their career goals. According to Coetzee (2008), individuals with a strong sense of career purpose demonstate higher levels of job and life satisfaction and have reduced levels of absenteeism from work. They also perceive that their work has a contribution to the greater community

- *Career directedness*: This refers to the visibility of one's career goals and the understanding the individual has about finding the resources required to help him or her achieve those career goals or opportunities (Coetzee, 2008)

- *Career venturing*: According to Coetzee (2008), career venturing refers to a person's willingness to take a risk in order to discover and explore career opportunities. Coetzee (2008) also comments that people's career purpose and career directedness will be aligned with their strengths.

2.4.2.4   Career harmonisers

Coetzee (2008) explains that career harmonisers encompass people's self-esteem, behavioural adaptability, emotional literacy and social connectivity, of which emotional literacy and social connectivity are the most important.

These career harmonisers serve as proponents of flexibility, resilience and control by maintaining balance of the career drivers in order to ensure that people do not 'burn out' while they pursue and reinvent their careers (Coetzee 2008). Coetzee (2008) states that career harmonisers are psychological resources that assist an individual to control the career drivers through psychological resilience and adaptability and thus ensure the wellbeing of the individual whilst managing their careers. Ferreira (2012) found that career harmonisers are predictors of an individual's life and career satisfaction, seeing their work as significant and feeling embedded in their work. The four career harmonisers are explained in more detail as follows:

- *Self-esteem*: Coetzee and Bergh (2009) describe self-esteem as an individual's subjective evaluation regarding their worth and abilities compared with others and compared with their own standards

- *Behavioural adaptability*: Coetzee (2008) states that this refers to the person's competence to recognise the attributes that are necessary for future career success and then to make the changes that are required.

- *Emotional literacy*: This harmoniser is described by Coetzee (2008) as the ability of an individual to manage the variety of emotions that can be received and conveyed.

- *Social connectivity*: Schreuder and Coetzee (2010) define this as the individual's ability to form and maintain healthy and mutually supportive relationships. Social connectivity is an important psychological resource which assists individuals to build valuable relationships and networks with people in their work environments, which assist them to manage their careers well (Coetzee, 2008).

2.5 Career Development

2.5.1 Background on career development

Career development has been defined in literature in numerous ways. Sears (1982, as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2014) defined career development as the arrangement of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and other factors that collectively influence the career of any individual over the lifespan." Gilley, Eggland, & Gilley (2002) defined career development as "a process requiring individuals and organizations to create a partnership that enhances employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes required for their current and future job assignments." MacDonald and Hite (2016) further suggest that career development is a process of enhancing an individual's abilities, skills and employability for the attainment of personal and work-related goals. Super (1990, as cited in Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006) argued that career development is a continuous process of evaluating and consolidating knowledge of one's self, internal variables (such as values, interest and abilities), and external variables (such as employment practices, job market, and economic conditions).

Super (1990, as cited in Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006) further developed a career stage theory to provide insight on how individuals undergo different stages or experiences in

their career development process and detailed how at each stage certain elements allow the individual to aspire towards a successful career. These life stages comprise of Growth (ages 4-13, focused on physical growth, the development of ideas about self-worth, and discovery of personal interests, talents and abilities), Exploration (ages 14-24, characterized by learning about different career options, developing one's skills and tentatively selecting a career of choice), Establishment (ages 25-44, stage where an individual acquires experience in their chosen career choice), Maintenance (ages 45-65, characterised by maintenance of existing career and continuous adjustment to improve one's position), and Disengagement (over 65 years, characterized by gradual disengagement from the working world in preparation for retirement) (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996).

2.6 Career choice

2.6.1 Career choice as a concept

The concept of career choice can be associated with different meanings: firstly, it can be defined in terms of an individual's inclinations, ambitions, goals and intentions; secondly, career choice can be defined in the context of economical and sociological factors Schreuder and Coetzee (2006). Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) identified three main theories of career choice: content, process and post-modern theories. Content theories describe career choice in terms of specific individual characteristics involved in choice. Process theories conceive career choice as a developmental process that constantly evolves throughout an individual's life stages. Lastly, the post-modern approach places emphasis on the subjective experience of individuals of their career development (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). According to Rousseau and Venter (2009), career choice is influenced by three variables: individual variables (skills, abilities and personal interests), situational variables (family, education and socio-cultural influences), and environmental variables (the economy, employment opportunities).

2.6.2   Career choice in the South African context

Although it is the responsibility of every individual to make career choices that will enable them to actualize their career potential, Stead and Watson (1998) emphasized the importance of contextual elements such as sociological, cultural, economic and educational factors that potentially interact with the career choice process of individuals. Stead and Watson (1998) further highlighted that in the South African context, various personal (e.g. interests, values, needs) and situational (e.g. sociohistorical, economic, education, and familial) determinants influenced the career choice and career decisions of Black South Africans. Abrahams, Jano and van Lill (2015) state that in apartheid South Africa, the different race groups were exposed to contrasting realities, different educational opportunities and career options. For the disadvantaged groups career choice was often determined by situational variables, and because of the lack of exposure to educational opportunities, they opted for whatever employment they could get (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). This is supported by Shumba and Naong (2012) who expressed that learners from lower socio-economic families were not afforded the opportunity to make independent decisions regarding their careers. Stead and Watson (1998) further added that the majority of black South African students left school prematurely in order to find employment to assist with supporting their families.

The relevance of Super's career development theory to the South African population has been questioned by a number of South African researchers (Stead & Watson, 1998; Naicker, 1994; Rousseau & Venter, 2009). Stead and Watson (1998) argued that the concept of career developmental stages was formulated in an environment where unemployment was not as prevalent as in South Africa. Naicker (1994) challenged the exclusion of socio-cultural factors in career research and its validity. Stead and Watson (1998) further proposed that contextual factors such as South Africa's history, economic downturn, high unemployment rate and cultural dynamics influence the decisions that individuals make relating to their careers, thus making the concept of developmental stages irrelevant in the South African context.

2.7   Career Wellbeing and Satisfaction

2.7.1   Background on career wellbeing and satisfaction

According to Hall (2013), individuals in the modern workplace are less concerned with climbing the organisational ladder but, instead, tend to opt for meaningful career experiences that will drive career satisfaction and career wellbeing. According to Ng et al. (2005), career satisfaction is seen as the subjective feelings that individuals have toward their careers. Career satisfaction is related to career wellbeing in the sense that individuals who are generally satisfied with their careers will experience career wellbeing (Kidd, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2014).

Career wellbeing is a form of personal welfare that is related to the subjective judgements that individuals make about their career satisfaction (Kidd, 2008). According to Ryff (2013), wellbeing may be described as a general term relating to the condition of an individual within a specific life sphere, or it may also refer to various, interrelated dimensions of cognitive, social, physical and emotional wellbeing that extend beyond the classification of health. Career wellbeing is conceptualised by Kidd (2008) as a continuous assessment of an individual's career experiences over a period of time and indicates the individual's degree of satisfaction with their career.

Wellbeing may be either objective or subjective, although career wellbeing is interpreted in a subjective way (Kidd, 2008). Subjective wellbeing (sometimes referred to as happiness) relates to an individual's own perceptions and evaluations of their wellbeing within a specific life sphere (Abele-Brehm, 2014). Individuals' subjective wellbeing may be conceptualised as the intrinsic feelings of contentment, happiness and satisfaction experienced in both life and in work (Demo & Paschoal, 2013).

Lindberg, Karlsson, Strömberg and Gustafsson (2015) state that the concept of career wellbeing is used to determine individuals' subjective emotions in relation to their career experiences. According to Kidd (2008), career wellbeing is influenced by individuals'

cognitive, spiritual, physical and social experiences within the work environment

Schotanus-Dijkstra et al. (2016) advance that because career wellbeing is typified by outcomes such as positive emotions, achievements, relationships and meaning, it is perceived as a positive psychological state. Furthermore, Kidd (2008) states that when individuals are dissatisfied with aspects of their career wellbeing, this may result in individuals demonstrating proactive and adaptive behaviour in order to rectify the area of dissatisfaction.

Kidd (2008) postulates that there are six components that make up career wellbeing; these are discussed in more detail below.

- Career purpose and meaning

The first component that Kidd (2008) identified - career purpose and meaning - refers to individuals making the decision to transition into occupations, organisations or positions that provide them with new challenges and opportunities. Wang (2013) states that career mobility has been positively associated with career satisfaction and therefore, individuals who are able to transition across organisational and societal boundaries in the pursuit of career purpose and meaning are more likely to be adaptable and satisfied with their careers.

- Positive relationships with others

With regards to the second component of career wellbeing, Kidd (2008) found that career wellbeing is negatively affected when individuals experienced stressful relationships within the work environment. This finding is supported by Ng and Feldman (2014), who found a significant, positive relationship between positive social relationships and feelings of connectedness and career satisfaction.

- Autonomy

The third component of wellbeing is autonomy, described as occurring when individuals experience feelings of independence regarding their own careers, which has a positive impact on career satisfaction (Hall, 2004).

- Employability

According to Kidd (2008), the fourth component is employability. When individuals feel that they are employable, they will be more satisfied with their careers and will experience higher levels of career wellbeing (Hall, 2004).

- Environmental mastery

The fifth component - environmental mastery - is viewed by Kidd (2008) as a key component of career wellbeing. According to Savickas (2013), individuals who are able adapt to environmental challenges are more likely to master their environments, which is one of the key dimensions of positive psychological functioning.

- Professional growth

The sixth and final component of career wellbeing is the opportunity to develop new skills or the expectation that new skills will be developed in the future (Kidd, 2008). Savickas (2013) found that learning new skills and knowledge assists individuals to adapt to their environments and that professional development is a key component of career satisfaction. A lack of opportunities to develop new skills may therefore have a negative impact on the career wellbeing of an individual.

2.7.2 The relationship between modern career perspectives, career wellbeing and career satisfaction

Boundaryless, protean, global and entrepreneurial as well as kaleidoscope career attitudes encourage the constant personal assessment of individual career wellbeing and career satisfaction as an indicator of career wellbeing (Briscoe et al., 2006; Savickas, 2013). Change-adaptive behaviours such as proactivity, adaptability and individuality that stem from these contemporary career attitudes are highly correlated with the behaviours associated with career wellbeing and career satisfaction (Ng & Feldman, 2014).

According to Ng et al. (2005), Kidd (2008), and Verbruggen (2012), both career wellbeing and career satisfaction are closely related to the setting of clearly defined career goals and the fulfilment of psychological needs. Additionally, Kidd (2008) and Ng and Feldman (2014) state that both career satisfaction and career wellbeing are dependent on the capacity of individuals to develop and apply their knowledge and skills. This indicates that these constructs are closely related to the boundaryless career outlook (Kidd, 2008). Ng et al. (2005), Kidd (2008) and Verbruggen (2012) found that the boundaryless career outlook is positively related to career wellbeing and career satisfaction as all three constructs are influenced by an individual's ability to adapt to changing environmental circumstances. Inkson et al. (2012) state that within the ever-changing environment of work, the boundaryless career outlook is important as it increases an individual's chances of achieving career satisfaction and career wellbeing.

Ng, Eby, Sorensen, and Feldman (2005), expressed the view that, as in the case of the protean career outlook, proactive behaviour, the ability to adapt and be flexible, the satisfaction of individual career values, autonomy, and taking responsibility for career decisions, are all positively related to career satisfaction and career wellbeing. It may thus be said that when individuals enjoy high levels of career satisfaction and career wellbeing, this will assist them to develop a protean career outlook. A study conducted by De Vos and Soens (2008), revealed that those individuals who adopt a protean career attitude reported higher levels of employee satisfaction and perceived employability.

Furthermore, research has found that there is a positive relationship between protean career attitude and career success and ultimately career wellbeing (Grimland et al., 2012).

Lastly, when individuals aspire to achieve career wellbeing, they are constantly assessing their work environments to ensure better alignment between themselves and their work environments (Kidd, 2008; Savickas, 2013; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016). Adaptive behaviour, environmental mastery and learning orientation are also key requirements if individuals are to experience career satisfaction and career wellbeing (Kidd, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2014). Career wellbeing and career satisfaction may therefore assist individuals to acquire a kaleidoscope perspective on their careers.

2.8   Career Advancement

2.8.1   Background to and stages of career advancement

Career advancement is one of the most important elements for employee satisfaction and retention (Louie, 2013). Gul, Akbar, and Jan (2012) support this view by stating that career prospects rank high in order of importance to every career driven person as they look for upward mobility in their chosen profession/career. Advancement carries a high value in employee retention, as career advancement prospects keep the employee motivated for good performance and long-term commitment to the organisation (Gul et al., 2012).

According to Munjuri (2011) career advancement is a key goal for many employees and is a contributory factor that helps enhance the level of satisfaction of individuals' subjective view of their work life. Conversely, a lack of career advancement can have various negative effects on both employees and the organisation; for example, work satisfaction or organisational commitment tend to decrease. Literature on the psychology of personnel and management science indicates that lack of career advancement prospects is frequently indicated as a strong reason for some employees disliking their jobs (Munjuri, 2011).

Louie (2013) states that the definition of career advancement varies from individual to individual. However, a workplace that promotes opportunities for career advancement would typically include expanding employees' skills sets, giving them additional responsibilities that lead to an evolution or a changing of their roles, acknowledging accomplishments through raises and promotions and offering a tailored career advancement plan for each employee that aligns with his or her professional goals (Louie, 2013). Zunker (2002, p. 34) defines career advancement as a "lifelong process which involves career growth". It can be described as progression through the ranks of the organisational hierarchy and therefore involves individuals moving from one level or position to a higher level or position in the workplace or in their careers (Zunker, 2002). Dries (2011) classifies career advancement in a number of categories, such as accomplishment, achievement, enjoyment, integrity, balance, personal recognition, influence, position, reward, relationship, material success, contribution and freedom.

Callanan and Greenhaus (1999) defined organisational career advancement as an objective assessment of an employee's career movement, either via hierarchical advancement or horizontal mobility. Based on the above definitions, career advancement can therefore be taken to mean any or a combination of the following: an increase in the scope or level of responsibility, greater authority, an increase in salary and/or in benefits, and a move to a higher level within a hierarchical structure. Important to note as part of the above definition is that career advancement in the organisational context is always a joint endeavour between the employee and the organisation and would typically involve the existence of alternative career paths based on the individual employee's and organisational needs (Pillay, Dawood, & Karodia, 2015). Employees therefore have to willingly avail themselves of opportunities that have been provided to them to improve their careers (Louie (2013). This is supported by various authors such as Van Staden (2009) and Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) who emphasise that the process has to be a collaborative effort between the organisation and the employee.

According to Werner and DeSimone (2006), employees have stages through which they advance in their careers.

- *Career stage 1:* The idealistic achievement phase (early career). This is an early career phase in which career decisions are aligned to career goals in order to fulfil intrinsic needs

- *Career stage 2:* The pragmatic endurance phase (mid-career). In this phase, an employee operates productively, and his/her career motives change from intrinsic rewards to be influenced by people such as colleagues and family

- *Career stage 3:* The re-inventive contribution phase (advanced career). In this phase, an employee is advanced in his/her career and reflects a re-inventive contribution towards the careers of other people, the community and the family.

2.8.2   Factors affecting career advancement

A study by Munjuri (2011) revealed that there are many factors that can facilitate or impede ones career prospects; these can be categorised into situational and personal attributes. According to Burke and Mattis (2005) there are three major categories of influences on career advancement that have been identified in the literature: organisational, social and individual factors. The organisational factors comprise organisational opportunity structures (size, promotion ladders, occupation types), the social factors comprise male hierarchies/gender similarity, informal networks, mentors, career encouragement, discrimination, affirmative action/equal opportunity programmes, and the individual factors comprise training and development, education, work experience, relocation, managerial skills, job performance (Burke & Mattis, 2005; Orser, Riding & Stanley, 2012). Other factors may be considered as those brought to the work situation, comprising both individual (personality) and family factors (marriage, children, and spousal support) (Burke & Mattis, 2005).

The most significant factors that affect career advancement are discussed in detail below.

2.8.2.1 Job performance

The work outcomes of an employee, to a large extent, determine their promotion path within an organisation. This position is supported by Munjuri (2011) who states that employees who are appreciated for their achievement at work enjoy relatively high organisational advancement.

2.8.2.2 Gender stereotypes

The perception that females are more suitable for nurturing and supportive roles as opposed to strategic and technical roles is evidence that gender is still a common barrier to the career advancement of women (Pretorius et al., 2015). Doubell and Struwig (2014) point out that women in general tend to be regarded as inferior to men and therefore are likely to be ignored for promotion.

2.8.2.3 Competence development

Training and development initiatives are organisationally directed experiences designed to improve employee competency levels and enhance organisational performance (Pillay, Dawood, & Karodia, 2015). Human capital theory postulates that employees who invest in education, training, acquire work experience and enhance managerial competencies have increased levels of career advancement (Ballout, 2007).

2.8.2.4 Mentors and networking

Career networks involve relationships with actors who can facilitate career progress by giving career advice, offering mentoring and sponsorship, assisting in securing key developmental assignments, facilitating career-enhancing visibility and engaging in advocacy for promotion (Wang, 2009). The availability of formal or informal mentorship

programmes, social relationships with superiors and internal and external networking has been associated with greater career success and upward mobility (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Researchers such as Meyer and Fourie (2004) suggest that seeking career guidance is one of the key strategies for career achievement. According to Singh, Bains, and Vinnicombe (2002), mentoring may focus on one's career or it may be psycho-social in nature: career-centred mentoring relationships provide mentees with functions like coaching, work that is challenging, sponsorship and exposure. In contrast, psycho-social relationships offer friendship, counselling and being role models to the mentees.

2.8.2.5 *Organisational culture*

Brown (2014, p. 67) states that "for some organisations, especially those in the service sector, the company's culture is what helps set it apart from competition." Van der Colff and Van Scheers (2004) refer to organisational culture as the beliefs, principles and standards of behaviour within an organisation. It is further advanced that the culture of an organisation is regarded as the essence of that organisation, and it provides value and guidance not only to the organisation but also to the individuals who form part of the organisation (Van der Colff & Van Scheers, 2004). Corporate culture also influences and determines the orientation of the organisation in relation to diversity, which is an asset that, when managed properly, can translate into an environment where all employees can use their full potential and develop (Dimovski, Skerlavaj & Man, 2010). Limited attention devoted to – and tolerance of – diversity, translate into an inhospitable and exclusionary environment for women (McDonagh & Paris, 2012).

According to Yesil and Kaya (2012), organisational culture is an important construct that affects both individual and organisational related process and outcomes. Organisational culture affects employee behaviour, learning and development, creativity and innovation, knowledge management and performance (Brown, 2018). The culture of an organisation can therefore either impede or promote diversity in the workplace and ultimately, the advancement of employees in designated groups (McDonagh & Paris, 2012).

2.9   Chapter Summary

In this chapter the concept career was discussed starting with an investigation of careers in the contemporary world of work followed by contemporary career perspectives, which included the boundaryless, the protean, the global and the kaleidoscope career perspectives. Thereafter career meta-competencies were examined, followed by career development, career choice, career wellbeing and satisfaction. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the stages and factors affecting career advancement.

The career advancement of female managers receives attention in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THE CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF FEMALE MANAGERS

3.1   Introduction

The career advancement of female managers is discussed in this chapter. The chapter begins with a discussion of women in leadership, the representation of women in leadership in South Africa and the ICT sector profile. This is followed by an examination of the challenges that women face with regard to career advancement and the chapter concludes with a discussion of how women can break through the glass ceiling.

3.2   Women in Leadership

The increase in participation of women in the workforce has not translated into increased numbers of women at senior and executive levels, as the movement of women through the business hierarchy into top level positions has been slow (Piterman, 2008). Globally, one in four senior roles is now held by a woman (Grant Thornton, 2017). According to Saab (2014), women in developing countries have the highest figures of women in leadership roles, particularly in the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). In these countries, women account for 30% of senior leadership positions, which is higher than the global average of 24% (Saab, 2014).

3.3   Representation of Women in Leadership in South Africa

Studies indicate that as a country, South Africa has more women graduates than men, and that South African women in the corporate environment have a strong desire to succeed (Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017). Crucially, women are often more ambitious than men at entry level, with 58% of women aspiring to reach senior management, compared to just 48% of men, while their confidence in this aspiration is broadly similar (Fajardo & Erasmus 2017). However, while entry is easier, progression slows down after the middle level and in most situations, regardless of their technical and professional qualifications or achievements, women are prevented from climbing up in the corporate ladder to reach

the top (Centre for Social Research, 2009). While South African women may start out as equally ambitious as men, their experience in the workplace either deters them from aspiring to senior leadership roles or prevents them from being promoted to an extent equal to that of their male counterparts (Grant Thornton, 2017).

According to Grant Thornton's International Business Report entitled *Women in business: New perspectives on risk and reward* (2017), which is based on an annual survey of 5,500 businesses in 36 economies, just 28% of senior leadership roles (chief executive officers, managing directors, chairmen and other senior decision-makers) in South African businesses were held by women in 2017. Furthermore, 31% of South African companies have no female representation in senior leadership roles.

The Commission for Employment Equity's Annual Report of 2016-2017 (Department of Labour, 2017) highlights that women occupy 22% of the top management level positions in South Africa and 33.3% at senior management level. This represents a slight increase for women from 2015, when 20.8% were in top management and 32.1% were in senior management (Department of Labour, 2017).

3.4   The Information Communications Technology Sector Profile

Although South Africa's Information Communications Technology (ICT) industry is becoming more accessible to women, and despite opportunities being available, women are still underrepresented in the sector (*SA News*, 2016). Studies on the profile of the sector reveal a predominance of male workers, particularly in the core ICT workforce and at the more senior levels. Statistics indicate that women in South Africa make up merely 20% of the ICT sector workforce as opposed to a 56% representation globally (*SA News*, 2016). According to the Media, Information Communication Technology (MICT) report for 2015, male dominance is still evident at 65% for more technical skills in Electronics, IT and Telecommunications, while female dominance is apparent in the Advertising and Electronic Media and Film sub-sectors (MICT SETA, 2015).

Research by Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015) has found that participation of women in science, engineering and technology careers has greatly increased over the last 20 years. Furthermore, it is also widely recognised that women's participation in all levels of management across most industries has substantially increased over the last few years (Orser et al., 2012). However, while the statistical evidence suggests that females have indeed increased in participation and managerial representation within most fields, research has also demonstrated that the attraction, retention and advancement of women in the technology sectors stands in stark contrast to such progress (Orser et al., 2012). Women continue to be significantly under-represented at higher levels of management in the ICT sector and experience lower retention rates than that of their male colleagues (Servon & Visser, 2011). This notion is supported by Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015) who state that it appears that once women in the male-dominated industries enter the workforce, they tend to leave their professions faster than their male colleagues.

3.5 Challenges to Career Advancement of Women Managers

There are numerous barriers that prevent women from obtaining work equality and achieving top managerial positions in the ICT sector. These include gender discrimination, glass ceiling, stereotypes, work-life balance, lack of mentoring, conflicting roles and pay inequality (Wirth, 2004). Career advancement challenges faced by women in the ICT sector are perhaps not unique to the ICT industry and the country - these are global challenges that exist in almost every society around the world (Pretorius et al., 2015) Women worldwide face a host of problems in the workplace and not enough has been done to fully understand all these disparities and the resultant implications for women's development and decision making (Orser et al., 2012).

Tharshini, Kumar, and Rathnasekara (2016) state that career barriers may be classified into categories that are individual, organisational and societal in nature. Individual barriers are those directly or indirectly imposed on individuals themselves; for example, lack of confidence, low commitment to work or inadequate skills. Barriers related to organisational culture, policies and the working environment are classified as

organisational barriers; for instance an unsupportive organisational culture and policies within organisations may be disadvantageous to women (Amondi, 2011). Barriers emanating from societal pressures include gender stereotyping and cultural norms that impose restrictions based on gender as well as work–family conflict that may arise as a result of the multiple roles that women embrace (Tharshini et al., 2016).

Research by Orser et al. (2012) has identified several individual and organisational-level barriers that explain the gender gap in the technology sector. According to Martin and Barnard (2013, p. 1) "the challenges women face in attempting to penetrate successfully and persevere in historically male-dominated work environments emanate from traditional gender hierarchies and norms that prevail in the family and society". Despite gender equality and empowerment, the household unit had a traditional structure, and still has, that makes males the dominant gender. These traditional stereotyped role expectations spill over to organisational policies and practices to maintain women's marginalised work roles and become entrenched in a gender-biased organisational culture (Prescott & Bogg, 2011).

Women's career advancement appears to be influenced by what has been termed a 'glass ceiling', described as the lack of upward mobility for women and minorities into executive ranks in corporate jobs (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2004). The road to the top positions has been described as being blocked by corporate prejudice and traditions resulting in lack of support for women. This definition was expanded by The Glass Ceiling Commission in the USA, which describes the glass ceiling as "invisible, artificial barriers that prevent qualified individuals from advancing within their organisation and reaching their full potential" (Prescott & Bogg, 2011, p. 207). According to Powell and Butterfield (2003), the so-called 'glass ceiling' is a form of barrier in the workplace that is so subtle and apparent, yet so tough that it proscribes women and minorities from occupying top positions in management hierarchy. The results of the glass ceiling are that women are denied access to the most desirable organisational opportunities and as a result perceive themselves as being treated unfairly and consequently leave the organisation (Powell & Butterfield, 2003).

As appears from extant literature, the glass ceiling comes in many forms: women's underrepresentation at the corporate hierarchy, gendered wage gap, occupational segregation, discriminative corporate policies, lack of attention to the specific needs women have, sexual harassment at the workplace, and exclusion of women from informal networks (Centre for Social Research, 2009). In contrast to recognised barriers to career advancement, such as inadequate education and lack of requisite work experience, the glass ceiling barriers are less tangible and may be rooted in culture, society and organisational, individual and psychological factors that collectively work to obstruct the progression of women to managerial positions (Jain & Mukherji, 2010).

More than 20 years after the term was coined, the glass ceiling still exists, and has led to a brain drain of women who opt to exit the industry. It poses a threat to organisations as it is a form of discrimination against women and contributes to their lack of access to decision-making and power in organisations (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2004).

Six experienced inhibitors of career advancement of females are discussed in more detail below.

3.5.1   Gender discrimination and stereotypes

According to Wirth (2004), a large number of women enter the workforce at levels similar to their male counterparts, but their careers progress more slowly than their male colleagues. Wirth (2004) states that women experience difficulty in advancing into top management or executive positions mainly because of other people's perceptions of their abilities. Similarly, gender stereotypes around leadership continue to have an impact in the workplace with women often seen as nurturers and rarely as leaders, advancing the stereotype that managerial positions require masculine characteristics. Male managers are perceived as being independent, unemotional, objective and competent, while women are viewed as possessing the opposite of these qualities (Wirth, 2004). Furthermore, discrimination acts against women takes the form of being treated unfairly at the recruiting

and promotion processes and as well as by company remuneration practices (Wirth, 2004).

Hymowitz (2005) argues that women are also discriminated against because they become mothers, stating that one of the reasons why women are not taken seriously in the workplace is because at some point in their careers they have children, and as a result, they are not willing to work long hours when required. Research by Prescott and Bogg (2015) has also identified that women leave male dominated occupations and move to female dominated occupations due to the negative impact of their psychological experiences such as sexual discrimination, self-efficacy and gender role ideology. This view is supported by Chu (2005, as cited in Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015) who states that a long-standing tradition of gender segregation has had a negative impact on the self-confidence of women in STEM occupations, and consequently, on their performance.

3.5.2   Working hours

Most women in senior management positions in male dominated occupations have expressed concern about long working hours, thus, this is considered to be one of the barriers to women advancing in their careers (Geertsema, 2007). Women perceive ICT to be associated with long working hours and consequently they leave their jobs because the perceived expectations are detrimental to their families (Pretorius et al., 2015). This view is supported by Watts (2009), who argues that organisational cultures that promote long hours have been proven to have both psychological and physical effects on women. These women struggle to balance the demands of their careers with the demands on their personal lives. Often when they request a reduction of working hours from their management, this is potrayed as a lack of commitment and results in them being excluded from consideration for promotions (Veale & Gold, 1998; Wilson, 2002). Thus, the inability to work flexible hours impacts negatively on women's advancement opportunities.

Further research by Prescott and Bogg (2011), in their study of career attitudes of men and women working in the male-dominated gaming industry, revealed that women in the

industry had to work long hours in order to be promoted, which fundamentally creates difficulties for women. Similarly, Webster (2006) states that in all companies, even those with strong equality programmes, the ability and willingness to work long hours is necessary for career advancement and promotions into senior positions. As the ICT industry is associated with long working hours, employees are expected to work overtime and to be on standby (Pretorius et al., 2015). This discourages women who are unable to work long hours from pursuing promotion possibilities in their organisations as they are disadvantaged in terms of advancing in their careers due to their inability to work extended hours and travel regularly (Orser et al., 2012).

3.5.3   Work family conflict

The balancing act between professional and private life is a very challenging factor for men and women in the ICT profession due to the fact that ICT demands and often involves tight deadlines and long working hours (Pretorius et al., 2015). Additionally, ICT professionals are required to spend time outside work in reading to update their knowledge and information in ICT and keeping up with the new technological developments (Haynes, 2006). Given these kind of working patterns, working time arrangements are challenging for women with family and childcare responsibilities. According to Rosser (2003), balancing work and family responsibilities was the number one challenge facing female engineers. Women today have multiple roles and are torn between demanding careers and demanding family lives (Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012).

Clutterbuck (2003, as cited in Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012, p. 4233) defines work-life balance as "a state where an individual manages real or potential conflict between different demands on his or her time and energy in a way that satisfies his or her needs for well-being and self-fulfillment." It is further suggested by Parasuraman and Simmers (2001), that the elements that influence this type of conflict are the employee's gender, type of employment, work role characteristics and pressures (such as level of autonomy available, time flexibility, level of job involvement and time commitment), and

family role characteristics and pressures (parental demands, level of family involvement and time commitment to the family).

Elliott and Smith (2004) argue that women withdraw from leadership positions because they are more likely than men to take on most of the family responsibilities due to the unequal division of labour. In a study of gender differences in managerial careers, Kirchmeyer (2002) made the observation that women are opting to take less challenging jobs with more flexibility because they are not as willing as men to put their careers ahead of personal commitments. Kirchmeyer (2002) further states that it is often difficult for women who have interrupted their careers to re-enter the workforce and be seriously considered for promotions. Adding to this Piterman (2008) states that talent is lost through a failure to better accommodate reasonable employee requests for flexible working conditions.

3.5.4   Lack of role models, mentoring and networking opportunities

The lack of role models has been demonstrated to be one of the most important barriers to women in ICT (James, Smith, Roodt, Primo & Evans, 2006). Good role models are needed for women in ICT when they enter the workforce and as they progress in their careers (James et al., 2006). Despite the well-recognised benefits from mentoring, finding mentors has been a major challenge for professional women and several possible reasons have been advanced for this. First, mentorship has traditionally occurred at the discretion and interest of the mentors, who are primarily male (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000). On the other hand, women seeking female mentors often find few available, thanks to the absence of women in high-ranking positions who can serve in the mentor role (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). As management positions in ICT are still dominated by men, female role models and mentors are difficult to come by (James et al., 2006).

Research by Wang (2009) and later by Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015), point to gender differences in forming networks, as well as discrepancies in access to and use of networks. In workplaces where males disproportionately occupy positions of power, this

propensity disadvantages women, reducing their access to the influential and informal social networks which are considered as a key facilitator for promotions in their career and achieving senior management, executive and CEO/president levels in the ICT field (Woodfield, 2006). Page, Bailey and Van Delinder (2009) and Lyon (2009), suggest that a lack of female role models may result in many girls doubting that they could succeed in engineering, science and technology, thus choosing alternative career paths. Additionally, the 'old boy's club' tradition in the fields of science and technology excludes women from professional networks, depriving them of opportunities for information exchange, career planning and professional support that is necessary for advancement opportunities to women (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015).

3.5.5   Organisational culture

Research by Gumbus and Grodzinsky (2004) has found that of all the barriers to the career advancement of women in organisations, organisational culture has the most significant impact. The result is that organisations fail to retain women in management positions over time (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2004). Booysen (2005) concurs with this view by stating that an unsupportive organisational culture is also one of the reasons for women moving between jobs, thus resulting in low retention levels of female managers.

Michie and Nelson (2006) have proposed that women find the cultural climate in many ICT organisations to be cold and hostile, hence they leave the ICT world for other types of work. In addition, several studies of women in ICT (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015; James et al., 2006) have found that most women in the industry experience a culture misfit: they do not feel that they belong because of the said 'old boy network' that exists in the industry. Veale and Gold (1998) argue that organisational culture plays an important role in promoting job satisfaction. This researcher is therefore of the opinion that companies that are rigid and do not promote gender equality will produce employees who do not achieve job satisfaction, and ultimately seek alternative employment opportunities, which results in low retention levels of female employees.

3.5.6   Training and development

Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015) go on to say that according to their studies, a lack of training, poor talent management and a lack of mentorship are some of the most prominent career barriers to women. Several studies have shown that women in full-time jobs tend to receive less training and have fewer opportunities for professional development in organisations compared to men, owing, in part, to the idea that women do not need training as they perform less skilled tasks for which training is unnecessary (Kirai & Mukulu, 2012; Munjuri, 2011). Kirai and Mukulu (2012) further state that few organisations make a systematic effort in assisting women by keeping them informed about all training and career development programmes available and giving them access to these programmes. Additionally, Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015) state that because of family commitments, women in STEM occupations find it more difficult to increase their skills through education and training, and because they are ill-equipped, they often remain in secondary positions in the labour force. This view is supported by Pretorius et al. (2015) who asserted that women in the ICT industry do not have the time to keep up to date with constant new training and education requirements as they also have to manage their households. Munjuri (2011) states that the unavailability of training and development can impede an employee's progress up or across job ladders, while Kirai and Mukulu (2012) explain that the loss of development opportunities over a period of time can prevent women from qualifying for senior or high level positions (Kirai and Mukulu, 2012).

3.6   Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling

A tremendous amount of research has been undertaken in the area of breaking through the said glass ceiling revealing that generally, worldwide, the attainment of top executive positions for females is complex and involves many variables (Centre for Social Research, 2009). Understanding those variables is important to formulate strategies to overcome such forms of gender inequality in organisational leadership. Organisational leaders will need to have a thorough understanding of the barriers faced by women in the corporate world if they are to remove the glass ceiling that women come across.

According to Pretorius et al. (2015), despite the existing societal, organisational and personal barriers, women in management still aspire to top jobs almost to the same degree as their male counterparts do. Research by Ramlall (2003) appears to support the notion that it is in an organisation's interest to open up career paths for women and to help them achieve their aspirations.

Strategies to help women advance in their careers have been implemented at both organisational and industry levels (Orser et al., 2012). Companies in the ICT sector have introduced a number of initiatives, including employment equity and diversity policies, monitoring and reporting of employee profile data, recruitment and retention strategies, flexi-time and part time work arrangements and parental support services (Orser et al., 2012). Furthermore, some employers and industry associations offer networking and mentoring opportunities and programmes that seek to inform women about career opportunities and improve their skills (Cukier, 2004).

Ragins et al. (1998) state that the glass ceiling results in productivity loses and high turnover costs due to employees who are demotivated because they are not advancing in their careers. Although literature regarding the programmes to support women in ICT in the South African industry is limited, there are several recognised strategies that have been implemented to address the under-representation of women in ICT and to attract more women to the sector. The various strategies are examined below.

3.6.1 Commitment from senior management to skills development

The first strategy entails gaining top management's commitment and support for the career development of women (McDonagh & Nancy, 2012). Elliott and Smith (2004) state investing in human capital is essential if women are to be steered into positions of authority. Organisations therefore need to adopt a culture of lifelong learning and invest in training and developing their female employees.

3.6.2 Training and development

Providing necessary training and development opportunities for women to move up the career ladder can be considered as one of the solutions to address the challenge of under-representation of women in top management positions (Munjuri, 2011). As the contemporary global economic environment continues radically evolving, attracting and retaining skilled employees has become increasingly imperative as it is their knowledge and skills that have emerged as the key for organisations to remain economically competitive (Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen, & Moeyaert, 2009). Continuing in professional development and gaining professional qualifications is important in advancing women in their careers, therefore it is essential that organisations give female employees the opportunity to learn and to develop (Kyndt et al., 2009).

According to Fernando, Amaratunga, and Haigh (2014), training and development is a vital resource that helps employees to keep abreast of new ideas, learn technical aspects and develop management and leadership skills, which assist in personal development and career advancement. Munjuri (2011) states that employees who invest in education and training have increased levels of career advancement. While formal qualifications play an important role in promoting a career, qualifications are not the only element in career development; informal learning and development on the job and ultimately, putting it into practice, are equally important (Holton & Dent, 2012).

3.6.3 Mentoring

The importance of mentorship in career advancement has been widely documented. Researchers maintain that mentorship programmes and mentoring opportunities are crucial for the employability and career advancement of women (Holton & Dent, 2012). Having someone who can challenge, support and act as a sounding board is seen as vital for career advancement, therefore, mentors and coaches provide important developmental relationships and opportunities for career success (Munjuri, 2011).

A study by Tharenou (2005) found that mentoring and career support for the female participants increased their chance of promotion more than that of their male participants. This finding is supported by Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) as well as by Raggins, Cotton and Miller (2000), who found that employees with a mentor received more promotions, had higher incomes and greater job satisfaction levels than employees without mentors.

Mentoring is, in fact, an effective vehicle for moving knowledge through the organisation from the people who possess the most experience and learning to those who have less (Munjuri, 2011). Meyer and Fourie (2004) state that mentorship is both value and career-oriented: the former in that the character and values of the mentee are developed and the latter because the mentee is taught the skills and given information relevant to his/her career. Deemer and Fredericks (2003, cited in Reddy, 2007), recommend that female mentees should have both male and female mentors: the former will assist the mentee understand the politics and success pathways of the organisation, while the female mentor can advise and guide the mentee on the gender-based challenges within the organisation.

3.6.4   Networking

The importance of networking as a career strategy is well documented in research literature. Garavan, Hogan and Cahir-O'Donnell (2003) stated that networking forms an essential dimension of organisational life and individuals who excel at networking are more likely to excel in their careers compared to those who do not. Networks of relationships are essential because they are social resources as well as contexts in which careers take shape (Arokiasamy, Ismail, Ahmad & Othman, 2011). The platform allows people to develop relationships with individuals who have the potential to assist them - work or career wise. According to Munjuri (2011), managers who advance are likely to have personal contacts in diverse groups within and beyond the organisation.

A study by Smith and Dengiz (2010) revealed that women believe that having women peers is important and that the opportunity to network with other women in the industry is a great asset to their growth and development. This is supported by Hofmeyr and Mzobe,

(2012) who state that networking amongst women assists them obtain the support and guidance they need to develop in their careers, which ultimately reduces the isolaton that they feel. Furthermore, Ragins et al., (1998) state that influential male mentors, with pre-established networks and credibility, can sponsor their female protégés into senior management circles and provide inside information usually obtained in the 'old boy' networks.

Govender (2005) states that when future female managers are given the oportunity to work closely with senior managers early in their careers, they gain access to a network of influential contacts. These contacts can expose young managers to the way in which an organisation operates, thus providing valuable business insight (Govender, 2005). This is supported by Linehan and Scullion (2008), who state that the significant advantages afforded to individuals through networking include information exchange, collaboration, alliance development, acquisition of tacit knowledge, visibility and support.

3.6.5 Flexible work schedules and family friendly policies

At the centre of efforts to respond to women's experiences in the workplace and initiatives designed to encourage and retain female talent, is the range of flexibility options and family support offered to employees (Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012). Flexible work arrangements which include flexible working hours, after-school and after-care facilities, assist women in overcome the challenges they experience at work (Orser et al., 2012). Frome, Alfeld, Eccles and Barber (2006) and Geertsema (2007) indicate that women have many responsibilities both at work and at home and so would benefit from flexible working hours, however, this flexibility is lacking in male dominated industries, which drives women away.

3.6.6 Support – organisational, family and friends

Line managers and senior colleagues are key in providing opportunities for learning and growth, encouraging and providing challenging work assignments to women (Holton &

Dent, 2012). Furthermore, Holton and Dent (2012) found that although supportive organisational cultures where equality is encouraged are highlighted, the relationship element of organisational life far outweighs the provision of formal policies and practices that support working women.

Managers and colleagues who provide employees with training, resources and the opportunity and support to show and prove their work abilities through assigning them significant work tasks and projects in the organisation contribute significantly to the advancement of an individual's career (Arokiasamy, Ismail, Ahmad, & Othman, 2011). Additionally, support from family and friends is essential in achieving career goals, as they provide moral support, act as sounding boards and share responsibility for child care and household duties (Doubell & Struwig, 2014).

3.7   Chapter Summary

The career advancement of female managers was addressed in this chapter. The chapter started with a discussion of women in leadership, the representation of women in leadership in South Africa and the ICT sector profile. This was followed by an examination of the challenges to career advancement that women face and the chapter concluded with a discussion of how women can break through the glass ceiling.

The research methodology is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe and justify the research methodology selected for this study. This includes a justification of the research approach, strategy and method. The examination of the research method covers the research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, research procedure, research participants, data collection methods, recording of data, data analysis and strategies employed to ensure quality data. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how ethical issues were addressed.

4.2   Research Design

Research designs are procedures and plans for research and consist of decisions regarding the broad assumptions and detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2003) defined research design as the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research question and, ultimately, to its conclusion. Research design can be considered as an action plan which guides a researcher from the beginning to the end of the research (Yin, 2003). In the following section the research design and methods that were used for the study are discussed.

4.2.1   Research approach

A qualitative research approach was selected for this study in line with the research question. This approach was chosen for the study since this would create an opportunity for detailed accounts of the phenomena, allowing for an opportunity to understand the experiences of the managers in greater depth and rich detail (Berg, 1998). In line with this approach, open ended and inductive techniques were used to understand the ways people make sense of their world and how they experience events. The participants were asked broad questions, their views noted and responses were analysed for common themes (Thomas, 2010).

Creswell (2014) defines a qualitative study as an inquiry process which seeks to construct a framework or picture. Schurink (2003, p. 3) looked at qualitative research from a holistic view and stated that "qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual, and detailed data." Based on these descriptions it can be inferred that more emphasis is on 'holistic' forms of analysis than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations (Mason, 2002).

According to Peshkin (1993) qualitative research studies ordinarily serve one or more of the purposes below:

- *Description*. They have the potential of revealing the essence of certain conditions, environments, proceedings, systems or people

- *Interpretation*. Qualitative research enables a researcher to (a) gain a new understanding about a particular phenomenon, (b) generate original theoretical viewpoints about the phenomenon and/or (c) uncover existing issues within phenomenon

- *Verification*. Researchers are able to practically test the validity of certain assumptions, assertions, theories, or generalisations

- *Evaluation*. They give the researcher a means by which he/she can determine the effectiveness of particular policies, practices or innovations.

The current study served an interpretative purpose. The interpretive approach enabled the objective and holistic study of female participants' subjective experiences as they construct multiple realities in their daily lives (Potgieter & Barnard, 2010).

Based on the descriptions above it can be said that qualitative research is primarily about making meaning and not formulating hypotheses (Mason, 2010). In this study, the focus, from the perspective of the participants, was on exploring and understanding their views

of career advancement in the ICT sector. The qualitative approach was selected for several reasons: this research method is perceptive of the true context in which people live (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007); it is commonly more exploratory and descriptive in nature than quantitative research; and interpretation is based on the participants' lived experiences, rather than measured facts or truths. In this sense the researcher is not detached from the participants, but attempts to understand the participants' own experiences of their world (Elliott & Smith, 2004). According to Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2007) qualitative research is concerned with meaning and the core lived experience that is rooted in the individuals' socio-cultural context, where the intention (Nieuwenhuis, 2007) is to collect rich, descriptive data in respect of the phenomenon under study with the objective of developing an understanding of what is being studied. A qualitative approach was used to obtain the perceptions and perspectives of female managers employed in the ICT sector in this study. This methodological approach was thus consistent with the aim of this research.

4.2.2   Research strategy

The methodology used for this study was phenomenology. This approach allowed for the description of what participants have in common with the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). In this study the phenomenon of interest was how women experience and understand career advancement. According to Terreblanche et al. (2006), phenomenology refers to the manner in which people connect with the world they exist in, and their consciousness of it. Furthermore, phenomenological research is an investigation in which the researcher identifies the meaning of people's experiences with regard to a specific phenomenon described by the participant (Creswell, 2014). In essence, phenomenology is the study of experience and seeks to understand people's experiences of life's events and the meanings these experiences have for them (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). In the context of phenomenology, experience refers to perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

4.2.2.1   Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used as a phenomenological method (Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA is phenomenological in that it wishes to explore an individual's personal perception or account of an event or state as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of the event or state itself (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Smith and Osborn (2008) emphasise that the focus of IPA is the in-depth exploration of personal experience and how people perceive, ascribe meaning to, and make sense of their experiences. The assumption behind this premise is that people are actively engaged in the world and are constantly reflecting on their experiences in order to understand it (Smith et al., 2009). As this study focused on the subjective interpretations of female managers' experiences, IPA facilitated the researcher entering the world of these managers through the use of the data collected.

Researchers adopting IPA as an approach have two main aims. Firstly, they listen intently to the concerns expressed by the participants in order to obtain an insider's perspective of the phenomenon under study; and secondly, they attempt to interpret these accounts for the purpose of gaining an understanding of what it means for those people to have those concerns in that particular context (Larkin et al., 2006).

Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) argue that IPA is a particularly valuable approach to adopt when researching an area that has previously lacked exploration. This seemed particularly pertinent to this research as investigations aiming to explore female managers' ICT advancement experiences in-depth appear to be particularly scarce. However, the inductive nature of the approach meant that the researcher did not have to rely on existing literature to drive the analysis process. Instead, the approach allowed for the possibility of novel and unexpected experiences to arise.

4.2.2.2   Social Constructionism

The theoretical framework of constructivism advances a view that knowledge is effectively a mere construction of reality. In this process the individual is seen as an active agent involved in this cognitive construction through a process of "self-conceiving and self-organising, influenced by both personal and socially determined interpretations of the world (Denicolo & Pope, 1997).

In order to fully comprehend participant's constructions of meaning, focus must be on the situational context and culture in which they are experiencing the event, and also to the temporal context. Thus, it is necessary to consider the participants context at the time of sharing their experiences, for example, their relationship with, or perception about, the organisation, and their rapport with the researcher extracting information from them at the time. These dynamics are likely to affect empployees' narratives and what is recalled and how it is interpereted and shared (Morrow, 2005).

This approach was relevant and suitable for this study because it indicates the contribution of the social context to an individual's constructions of reality. It further recognises the role of social relationships on individual constructions of meaning, which somewhat addresses criticisms of constructivism being overly individualistic. Due to it's holistic perspective, participants are not viewed in isolation from their context, but in a holistic way that hightlights both the individual and social influences that contribute to their perceptions of each new situation they encounter (Martin & Sugarman, 1999; Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978)

Cochran (1990, p.73) stated that "attempting to understand career transition without placing it in the context of the individual's whole life is akin to walking in to the last scene of a film and attempting to understand the plot". This approach therefore assumes there is no fixed external reality to be objectively known but a fluid social reality that is co-constructed.

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4.2.3   Research method

4.2.3.1   Research setting

The study was conducted in an ICT company in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa. The selected company operates in the Contact Centre, Unified Solutions, and Telecommunication environments. This study was conducted on junior, middle, senior and executive female managers in this company.

4.2.3.2   Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The researcher was an employee in the organisation where the study was conducted. The HR Director at the organisation gave consent for the study to be conducted in the organisation. Participants selected for the study were approached individually and the background to the study and aims of the study were discussed with them. Once the participants agreed to participate in the study, they signed an informed consent form outlining the parameters of the study and confirming their willingness to participate. The aspect of confidentiality was reiterated to the participants prior to and during the interviews. The researcher qualified herself in the specific qualitative research methods of interviewing before the interviews were conducted.

4.2.3.3   Research procedure

In order to gain access to the participants, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the study on female managers at different levels from top management of the participating organisation. The purpose and benefits of the study were highlighted to the organisation and to participants was permission was granted.

The researcher identified a Human Resource representative as a gatekeeper of the study. The gatekeeper was responsible for facilitating access to respondents and logistical arrangements. The context and purpose of the study was clearly explained, and

confidentiality was assured to all participants. Interviews were scheduled at a convenient location and time for all parties.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.7.3.3., participants were given the participation information sheet and were requested to complete the consent forms. Upon receipt of the informed consent, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from participating at any time. Furthermore, participants were then asked to read the instructions carefully and fill out the demographic section of the interview. Once the interview session was concluded, participants were asked if they had any questions and thanked for their participation. All sessions were audio taped with the prior consent of the participants.

4.2.3.4   Research participants

Whitley (2002) states that when we design research, we want our results to apply to a certain group of people, adding that this target population can be as broad as everyone in the world or as narrow as the workers in a particular job in a particular factory. The population for a study is the universe of all the subjects or group of people, with a common characteristic, about whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions or generalise the results of a study (Babbie, 2005). In this study, the population consisted of all 20 female managers in the participating company. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.7.4., these managers were of different race groups, genders, age groups, occupational categories, educational levels and managerial levels.

The selection process for participants for the study involved the consideration of a number of factors. As the aim of IPA is to obtain detail about individual perceptions, Smith and Osborn (2007) recommend that IPA studies should involve small groups to allow the researcher the opportunity to obtain an in-depth account of the perceptions of the group, instead of making inferences from general statements.

Neumann (2000) states that researchers focus on particular methods in order generate sample groups that are representative of their research requirements. The purposive

sampling technique (nonprobability sampling) was employed in this research, wherein subjects were selected on the basis of their understanding of the topic that was being investigated (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Purposeful sampling is suitable when the selection of a sample is based on the researcher's knowledge of the population and its elements, as well as the nature and purpose of the research aim (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Participants were carefully selected and represented the area of interest to ensure that the research question was answered.

The key criteria for selecting partitcipants in this study included years of experience in the ICT industry as well knowledge of the topic being investigated, in line with Sekaran and Bougie (2013). Preference was given to participants who have been in the ICT industry for over 5 years, and who have previously taken part in any career development initiative such as leadership development programme, being a mentor or being mentored. Managers who were relatively new in the ICT industry were excluded from the sample due to their limited exposure to industry dynamics. Simillarly, managers who showed limited understanding of, and interest in, the topic were excluded due to potential limited contribution in this study.

These participants were contacted via e-mail and participation was on voluntary basis. Data saturation was reached with the ten managers, which was established because the same information began to be repeated and reported upon (Monette, Sullivan, & De Jong, 2005).

4.2.3.5   *Data collection methods*

Interviews were used to gather information regarding opportunities for career advancement of female managers in ICT, and company records were obtained to provide evidence of employee development records. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) state that interviews are a specific type of discussion that requires active asking and listening between the researcher and the interviewee. In addition, Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight (2006) propose that interviews constitute a learning process for both the interviewee and

the interviewer since the conversation simultaneously presents the experiences of the interviewee while the interviewer takes this opportunity to further advance the research process. Due to the nature of variables involved in this study, secondary data sources such as Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and employee turnover records were also consulted (with the participants' permission) to validate the information.

A variety of interview types can be used to gather data. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method for this study; information was obtained first-hand from the participants with the purpose of allowing interviewees an opportunity to offer their interpretations of reality (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). This data collection method is in line with the IPA approach adopted as part of the research strategy for this study. Semi-structured interviews are probably the best way to collect data for an IPA study because the real time interaction with the participant gives major flexibility for the researcher in facilitating the participant to explore their lived experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Furthermore, this form of interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews can thus be considered as the most popular method to elicit rich and detailed first-person accounts of experiences and phenomena under investigation, although other alternatives of data collection can also be used (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Smith and Osborn (2008) further suggest that the in-depth interviews allow the researcher to make interpretations which reflect the interviewees' accounts based on the responses of the participants.

Semi-structured interviews are so labelled, according to Smith and Osborn (2008), because the interviewer enters the interview setting with a planned sequence of questions to ask the respondent. In this study, the interview schedule was not used to dictate the interview, but was used as a guide. A prompt sheet was developed with a few main themes for discussion with the participants. It should be noted that this interview sheet was merely the basis for the conversation: it was not intended to be prescriptive and certainly not limiting in the sense of overriding the expressed interests of the participant

(Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). The interviews therefore provided insight rather than statistical significance.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with an open mind, allowing the interviewees to determine the direction of the interview while listening and facilitating the discussion. Reflexivity was used as the validity procedure by the interviewer acknowledging the effect of her personal history and entering beliefs early in the research process, and then bracketing those biases as the study proceeded (Krefting, 1991). Even though the interviewer had studied literature related to the topic, all effort was made to conduct the interview in such a way that the interviewee was the one driving the interview and sharing their experiences of career advancement.

The funnelling technique was incorporated (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013), when asking questions, which allowed the formation of impressions of the situation from the open-ended questions. This is a transition from broad to narrow themes. For certain issues, the interest was in eliciting both the participants' general views and their response to more specific concerns, thus constructing the schedule as a funnel enabled this to be done. Questions were posed in an attempt to elicit the respondent's general view on the phenomena and having established that, the researcher probed for more specific issues. The general point was that by asking questions in this sequence, the respondents were encouraged to give their own views before funnelling them into more specific questions of particular concern to the researcher.

According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), the aim of IPA is to enter the psychological and social world of the participant. As such, the participants directed the interviews and were given an opportunity to tell their stories. Each interview was a real-time dialogue between the researcher and the participant, with the researcher leaving the script and moving deeper into the personal experiences of the participants – which is the heart of rich IPA research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

In order to establish credibility during the interviews, the researcher made the participants feel comfortable by addressing any fears that the participants had, and by displaying a genuine interest in the participants' responses (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Credibility was further enhanced by the researcher making use of more than one individual as a source of data in order to gain multiple perspectives. The researcher stated the purpose of the interview and assured complete confidentiality in the study. Since IPA studies are frequently concerned with significant existential issues, the researcher was careful to monitor how the interview was affecting the participant, and applied interviewing skills when she picked up that the participants were avoiding talking about certain issues (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The main emphasis during this process was to record, in detail, the participants' responses, both spoken words and non-verbal signs (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007). Another important consideration in the interview process was the duration of the interviews. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) state that the duration of most IPA interviews is one hour or longer. For this study, each interview lasted approximately an hour.

4.2.3.6   Recording of data

According to Terreblanche et al. (2006), interviews are often recorded by taking down notes, audio and video recording. In IPA it is necessary to audio record the interviews in order to capture important nuances and produce a verbatim transcription of it (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). For this study, permission to record the interview was requested from each individual participant at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were recorded in two ways: with an audio recording tape and notes written down during the course of the interview in order to capture details and behaviour that was not articulated verbally. Both methods were used simultanously to optimize the data recording process.

A margin was left on both sides of the interview sheet to make analytic comments. Smith and Osborn (2007) state that for IPA, the level of transcription is generally at the semantic level: one needs to read all the words spoken including false starts; significant pauses, laughs and other features are also worth recording. As further suggested by Smith and

Osborn (2007), after each interview, the recording was transcribed with meticulous accuracy, often including, for example, indications of pauses, mis-hearings, apparent mistakes and even speech dynamics where these were in any way remarkable. The transcripts were analysed in conjunction with the original recordings and interview themes were identified. Data were stored in a safe place and kept confidential. The researcher informed the participants about how the data was going to be recorded, stored and processed.

4.2.3.7 Data analysis

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013) the analysis of qualitative data is not simple. The problem is that, in comparison with quantitative data analysis, there are relatively few well established and commonly accepted rules and guidelines for analysing qualitative data. The primary data analysis approach of this study was based on IPA methodologies. IPA aims to identify the meaning/s behind participants' experiences. Smith and Osborn (2008) state that the aim of conducting data analysis in IPA is to understand the content and complexity of meaning rather than to measure the frequency of meaning. Therefore, from an IPA perspective, the researcher is mainly interested in the living world of the participant. In order to understand the meaning of the events within this psychological world, which as mentioned above, is of central interest to the researcher, this researcher engaged in an interpretative relationship with the transcript (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

According to Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006), there are two levels of analysis that are important for the IPA researcher to be attuned to in order for the research to be properly explored, understood and communicated. The first level simply summarises what the participants have described regarding their perceptions and experiences. The second level of analysis requires the researcher to deal with the data in a more speculative fashion in order to provide a critical and conceptual commentary. Larkin et al. (2006) further add that this requires interpreting the participant's claims from a psychological perspective and/or wider socio-cultural context.

When analysing qualitative material, it is recommended that the researcher totally immerse themselves in the data or, in other words, as far as possible tries to step into the participants' shoes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). During the data analysis process, the recommended guidelines for applying the IPA approach as propagated by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) were used. The initial stage involved reading the transcript and listening to the audio recording a number of times with the researcher making use of the left-hand margin to annotate what was interesting or significant about what the respondent said. As recommended by Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008), the researcher made notes of any thoughts, observations and reflections that occurred while reading the transcript or other text as these notes were likely to include any recurring phrases, the researcher's questions, their own emotions and descriptions of- or comments on, the language used. Once this process was completed for the entire transcript, the researcher returned to the beginning of the transcript with the aim of transforming the notes into phrases which aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text. The right-hand margin was used to document the emerging themes.

Resulting from the establishment of the emergent themes (listed on a sheet of paper), the researcher engaged in a process of searching for connections between the emerging themes. According to Smith et al. (2009), this process entails detailing how the themes link with each other. Themes that were not relevant to the research question were excluded from this stage. Similar themes were then grouped together in clusters. As the themes were clustered, meaning was once again checked with the transcript to continually verify that the themes made a connection with the participant's words. The over-arching (superordinate) themes were then identified. In deciding which themes to focus on, the researcher did not just select themes based purely on their prevalence within the data, but she considered other factors too, such as the richness of the particular passages that highlighted the themes and how the theme helped bring to light other aspects of the account.

The next stage involved developing a table of themes and listing the sub-themes which go with each superordinate theme.

Although there is no absolute description of how IPA analysis should take place, Smith et al. (2009) suggest some common practices and principles involved in the process. Table 4.1 below illustrates the steps that were followed in the IPA analysis of the data.

Table 4.1 Steps followed in the IPA analysis of the data

Step 1: Administering a comprehensive line-by-line analysis of the insight, concerns and allegations of each participant.
Step 2: Recognition of themes or patterns that are emerging, and emphasising convergence, divergence, aspects of commonality and nuance. This technique is then applied across several interviews.
Step 3: The next step involves a detailed description of the interchange between the researcher and his/her psychological knowledge, as well as the coded data.
Step 4: Development of a gestalt or holistic framework as an illustration of the relationships between various themes.
Step 5: Organising the material in a simplified format for the processing of analysed data, and linking this to the original transcript comments, clustering and the final structure of themes.
Step 6: Supervision, collaboration or auditing is used to test the coherence, reliability and validity of the interpretation.
Step 7: The next step involves a detailed account supported by comprehensive commentary on data extracts. This section is often accompanied by a table or an illustration. The objective is to assist the reader with interpreting each theme.
Step 8: The researcher then reflects on his/her own interpretation, perceptions and processes.

 Source: Smith et al. (2009)

Smith et al. (2009) emphasise that the researcher shouldn't follow a linear path, instead the process shouldd be reactive in the hermeneutical circle of analysis and interpretation. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) highlight that even though IPA is mainly focused in the personal lived experiences of participants and the resulting meaning made of those experiences, the final step in the process must always be the report of how the researcher thinks the participant is thinking (double hermeneutics).

4.2.3.8   Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Qualitative researchers, who frame their studies in an interpretive paradigm, think in terms of trustworthiness as opposed to the conventional, positivistic criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) further suggest that four factors be considered in establishing the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. This is supported by Babbi and Mouton (2001) who suggest that the above factors should be used as strategies to ensure that bias is lessened during the research process. Each of these factors is discussed in this section.

- *Credibility*

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility refers to the confidence one can have in the truth of the research findings. It indicates the extent to which the findings are convincing and believable. Krefting (1991) stated that a qualitative study is credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretations of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the descriptions.

Anney (2014) suggested that a qualitative researcher establishes rigour of the inquiry by adopting a variety of credibility strategies. The credibility of this study was strengthened by applying data triangulation - making use of multiple participants, interviewing different groupings of people over a period of time to deepen the understanding of the investigated experience (Krefting 1991). In addition, credibility was ensured by doing member checks (Anney, 2014) which involved sending the analysed and interpreted data back to the participants for them to evaluate the interpretation made by the researcher and to suggest changes if they disagreed with the researcher's interpretation. Lastly, the researcher also made use of peer reviewing (Krefting 1991) using an experienced qualitative researcher to review the analysed data.

- *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the research can be transferred or applied to other contexts (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2011). In essence, it means that other researchers can apply the findings of the study to their own situations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a detailed description permitting likely transferability of judgements should always be provided by the researcher. A variety of data sources such as interviews and notes were used in this research study. Participants and the context of the study were described as extensively as possible. Rich and thick descriptions of the findings were used in order to take the readers to the research setting and give the discussion an element of a shared experience (Creswell, 2014). These measures should make it possible for the reader to decide on the transferability of the findings to other contexts (Shenton, 2004).

- *Dependability*

Dependability refers to whether research findings are reasonable and based on a logical and well documented research process (De Vos et al., 2011). In the current study, dependability was established by using recordings and notes to ensure the research process was well documented. In order to further enhance the dependability of the data analysis, the research design, its implementation and the detail of how data was gathered, were reported in detail, while a peer review of the research process was also conducted (Shenton, 2004).

- *Conformability*

Conformability relates to objectivity in qualitative research and is to ensure that the research findings are based on the experiences and narratives of the research participants and are not borne out of the researcher's traits and perspectives (Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure conformability, the researcher kept a reflexive journal – documents which included all events that happened during the data collection process as

well as personal reflections in relation to the study (Anney, 2014). The researcher also continuously reflected on her own personal contributions to the research and explained her role in the research in detail (Shenton, 2004).

- *Reflexivity*

Reflexivity involves ways of questioning our attitudes, thoughts, reactions and habitual actions to strive to understand our roles in relation to others (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas & Caricativo, 2017). To be reflexive is to examine ones involvement and become aware of the limits of ones knowledge and how their behaviour may influence or affect others. This study adopted the Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) reflexivity model to ensure transparency in decision making in the research process at multiple levels: personal, methodological, theoretical, epistemological, axiological and ethical. Focus was primarily on four levels of the model as presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Reflexivity model

1. Problematizing collected empirical material level:	The role played by the researcher in hearing and interpreting the data during the interviews was examined to determine whether the researcher was able to listen, reflect back on information given and ask relevant questions without being directive of the content.
2. Engagement with the interpretive act level:	To carry out the process of coding, the audio recordings was transcribed after each interview (verbatim) and no spoken details from the audio recordings were be omitted in the initial process.
3. Clarification of the political-ideological context level:	The researcher checked whether he was able to examine his own stance, values, and role in the research process, so that any potential for bias or prejudice is stated explicitly. This was very important to do in this research considering the reseracher's background in the topic, personal interest and values.
4. Consideration of questions of representation and authority level:	The Researcher untimately reflected on how she was engaging participants and how influential she was in the research process. How to present the material to reflect the approach and the purpose of the report. The researcher also reflected on the alignment of research objectives, reporting style and potential audiences.

Source: Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009)

Being reflexive in qualitative research means being transparent about decisions that are made in the research process (Engward & Davis, 2015). Literature further indicates that without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility. A great deal of attention is applied to reliability and validity in all research methods and presents multiple sources of evidence as a basis for trustworthiness and credibility (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018).

4.2.4   Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are imperative for research since they serve to protect both the researcher and the research participant (Powell, 2013). In the context of research, according to Saunders et al. (2009), ethics refers to appropriate and responsible conduct demonstrated by the researcher towards research participants and those affected by the research. The ethical guidelines on privacy, confidentiality and anonymity that were emphasised and adhered to as a standard for this research were those developed by Saunders et al. (2009).

Written approval and permission was obtained from the Human Resources Department of the participating organisation to conduct the study and to obtain other relevant records that were required. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from UNISA's Ethics Committee before commencement of the empirical study. Verbal and written informed consent was obtained from all participants and the completed forms were safely stored to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

Various steps were adopted throughout the process to preserve the quality and integrity of the data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). After the data were collected, participants were debriefed, with the researcher highlighting the aims of the research once more. In addition, the researcher answered any other additional questions the participants had. Each participant was given the typed transcript of her interview and the findings, and was requested to confirm that the data had been interpreted accurately. The research report will be made available to the company should it need it for organisational development and process improvement purposes. Participant anonymity will be maintained at all times.

4.3   Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to describe and justify the research methodology selected for this study. This included a justification of the research approach, strategy and method. The discussion of the research method included the research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, research procedure, research participants, data collection methods, recording of data, data analysis and strategies employed to ensure quality data. The chapter concluded with a discussion on how ethical issues were addressed.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the findings of the empirical study are presented and discussed. The chapter starts with a recap of how the data was gathered and then reports on the themes that were identified from the interviews during the data analysis process. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the identified themes and the chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

5.2   FINDINGS

5.2.1   A recap of how the data was gathered and analysed

A purposive sample of 10 female managers was drawn from a population of 20 female managers in the participating organisation and semi-structured interviews were used to gather information regarding opportunities for career advancement of female managers in ICT. Further to this, company records were obtained to provide evidence of employee development records. The primary data analysis approach of this study was based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodologies which aimed to identify the meaning/s behind participants' experiences. The social constructivist perspective was adopted, embracing how `emerging theories' of career development can enable an insight into participants' processes and understanding of context, in terms of both temporal context (e.g. the sequence of events prior to a career transition) and social context (e.g., the significance of the influence from social constructs such as family, gender, masculinity, and education)

5.2.2 Composition of the research sample

The composition of the research sample is given in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Composition of the research sample (n = 10)

Research Participant (RP)	Race	Age	Marital status	Children	Highest qualification	Management level	Years in current position	Years within organisation	Years within ICT industry
RP 1	Black	20-29	Married	Yes	Diploma	Middle	2 - 5	5+	5+
RP 2	White	50-60	Widow	Yes	Masters	Senior	5+	5+	5+
RP 3	Indian	30-39	Married	Yes	Degree	Middle	0 - 2	2 - 5	5+
RP 4	White	40-49	Divorced	Yes	Diploma	Executive	5+	5+	5+
RP 5	Black	30-39	Single	No	Degree	Middle	2 - 5	5+	5+
RP 6	Indian	40-49	Married	Yes	Diploma	Middle	2 - 5	5+	5+
RP 7	Indian	30-39	Married	Yes	Masters	Executive	0 - 2	5+	5+
RP 8	White	30-39	Single	Yes	Matric	Middle	5+	5+	5+
RP 9	White	30-39	Divorced	Yes	Diploma	Middle	2 - 5	5+	5+
RP 10	Black	30-39	Single	Yes	Diploma	Junior	2 - 5	5+	5+

From Table 5.1 it can be seen that, with regard to race, there were four White, three Black and three Indian participants. Most of the participants were aged between 30 – 39 years. Two participants were between 40 – 49 years of age while there was one participant representing the age group 20 – 29 years and one in the 50 – 60 year old group. There were four participants who were married, two divorced, three single and one was a widow. The majority of participants (90%) have children.

With regard to educational level, the majority of the participants had an undergraduate level education and two participants were qualified at a post-graduate level, while one participant's highest level of education was Grade 12. The managerial level represented in the study consisted mainly of middle managers (six), two participants were at executive level, one was senior and one was a junior manager. Finally, a distinction was made between years of service in the employee's current position, years employed with the

company at the time of data collection, and years employed in the ICT industry. Service periods of more than six months but less than one year were rounded off to the following year. The majority of participants have been employed in the organisation and the industry for over 5 years, while the majority of the participants have been employed in their current positions for between 2 and 5 years.

5.2.3 The identified themes, clusters, superordinate and sub-ordinate themes

The findings from the IPA analysis are recorded in the structure of the major themes, clusters, superordinate and subordinate themes identified from the individual interviews that were conducted with the female managers in the research sample. Table 5.2 offers an example of an interview and the notes of the interviewer's thoughts, observations and reflections, after reading this specific interview transcript.

Table 5.2 An example of a verbatim transcription of an interview and the notes of the interviewer's thoughts, observations and reflections

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW (CITATIONS)	RESEARCHER'S ANALYSIS/NOTES FROM THE TRANSCRIPT (ANNOTATIONS)
Interviewer: How would you describe the culture here? Respondent: Uhm… (*long pause, thinking*) It's intimate and family orientated. There's a strong male influence in management layers (*concern, discontent*)	Employees are friendly and supportive
	Employees allowed to work remotely
	Employees are not aware of what talent management programmes are in place
	Males and females are exposed to the same opportunities for advancement
Interviewer: What more needs to be done to support career advancement? Respondent: Mentorship. We should invest more in mentoring junior employees (*passionate*) (*reflects on personal*	Need for career guidance. Importance of senior managers giving direction to junior employees

mentoring relationships)	
	Employees must be willing to learn
Interviewer: What are the greatest strengths of this organisation? Respondent: (*Smiles*)… The organisation takes care of its people and management is very supportive	Support from management, co-workers and family in balancing work and family responsibilities
	Organisation treats males and females equally
	Increasing number of females in management positions
Interviewer: What have you identified as career obstacles in this organisation? Respondent: It is a small organisation so opportunities to advance are not common, especially in the middle-level of management (*sounds concerned*)	Not enough room for growth
	Employees are promoted on merit
	Demanding responsibilities at work and at home
Interviewer: How would you describe the culture here? Respondent: (*sigh*)… It's a highly pressurised environment. We work hard but also play hard. There's no start or end times – you work until you finish your work, sometimes even on weekends.	Employees do not work fixed hours. They are required to be on standby after-hours and on weekends
	Management imbalance. More males in leadership positions across the industry

The emergent themes reflected in Table 5.3, presented below, were identified from the notes that the researcher made after studying all ten of the interview transcripts.

Table 5.3 Transformation of interviewer notes into emergent themes

RESEARCHER'S ANALYSIS/NOTES FROM THE TRANSCRIPT	EMERGENT THEMES
Employees are friendly and supportive	Organisational culture
Employees allowed to work remotely	Flexibility
Employees are not aware of what talent management programmes are in place	Lack of Communication
Males and females are exposed to the same opportunities for advancement	Equal opportunities
Need for career guidance. Importance of senior managers giving direction to junior employees	Mentoring
Employees must be willing to learn	Personal drive
Support from management, co-workers and family in balancing work and family responsibilities	Support systems
Organisation treats males and females equally. Increasing number of females in management positions	Gender equality
Not enough room for growth	Lack of opportunities for advancement
Employees are promoted on merit	Fair processes
Demanding responsibilities at work and at home	Role conflict
Employees do not work fixed hours. They are required to be on standby after-hours and on weekends	

RESEARCHER'S ANALYSIS/NOTES FROM THE TRANSCRIPT	EMERGENT THEMES	CLUSTERING CONNECTING THEMES
Management imbalance. More males in leadership positions across the industry	Long working hours	
	Male-dominated industry	

The clusters listed in Table 5.4 were identified from the emergent themes identified by the researcher.

Table 5.4 Grouping of similar emerging themes into clusters

RESEARCHER'S ANALYSIS/NOTES FROM THE TRANSCRIPT	EMERGENT THEMES	CLUSTERING CONNECTING THEMES
Employees are friendly and supportive	Organisational culture	**Individual factors**
		Personal drive
		Role conflict
Employees allowed to work remotely	Flexibility	Willingness to learn
Employees are not aware of what talent management programmes are in place	Lack of Communication	**Organisational factors**
		Organisational culture
		Flexibility
Males and females are exposed to the same opportunities for advancement	Equal opportunities	Lack of Communication
		Equal opportunities
		Mentoring
Need for career guidance. Importance of senior managers giving direction to junior employees	Mentoring	Support systems
		Gender equality
		Lack of opportunities for advancement
Employees must be willing to learn	Personal drive	Fair processes
		Long working hours

Support from management, co-workers and family in balancing work and family responsibilities	Support systems	
Organisation treats males and females equally. Increasing number of females in management positions	Gender equality	**External factors**
		Family support
Not enough room for growth	Lack of opportunities for advancement	
		Male-dominated industry
Employees are promoted on merit	Fair processes	
Demanding responsibilities at work and at home	Role conflict	
Employees do not work fixed hours. They are required to be on standby after-hours and on weekends	Long working hours	
Management imbalance. More males in leadership positions across the industry	Male-dominated industry	

Table 5.5 reflects the over-arching (superordinate) themes and subordinate superordinate themes identified

Table 5.5 Superordinate and subordinate themes identified

	SUPERORDINATE THEMES	SUBORDINATE THEMES
1.	Personal development	• Mentoring • Training and development • Personal drive
2.	Organisational culture	• Learning culture • Self-development • Gender stereotypes
3.	Transformation	• Gender equality
4.	Work-life balance	• Role conflict

5.2.4 Findings per superordinate and sub-ordinate themes

The findings regarding the identified superordinate and subordinate themes are discussed in more detail below.

Superordinate theme 1: Personal development

Mentorship

The study revealed that having mentors who are inspirational and provide guidance plays an essential role in assisting women managers to advance in their career in the ICT industry. The women managers in the study who have been mentored conceded that mentoring relationships have contributed significantly to their career growth. One participant stated that "*Mentoring is very important towards one's career development. I've been mentored previously - a mentor facilitates your growth. You learn the ability to handle and deal with different situations.*"

One of the participants who has been employed by her organisation for over 15 years related how she goes out of her way to provide mentorship for employees - especially women at different levels in the organisation. The participant highlighted the significance of having a knowledgeable and experienced mentor, someone who would impart their knowledge and skills and be a sounding board for the mentee.

The majority of respondents emphasised the need for mentorship programmes for women. Interestingly, it is apparent from the study that only a few of the female managers interviewed have mentors. Some of the contributing factors to these low numbers is a lack of sufficient female mentors and lack of time for mentoring sessions. One participant put it this way: "*Mentoring is very important for career development, but I find in our division time is a problem. We are not office bound – how do you mentor someone you hardly see?*"

Nevertheless, participants expressed the need for more formal mentorship programmes, especially at entry and junior management levels. The suggestion was that when graduates are recruited, they must be assigned mentors to guide them during their career development. *"I believe mentorship should become common practice. Senior engineers should be mentoring junior engineers. There must be someone you can ask 'what do I do now?'"*

This approach fits into the social constructivist framework and significantly illustrates the benefits or contribution of values affecting the processes of career development within a social context, as well as enabling a further understanding of the concept of career advancement.

Training and development

The study found that the participating organisation promotes the upskilling of employees with various soft and technical skills. Most participants mentioned that the organisation offers various training opportunities in-house and externally, which eventually leads to

effectiveness and increased productivity. One participant put it in this way "*The organisation has good career development programmes in place. There are mechanisms to uplift anyone in this organisation, however, you have to put your hand up*." This view is also shared by another employee who gave a personal account of her development over the years *"Personally I have benefited a great deal from the training and development programmes offered by my organisation. The company allows employees to further their studies. It also offers employees opportunities to learn soft and technical skills. In our division, there's also voluntary training that's offered to staff during weekends".*

Participants indicated that employees have equal access to organisationally-sponsored training and development interventions and to educational opportunities. The participants indicated that the organisation is investing in the development of the learning culture because it is critical in the ICT sector to move with technology and build the knowledge base. One participant added *"In our division we are exposed to a lot of training because you have to stay abreast of the technological changes to remain relevant and competitive in this industry."* Another employee added *"Things are constantly changing in our industry and we have to keep up. We do a lot of training specific to the products and solutions that we support.*"

Also worthy of mention is that 30% of the participants mentioned that because of work and domestic commitments, they were unable to further their studies at present. It appears that the demanding nature of their work and family responsibilities takes up their time and energy, thus contributing to their loss of motivation to advance their qualifications. This is consistent with research findings (Munjuri, 2011 & Pretorius et al., 2015) that state that due to the demanding nature of ICT, women find it difficult to upskill themselves through education and training, thereby reducing their opportunities for advancement.

The study found that the organisation encourages employees to take charge of their own development and avail themselves of opportunities for learning. The women managers interviewed emphasised the importance of personal ambition and drive. As one participant put it "*There's enough training programmes in place, people must put up their hands for opportunities.*" Another participant supported this when saying: "*Opportunities to advance are available but you have to be open and available to it. You need to take responsibility for your own growth.*"

A social constructivist paradigm incorporates these dynamics. It advocates for an understanding of the development of concepts such as motivation, personal-drive, identity, and emotion. The approach places point-in-time sense-making within a temporal context, recognising the impact of both past experiences and future aspirations. In line with this perspective it is thus possible to assess the range elements that contribute to the development and maintenance of these concepts, as well as the relationship between the individual and the influence of their social context in terms of self-regulation.

Superordinate theme 2: Organisational culture

Learning culture

This study found that the participating organisation promotes a culture of learning in order to empower employees with the required business skills and to advance their careers. This learning culture not only involves training and upskilling employees, but most importantly, empowering employees to develop themselves. Most participants mentioned that the organisation has various organisational development programmes aimed at encouraging employees to develop themselves further. Employees are also encouraged to share knowledge with each other, which leads to effectiveness in teams and increased productivity overall. One participant put it in this way *"The culture here encourages one to learn from others and you get the opportunity to teach junior employees."* Lastly,

employees stated that management involves them in decision-making, allowing them the opportunity to learn and contribute to the growth of the business. As one participant put it: "*What I like about this organisation is that management allows us to voice our opinions. We are allowed to make decisions, and to learn from our mistakes.*"

Self-development

The findings of the study revealed that the organisation promotes a culture that encourages employees to drive their own development. One participant stated "*There are mechanisms to uplift anyone in this organisation, however, you have to put your hand up.*" Participants revealed that although there are certifications that are mandatory for them to obtain as part of their accreditation, various other opportunities are presented for them to advance their skills and competencies. Furthermore, participants do not have to wait for the organisation to approach them with development opportunities, but they actively seek ways to develop themselves further, with the support of the organisation.

Gender stereotypes

The women managers in the study stated that they have not experienced any gender stereotypes or discrimination in the organisation. One employee stated that "*I've never had challenges because I am a female per se*." The participants stated that they believe they are treated equally with their male counterparts and that they are expected to work just as hard as the males do. The study did, however, find that some of the participants experience pressure to perform in order to prove that they are competent enough to lead. One participant said "*It is definitely easier being a male in this industry. We always have to prove ourselves, to show that we can do the job just as well as the males.*" The expectation of having to prove themselves to their male counterparts can be attributed to the societal gender stereotype that reinforces the belief that women are less competent.

Superordinate theme 3: Transformation

Gender equality

Based on the findings of the study, there appears to be a willingness within the participating organisation to accept and advance women managers. Participants revealed that the organisation is continuously adapting and is more accepting of women managers. When asked if she believes she gets equal career opportunities to that of her male counterpart, one manager responded by saying: "*Yes, definitely. It's definitely changed over the years.*" In response to the same question, another respondent said "*I believe I've been offered the same opportunities as my male counterpart. I can't say I've been overlooked for any role.*"

Participants cited that the organisation demonstrates commitment to transformation and strives to promote gender equality. One senior female manager states: "*Gender equality is promoted throughout the organisation. I've never seen or been around any kind of discrimination. We have a number of female engineers at all levels, which is a great accomplishment.*" Furthermore, the study also revealed that the organisation has sufficient employment equity and skills development measures that enable broad-based transformation to support the government's objective of achieving a well-balanced workforce. One of the interventions mentioned is the internship programme. One participant said: "*Our internship is fabulous. It's definitely doing the right things in finding talent - bringing in young girls into the industry, and identifying who we can retain and develop.*"

The participants also highlighted that the organisation has fair processes in place when it comes to recruiting and promoting employees. When asked if the organisation has implemented specific policies to advance women managers, one respondent said "*I don't know if there are specific interventions. The company treats males and females the same, there's no specific policy in place – which is fair. I'm happy males and females have the same opportunities.*" The study did however also reveal that there's still an

underrepresentation of women in management positions, with some participants suggesting that there's a need to recruit more female leaders in top management. This sentiment was shared by one participant when she said: "*Although we've done well to recruit females in key management positions, our EXCO is still dominated by males.*" It is however also important to mention that the general sentiment was that this is more a reflection of a lack of females in the ICT industry rather than gender inequities within the organisation.

Subordinate theme 4: Work-life balance

Role conflict

A finding from the research was that the participants did not view the dual role of being wives/mothers and being leaders as a serious barrier to career advancement. Most of the women interviewed have seemingly accepted the dual responsibility and have found ways to work around the demands of both roles. One respondent said "*It is difficult sometimes but you find a balance. We work hard, sometimes even on weekends, but you also have to make time for family.*" Another participant said "*I wouldn't say the responsibilities and expectations from work and home have had any effect on my career advancement. You have to make a distinction between your different roles and create boundaries.*" The respondents also cited that they relied heavily on strong social support structures, such as support from family, peers and line managers. They were thus able to balance the competing demands of family and work through the support structures in their lives.

Participants did, however, indicate that long working hours were a challenge. Despite this, it was evident that employees, especially women, benefit from flexible hours due to the responsibilities that they have at work and at home. Although the organisation offers employees flexible work arrangements, one participant said "*If I could change one thing about this organisation, I'd give staff more freedom, and let them set their own work schedule. I'd also enforce the work-from-home policy more.*"

5.3   DISCUSSION

This section examines the findings for each of the eight subordinate themes that were identified from the individual interviews.

5.3.1   Mentorship

The majority of the participants emphasised the importance of having a mentor to assist in career development. This means that participants find value in mentoring relationships and believe that mentoring is one of the key strategies that can be deployed to overcome barriers to the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector. Furthermore, participants highlighted the need for more formal mentorship programmes, especially at entry and junior management levels. This indicates that good role models are needed for women managers when they enter the technology workforce. It is thus important for the organisation to give structure to and endorse mentoring relationships, especially for women in male-dominated environments. This is supported in the research undertaken by Whitely, Dougherty, and Dreher (1991); and Holton and Dent (2012), who found that mentor presence and mentor career support is positively related to managers' promotion in the early career. As an option, the organisation should assign mentors to newly appointed graduates in order to provide them with the guidance that they require as they advance in their careers.

The finding that most of the female managers interviewed did not have mentors in the organisation in which the study was conducted means that they would not get the career guidance that they require in order to progress. This finding is concerning as mentoring relationships contribute to the personal and professional development of mentees. Employees will require mentors at different stages in their careers as it is during this process of mentorship that mentors transfer knowledge, job-related skills and experiences to mentees. Mentorship can also be used as a tool to empower managers with the required expertise to address leadership challenges that they may come across. This is supported by research by Munjuri (2011) who found that mentors are often well

versed with the skills and experience that are most valued by the mentee's organisation and are thus able to provide mentees with the necessary support and guidance for career success.

5.3.2   Training and development

The finding that the organisation provides ongoing learning and development initiatives that are integral to the organisational development and talent management strategies is evidence of the organisation's commitment to upskilling its employees. As stated by participants in the study, interventions such as training and mentoring are vital to improve employees' knowledge and skills. This is supported by research findings from Azmi, Ismail, & Basir (2014) who asserted that women's career advancement is chiefly related to their knowledge and skills acquired through education and training.

According to Fernando, Amaratunga, and Haigh (2014), training and development is a vital resource that helps employees to keep abreast of new ideas, learn technical aspects and develop management and leadership skills, which assist in personal development and career advancement. Munjuri (2011) states that employees who invest in education and training have increased levels of career advancement. Therefore, providing necessary training and development opportunities for women to move up the career ladder can be considered as one of the solutions to addressing the challenge of under-representation of women in top management positions.

5.3.3   Personal drive

Another insight from the findings was that participants recognise that as much as the organisation provides numerous opportunities for training and development, learning needs to be self-driven. A common thread in the participants' narrative was that employees need to demonstrate a willingness to learn and capitalise on the opportunities presented to them. It will be beneficial for the organisation to continue to advocate for a culture that promotes self-development and provide the necessary platforms for

development, but ultimately, individual employees will need to take responsibility for their own growth. If employees want to advance in their careers, they have to avail themselves of the opportunity to complete their formal education and attend the training necessary to address specific skills gaps. This is supported by research by Ferreira (2012) who states that the onus is on the individual to ensure they become flexible by acquiring a diverse skill set in order to meet the demands of the fast-changing ICT environment.

5.3.4   Organisational culture

Research has found that organisational culture is considered as having the most significant impact on the advancement of women in organisations (Piterman, 2008). This barrier can potentially threaten retention of female managers, thus resulting in the inability by the organisation, to retain successful women in managerial positions in the long term. Booysen (2007) concurs with this view, stating that an unsupportive organisational culture is also one of the reasons women move between jobs, resulting in low retention levels of female managers.

The finding that participants are offered opportunities to participate in decision-making and that top management encourages a participative leadership style means that the leadership has confidence and trust in their managers. This reflects positively on the ability of top management to involve female employees in achieving the organisational goals. This is also a reflection of the impact of talent management programmes that are in place to support management in building strong female leaders in the organisation. Participation in the organisation's decision-making process empowers female managers and makes them feel valued. This could be an important competitive advantage for the organisation as employees tend to stay longer where they feel they are adding value. This is supported by research by Irawanto (2015) who states that employee participation is considered a key element in the successful implementation of new management strategies and plays an important role in determining the degree of job satisfaction and commitment of the employee as well as their motivation.

The findings revealed that participants work long hours and the environment is highly pressurised. This can be attributed to the fact that the IT industry is fast-paced and constantly evolving, thus forcing organisations to adapt and to keep ahead of technological trends (Pretorius et al., 2015). If properly managed and leveraged, never being satisfied with the status quo can keep employees focused and innovative in how they move forward. However, this culture can also yield negative results. A culture that encourages extended hours can be perceived as discriminating against those employees with family commitments (Todd & Binns, 2013). Besides, the organisation runs the risk of pushing the employees too hard and maybe beyond their capacity and eventually losing good employees due to breakdowns and burnouts (Nielsen, von Hellens, & Beekhuyzen, 2005).

5.3.5 Learning culture

The finding that the organisation promotes a comprehensive learning and development approach that focuses on both the development of self and the development of others, means that employees are empowered with the skill of not just developing themselves but also developing their teams and colleagues. This could be a huge benefit for the organisation in the long run as employees will find it easier to cross-skill and support each other in business operations. This culture could also lead to positive team cohesion, improved customer and staff satisfaction. This is consistent with Grossman's (2015) argument that people not only want to learn and apply what they have learned to help their organisation, they also feel compelled to share their knowledge with others. This finding supports the argument of Bhuvaniah and Raya (2014, p. 61) that:

> Organisations are striving for competitive advantage to sustain in the dynamic world of market fluctuations, technological advancements and changing economy. For sustainable business success, organisations must adapt to the changes and focus on intellectual capital instead of materialistic capital. Organisations should invest in skills, abilities and innovative behaviour to reciprocate external inconsistency.

5.3.6   Self-development

The finding that the organisation promotes a culture of continuous improvement that emphasises self-development means that employees are primarily responsible for taking control of their development and their career. Employees realise that the technology sector is constantly evolving, and they need to equip themselves with the relevant skills to keep up with the changes. This finding is consistent with findings by Ferreira (2012) who discovered that individuals who adapt in their careers often tend to invest in self-development initiatives that allow them to capitalize on their job or career opportunities. Coetzee (2006) states that in the modern-day career that is about lifetime employability, individuals need to take personal accountability for their own career growth and progression. Coetzee (2006) explains that employability means that the individual is now more responsible to continuously develop his or her skills and abilities to meet the demands of the modern workplace.

5.3.7   Gender equity, gender stereotypes and discrimination

Based on the findings of the study, there appears to be a willingness within the organisation to accept and advance women in the organisation. The study revealed that over the years, an increasing number of female engineers have come into the organisation, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to diversity and the promotion of equal opportunity.

The finding that participants have not experienced any form of discrimination in the organisation means that the culture which is promoted n the organisation is conducive to the career growth and progression of female managers. Women are perceived as equally capable as men and are afforded the same opportunities. Interestingly, the study found that participants believe they have to work harder than men to prove themselves worthy of management-level positions. Societal gender stereotypes reinforce the belief that women are less competent and less capable of executing leadership roles. As a result, women feel pressured to exert extra effort, to work harder and perform better than their

male counterparts in order to prove themselves equal to them. This finding is in line with the finding by Cornelly, Mecham and Strauss (2008) who reported that women have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts to be promoted. Rowe and Crafford (2003) further state that even when women are promoted and do acquire senior executive status, there is a prevailing norm that demands that they have to perform even better than their male colleagues to prove themselves worthy of the position. This perception can lead to increased stress levels among women and reduced confidence in their abilities.

The finding that women are still under-represented at senior and top management levels means that even though the organisation has made great strides in the direction of transformation, it is still falling short of the target. Evidently, more conscious efforts are required to recruit and retain women in senior leadership roles. It has been widely recognised in literature that diversity is a source of competitive advantage. Whether this originates from aspects such as improved problem solving through varying perspectives (Cox, 1991) or the ability to serve more diverse market segments (Hayles & Russell, 1997), a diverse workforce is said to increase an organisation's competitiveness in the market. Furthermore, transformation in itself adds to sustainability of the business as in the current South African context, organisations lose credibility and consequently lose business if they do not comply with imposed legislation. One participant alluded to this when she stated that supporting women in their career advancement reflects well on the organisation's image.

It appears from the data collected that the company's Internship Programme is working and has been effective in bringing in young females into the ICT industry. The programme is also appreciated by employees.

The majority of the participants indicated that they are unsure if the organisation has any transformation policies in place. This finding means that employees are either unaware of the policies due to a lack of communication by the organisation, or the policies are non-existent.

5.3.8   Role conflict

The finding that participants have discovered ways to work around the demands of the roles they play at work and at home indicates that they have accepted the dual responsibility from both roles. It appears that women do not view the dual role of being wives/mothers and being leaders as a serious barrier to their career advancement. Employees seem to be aware of the expectations of both roles and have put measures in place to ensure that they fulfil both roles. This is consistent with the finding by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) that most women have accepted their dual roles as mothers/wives and leaders and do not see a conflict in balancing these roles. In this study, most employees mentioned that they relied on support structures such as their partners, family, helpers, peers and management in order to cope with work/family demands. This means the management in the organisation is flexible and supportive when it comes to allowing employees to attend to family responsibilities.

The study revealed that even though the organisation does promote work-life balance through its Employee Wellness Programme and flexible work arrangements, most women do not enjoy the benefits of these arrangements. Workload and work pressures proved to be significant influencers dictating the majority of participants' use of flexi-time. Although employees are offered and have access to flexi-time, work is so demanding that employees cannot always afford to take time off and are sometimes forced to work overtime. This could be due to the nature of the roles in which the participants are. Additionally, some of the participants are client-facing and are required to work fixed hours. Eagli and Carli (2007, cited in Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012) suggested that if organisations could provide family-friendly policies such as flexi-time and child care facilities, women would thrive more and increase their performance.

The finding that some of the participants have put their studies on hold means that due to the demanding nature of their work and family lives, participants do not have the time, nor the energy to study further. Interestingly, the desire to study further seems to be linked to age and various career stages. The participants who mentioned that they have had to

put their studies on hold are in their thirties and have young children below the age of ten. As a result, there is more that is expected of them in their role as mothers. This research finding is in line with the views of Mathur-Helm (2005) that women pace themselves in terms of improving their qualifications in order to advance their careers.

The study also found that participants expressed the need for more flexibility in terms of working from home. As female representation in the workplace continues to grow, businesses need to cater to their needs. Although this arrangement is not suitable for all positions, it would be beneficial for the organisation to allow female employees to telecommute or to alternate between telecommuting and working part-time. These benefits include psychological benefits such as reduced stress and anxiety for the employee and organisational benefits such as employee commitment and loyalty to the organisation that cares for the well-being of its employees. This view is supported by Hoganson (2011) who proposes that flexible working arrangements, including part-time work and tele-communicating, could help retain women within the industry.

5.4   SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

In attempting to fully comprehend a broad range of career experiences and aspirations the findings contribute to understanding not only issues relating specifically to the gender of the participants but also to the nature of the industry, the nature of their roles, support structures such as family and on-the-job support.   From a social constructivism perspective, these career stories of several female participants in this study have highlighted both the interconnection between temporal and social constructs as well as the significance of the subjective values associated with non-work issues (e.g. quality of life, time with family, personal fulfilment). Most importantly, this perspective illustrates the implications these constructs have on participants' career structure.

In summary, women managers in the participating organisation experienced different types of obstacles and work under highly pressurised conditions. However, it appears that the organisation has established organisational processes and initiatives such as

skills development programmes, managerial support, flexible work arrangements and the Employee Wellness Programme to support the female managers. Insights gathered from the interviews provide a new understanding of how female managers experience their career advancement in the ICT sector. The findings also provided a deeper understanding of the factors that hinder and promote the advancement of female managers in the ICT sector. These findings were used as building blocks for the conclusions and recommendations that are presented in the next chapter.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the findings of the empirical study were presented and discussed. The chapter started with a recap of how the data were gathered and it then reported on the themes that were identified from the interviews during the data analysis process. This was followed by an in-depth discussion of the identified themes and the chapter concluded with a summary of the main findings.

Conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study are discussed. The chapter starts with conclusions regarding the specific literature aims, the specific empirical aims and the general aim of the study. Thereafter, the limitations of the literature review and empirical study are discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research for the participating organisation as well as for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

6.2   CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

6.2.1   Conclusions regarding the specific theoretical aims of the study

The study had three specific theoretical aims:

- To conceptualise and understand career advancement as a construct

- To conceptualise and understand the career advancement of female managers.

- To conceptualise the enablers and inhibitors of career advancement for female managers.

6.2.1.1   The 1st specific theoretical aim: To conceptualise and understand career advancement as a construct

This aim was achieved in Chapter 2 of this study. Based on the literature review, the following conclusions can be made:

- The concept and perspective on careers has developed over time due to economical, technological and societal changes (Enache et al., 2013). These changes have an effect on the planning and management of employees' careers (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). Furthermore, the changes in the career context also affect the knowledge, skills and abilities expected of individuals who wish to entire the world of work (Briscoe et al., 2012).

- The reviewed literature makes a clear distinction between the traditional and the modern perspectives of career as a concept. Traditionally, the concept of a career spanned a lifetime doing one type of work in one organisation, while in modern times a career is defined as any sequence of employment-related experiences within multiple organisations (Schein, 2006; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006).

- In the contemporary outlook of careers, scholars indicate a movement from career relationships that are long term to shorter term relationships that evolve between employees and their employers (Adamson, Doherty, & Viney, 1998; Baruch, 2004).

- Another important distinguishing factor between traditional and contemporary careers is that employees in the 21st century world of work are responsible for their own career management and engage in continuous learning to develop their employability (Briscoe et al., 2012).

- The challenges and changes that have taken place in the contemporary work environment have resulted in career theorists defining new ways to conceptualise the modern career, such as the boundaryless, the protean, the global and the kaleidoscope career outlook as well as the entrepreneurial approach to careers (Savickas, 2013).

- In the context of the contemporary career, success is no longer seen in terms of promotion or salary, but rather as the subjective judgements that individuals make regarding their career satisfaction and career wellbeing (Ng & Feldman, 2014). The extent to which individuals are satisfied with their career progress, outcomes and achievements is conceptualised as career satisfaction (Ng & Feldman, 2014), while consistent satisfaction with one's career over time is conceptualised as career wellbeing (Kidd, 2008).

- Career advancement is one of the most important elements for employee satisfaction and retention (Gul, Akbar & Jan, 2012). According to (Munjuri, 2011) career advancement is a key goal for many employees and is a contributory factor that helps enhance the level of satisfaction with the subjective aspect of one's work life. Conversely, a lack of career advancement can have various negative effects on both employees and the organisation.

- There is no definitive description of career advancement. As a construct, career advancement can be taken to mean any or a combination of the following: an increase in the scope or level of responsibility, greater authority, an increase in salary and/or in benefits and a move to a higher level within a hierarchical structure (Louie, 2013; Zunker 2002).

- There are three stages through which employees can advance in their careers: the idealistic achievement phase, the pragmatic endurance phase and the re-inventive contribution phase. Three major categories of influences on career advancement that have been identified in literature are organisational, social and individual factors (Tharshini, Kumar, & Rathnasekara, 2016)

- Factors that affect career advancement include job performance, gender stereotypes, competency development, mentors and networking and organisational culture.

6.2.1.2   The 2nd specific theoretical aim: To conceptualise and understand the career advancement of female managers.

This aim was achieved in Chapter 3 of this study. The following conclusions were made based on the literature review:

- Although entry into the corporate environment tends to be easy for women, their progression slows down after the middle level and in most situations, regardless of their technical and professional qualifications or achievements, women are prevented from climbing up in the corporate ladder to reach the top (Centre for Social Research, 2009).

- Women are still underrepresented in the ICT sector with a predominance of male workers, particularly in the core ICT workforce and at the more senior levels (SA News, 2016).

- Globally, the increase in participation of women in the workforce has not translated into increased numbers of women at senior and executive levels, with studies revealing that just one in four senior roles is now held by a woman (Piterman, 2008; Lagerberg, 2017). Locally, women occupy 22% of the top management level positions in South Africa and 33.3% at senior management level, while 31% of South African companies have no female representation in senior leadership roles (Department of Labour, 2017; Grant Thornton's International Business Report, 2017).

- Over the past few years, the ICT sector has made significant progress in promoting gender equity and advancing women to management positions.

- An in-depth review of literature by various authors such as Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015), Orser et al. (2012), Pretorius et al. (2015) and Prescott and Bogg (2011), support the common narrative that even though many women

are devoted to advancing their careers, there are still invisible and artificial barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. Women's career advancement appears to be influenced by what has been termed a 'glass ceiling', described as the lack of upward mobility for women and minorities into executive ranks in corporate jobs (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2004). The glass ceiling comes in many forms: women's underrepresentation at the corporate hierarchy, gendered wage gap, occupational segregation, discriminative corporate policies, lack of attention to the specific needs women have, sexual harassment at the workplace, and exclusion of women from informal networks (Centre for Social Research, 2009).

- Women in higher levels of management in the ICT sector experience lower retention rates than their male colleagues as their experience in the workplace either deters them from aspiring to senior leadership roles or prevents them from being promoted to an equal extent as their male counterparts (Lagerberg, 2017).

6.2.1.3   The 3rd specific theoretical aim: To conceptualise the enablers and inhibitors of career advancement for female managers.

This aim was achieved in Chapter 3 of this study. From the literature review, the following conclusions can be made:

- There are numerous barriers that prevent women from obtaining work equality and achieving top managerial positions in the ICT sector, such as gender discrimination, glass ceiling, stereotypes, work-life balance, lack of mentoring, conflicting roles and pay inequality (Elliott & Wirth, 2004).

- Career barriers may be classified into categories that are individual, organisational and societal in nature (Tharshini et al., 2016). The following are

some of the issues that ICT organisations have to contend with if they are to develop women for top jobs and to retain them:

➢ Gender stereotypes: Gender stereotypes around leadership continue to have an impact in the workplace with acts of discrimination against women taking the form of unfair treatment at the recruiting and promotion processes and as well as by company remuneration practices (Elliott & Wirth, 2004).

➢ Working hours: Companies, including those with strong equality programmes, often require the ability and willingness to work long hours for career advancement and promotions into senior positions (Webster, 2006). This puts women who are unable to work long hours at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement (Orser et al., 2012).

➢ Work family conflict: Women today have multiple roles and are torn between demanding careers and intensive family lives (Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012). Studies of gender differences in managerial careers reveal that women are opting to go with less challenging jobs with more flexibility because they are not as willing as men to put their careers ahead of personal commitments (Kirchmeyer, 2002).

➢ Lack of role models, mentoring and networking opportunities: The lack of role models has been demonstrated to be one of the most important barriers to women in ICT (James et al., 2006). Finding mentors has been a major challenge for professional women as management positions in ICT are still dominated by men (James et al., 2006). Additionally, the 'old boy's club' tradition in the fields of science and technology excludes women from professional networks, depriving them of opportunities for information exchange, career planning and professional support that is

necessary for advancement opportunities to women (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015).

- ➤ Organisational culture: Women find the cultural in many ICT organisations to be hostile, hence they leave the ICT world for other types of work (Michie & Nelson, 2006).

- ➤ Training and development: Women in full-time jobs tend to receive less training and have fewer opportunities for professional development in organisations compared to men, owing, in part, to the idea that women do not need training as they perform less skilled tasks for which training is unnecessary (Kirai & Mukulu, 2012; Munjuri, 2011).

- Companies in the ICT sector have introduced several initiatives, including employment equity and diversity policies, monitoring and reporting of employee profile data, recruitment and retention strategies, flexi-time and part time work arrangements and parental support services (Orser et al., 2012).

- Some employers and industry associations offer networking and mentoring opportunities and programmes that seek to inform women about career opportunities and improve their skills (Cukier, 2004).

- Some of the enablers of career advancement include:

- ➤ Commitment from senior management to skills development: Elliott and Smith (2004) state that investments in human capital are crucial for guiding women into positions of authority

- ➤ Training and development: According to Fernando, Amaratunga, and Haigh (2014), training and development is a vital resource that helps employees to keep abreast of new ideas, learn technical aspects and

develop management and leadership skills, which facilitate personal development and career advancement

➢ Mentoring: Researchers maintain that mentorship programmes and opportunities are crucial for the employability and career advancement of women as mentors and coaches provide important developmental relationships and opportunities for career success (Holton & Dent, 2012)

➢ Networking: Managers who advance are likely to have personal contacts in diverse groups within and beyond the organisation (Munjuri, 2011).

➢ Flexible work schedules: Flexible work arrangements, such as flexible working hours, after school clubs and after-care facilities are beneficial to women who need to balance their work and family lives (Orser et al., 2012).

➢ Support – organisational, family and friends: Line managers and senior colleagues are the key in providing opportunities for learning and growth, encouraging and providing challenging work assignments to women (Holton & Dent, 2012). Additionally, support from family and friends is essential in achieving career goals as they provide moral support, act as sounding boards and share responsibility for childcare and household duties (Doubell & Struwig, 2014).

6.2.2   Conclusions regarding the specific empirical aims of the study

The study had four specific empirical aims:

• To explore the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector

- To explore the enablers and inhibitors of career advancement experienced by female managers in the ICT sector

- To identify suggested strategies that organisations can implement to recruit, develop and retain female managers in the ICT sector

- To explore to what extent opportunities for the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector affect their loyalty toward their organisations.

6.2.2.1   The 1st specific empirical aim: To explore the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.

The first aim was achieved in Chapter 4 of this study. From the interviews conducted, the following conclusions were made:

- There is an imbalance in the representation of women at senior management levels in the participating organisation, although the number of females in management positions in general has increased significantly

- The participating organisation treats male and female employees equally, males and females are exposed to the same opportunities for advancement, and employees are promoted based on merit

- Employees do not work fixed hours in the participating organisation as they are required to be on standby after-hours and to sometimes work on weekends

- In the participating organisation women still face various challenges – from hostile work environments to their integration into senior management positions. However, perhaps the most significant insight from this study is that

these challenges should not be perceived as barriers that impede career advancement since most of the respondents managed to transcend them.

6.2.2.2   *To explore the enablers and inhibitors of career advancement experienced by female managers in the ICT sector*

The following could be concluded from the data collected from the participants:

- Employees in the participating organisation who have invested in ongoing development through education, training and mentorship, have advanced in their careers. The fast-paced nature of the ICT sector requires employees to continually invest in their learning and development in order to keep abreast of technological changes. However, it appears that the demanding nature of their work and family responsibilities takes up their time and energy, thus making it difficult for female employees to upskill themselves through education and training, consequently reducing their opportunities for advancement

- In the participating organisation mentorship has been used as a tool to empower female managers with the necessary skills to deal with leadership challenges that they may encounter. It was concluded that there is a growing need for more formal mentorship programmes, especially at entry and junior management levels. The female managers in the study who have been mentored conceded that mentoring relationships have contributed significantly to their career growth as mentors have imparted their knowledge and skills and are sounding boards for the mentees

- In the participating organisation management support has contributed significantly to the career advancement of women who participated in this study. The supportive relationship between women and their management has facilitated women's career advancement, especially at the entry level of their career. Additionally, support from family and friends has assisted participants

to strike a balance between their work and family demands. Furthermore, the maintenance of a healthy work-life balance is essential for retaining females in the industry.

- A positive relationship was found to exist between the participating organisation's culture and its employee retention, which supports previous studies in this regard by Booysen (2005)

- In the participating organisation top management encourages a participative leadership style, offering opportunities to participate in decision-making. This demonstrates that the leadership has confidence and trust in their female managers and this participation in the organisation's decision-making process empowers female managers and makes them feel valued.

- The ICT environment is highly pressurised and female managers in the participating organisation work long hours, travel extensively and are often required to be on standby after hours and to work on weekends. Female managers do not enjoy the benefits of the existing flexible work arrangements due to workload and work pressures.

6.2.2.3 *To identify suggested strategies that organisations can implement to recruit, develop and retain female managers in the ICT sector*

From the data obtained from the individual interviews, the following conclusions could be made regarding strategies that organisations can implement to recruit, develop and retain female managers in the ICT sector:

- Focus should be on promoting an equitable and inclusive organisational culture that promotes gender balance across all levels within the organisation and a culture that celebrates and promotes the organisation's transformation

achievements. Transformation should be embedded in the organisational strategy to gain a competitive advantage

- There is a need to implement a Talent Management Strategy that is developed as a key priority in an organisation's strategic plan. This plan involves working strategically both at attracting good talent to the organisation through recruitment and selection efforts, while also ensuring strategies are in place to develop as well as retain the good talent currently available. The strategy should focus on recruitment practices, internal capacity building programmes and a retention strategy that addresses issues of communication, leadership, culture, career development, remuneration and incentives – as combined, these elements form part of the checklist that employees go through when making a decision to stay or leave an organisation.

6.2.2.4. *To explore to what extent opportunities for the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector affect their loyalty toward their organisations.*

Based on the empirical data collected, the following conclusions were made regarding this specific empirical aim of the study:

- Employee turnover is considered as one of the most costly problems organisations have to deal with today. Research shows numerous benefits for organisations who have a workforce that is strongly commited. Organisational commitment deteriorates if opportunities are lacking for female managers desiring personal career growth

- The organisation under study has prioritized ensuring that employees remain committed to the organisation. Career advancement is thus regarded as a strategic tool to develop women managers at different levels in the

organisation, to enhance engagement and ultimately, loyalty to the organisation.

- Career advancement is one of the most important elements to ensure the employee satisfaction and retention of female managers. The organisation's commitment to career advancement of female managers has resulted in the attraction and retention of women managers and ultimately, in the sector.

- Advancement carries a high value in the retention of female managers in the ICT sector, as career advancement prospects keep female managers motivated for good performance and long-term commitment to their organisations. Female managers in the ICT sector who perceive few opportunities for advancement develop negative attitudes towards their work and their organisations.

6.2.3   Conclusions regarding the general aim of the study

The general aim of this study was to explore the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector. To achieve this, a qualitative research approach was followed and the research strategy used was phenomenology. The conclusion can thus be drawn that the general aim of the study was achieved.

6.3   LIMITATIONS

6.3.1   Limitations of the literature review

Although there is a significant amount of literature available on the under-representation of women and their career advancement in the traditionally male-dominated sectors in general, there is very little literature on the topic in a South African context (Hill, Corbett, & St. Rose, 2010; Fouad & Singh, 2011; Pretorius et al., 2015). Literature that relates specifically to career advancement of females in the ICT sector locally and globally is also

limited. This therefore did not allow for a comprehensive understanding and background of this research topic and its status within the South African context.

6.3.2   Limitations of the empirical study

It was a challenge to select and interview participants due to the scarcity of female managers in the ICT sector and their demanding schedules. Consequently, the researcher opted for a sample size of ten, which can be considered as relatively small. The implication of a small sample is that it could mean limited insight was gained. Furthermore, the researcher focused on the experiences of female managers in just one organisation. As a result, the results cannot be generalised across the entire ICT sector.

Another possible limitation is that the researcher was an OD Consultant in the company selected for the study. This might have influenced the information obtained from the interviews, as participants could have represented their knowledge and experiences in a more positive light than they would have done in the case of a neutral researcher. Moreover, the researcher's role and experience in the organisation might have resulted in the formation of certain preconceptions.

6.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

6.4.1   Recommendations for future research

- As a comparative study, the topic of the study could be extended to other male-dominated industries

- The study was limited to one organisation, therefore consideration should be given to conducting a similar study in an expanded population to generate more knowledge on the subject

- Men were excluded from the study. It is proposed that a study should be conducted to investigate the perceptions of male employees regarding the advancement of female managers in the ICT industry. The views of men can be compared to the findings of this study and could provide valuable additional information on the subject of the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector

- To obtain a more in-depth view of the experiences of women in male-dominated environments, particularly women in ICT, future research should involve women who have previously worked in the ICT industry but opted to leave and join more more gender balanced or female-dominated environments

- The impact of mentorship on career advancement has been extensively documented in literature. As this matter was not central to the study it was therefore not discussed in detail, despite it being very relevant. It is recommended that further research be done on how the effect of mentoring female managers in the ICT sector can be evaluated in terms of the mentee and its impact on the organisation.

6.4.2   Recommendations for the participating organisation

Based on literature and research findings, the following key strategies are recommended to assist the participating organisation in retaining its female managers.

6.4.2.1   *Transformation and empowerment*

The organisation should intensify its contribution to the transformation agenda through ongoing compliance with the imposed legislation and by embedding transformation and empowerment in the organisation's strategy. The organisation should actively promote and manage diversity at all levels of the organisation and invest in diversity training to

raise awareness. This process must be driven by leadership, through planning, implementation and accountability.

It is further recommended that the organisation develop transformation interventions that are linked to current best practices and embedded in the organisation's strategy. These interventions include appointing a Transformation Committee to assist the EXCO in ensuring that there are appropriate strategies, policies and processes in place to drive transformation.

6.4.2.2   Supportive and enabling environment

It is recommended that the organisation implements strategies to create an enabling environment and to show its commitment to transformation. The starting point should be building an equitable and inclusive organisational culture that promotes gender balance across all levels within the organisation and celebrates and promotes the organisation's transformation achievements. This can be done through the following interventions:

- Reinforcing the organisation's zero tolerance of discrimination and harassment and encouraging and supporting employees to report such behaviour when it occurs

- The Human Resources Department should review, realign and reinforce company policies that support the development of women in the organisation

- The organisation should further provide women with unique (formal or informal/social) platforms to encourage them to assume leadership roles in various forums

- The organisation should invest in capacity building initiatives of women through regular training and communication.

- Regularly promoting the organisation's commitments and actions regarding transformation and other key messages through organisational communications such as the CEO address, internal email communication, intranet and the company website.

6.4.2.3   *Talent management*

It is recommended that a Talent Management Strategy be developed as a key priority in the organisation's strategic plan. This plan should involve working strategically both at attracting good talent to the organisation through recruitment and selection efforts, while also ensuring strategies are in place to develop as well as to retain such good talent as is currently on board. The strategy is targeted at female employees who show potential, who competently occupy key positions or possess scarce or specialised knowledge/skills.

6.4.2.4   *Work-life balance*

In responding to employees' needs, the organisation needs to acknowledge domestic responsibilities and the pressure to manage both family responsibilities and career. The organisation already has an Employee Wellness Programme (EWP) in place. As part of the benefits offered, it is recommended that the organisation should adopt work-life and family-friendly policies to help educate and guide employees. Topics to be considered in the policy should include family responsibility leave, flexible work schedules, temporary or permanent switch to part-time, including family issues as part of the EWP, employee and family health benefits and online support groups.

6.4.3   Recommendations for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology

The major contribution to the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) is that this study was able to demonstrate the role that Organisation Development (OD) can play in developing interventions to attract, develop and retain female managers in the ICT

sector. There is no immediate remedy to address the existing gender disparities in the sector and the challenge for current and future OD Practitioners will remain the ability to take proactive actions to break the glass ceiling phenomenon for female managers in the ICT sector by re-examining the organisational culture, implementing transformation policies, ensuring continuous staff development, and establishing support mechanisms and structures such as coaching, mentorship programmes and counselling to assist employees who experience difficulties in dealing with work/family pressures and personal or developmental issues.

6.5   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study were discussed. The chapter started with conclusions regarding the specific literature aims, the specific empirical aims and the general aim of the study. Thereafter, the limitations of the literature review and empirical study were discussed and the chapter concluded with recommendations for future research, for the participating organisation as well as for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Copy of individual interviews informed consent form

APPENDIX 2: Copy of questions asked during individual interviews

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Background

Dear Participant

My name is **Zolile Zikode** and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Post-graduate degree at the University of South Africa. The main aim of the study is to investigate the career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.

Purpose of the study

Specific aims also include:

- To explore the experienced enablers and inhibitors of career advancement of female managers in the ICT sectors.
- To identify suggested strategies that organisations can implement to recruit, develop and retain female managers in the ICT sector.
- To explore to what extent opportunities for the career advancement of female managers in the ICT sector affect their loyalty toward their organisations.

Procedure

You and other participants have been identified to take part in these discussions. Participating in this research will entail being interviewed by myself, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes. If needs

being, and with your permission, the interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Alternatively, notes will be taken in the sessions.

You are therefore required to complete consent forms before taking part in the study. You will also be asked to complete a biographical information form that will be used for sampling purposes only.

Risks

There are no risks involved in participating in this study.

Right to Withdraw

Please note that participation in these discussions is entirely voluntary. Thus, you may refuse to participate. You may also, at any stage, withdraw from the study if you wish to do so. The decision not to participate or withdraw will not have any impact on your employment conditions or career advancement as the study is only an academic assignment for the researcher – with no direct link with the employer.

Confidentiality

Discussions will be conducted in a private setting. Your name will not appear on the study records and in the information gathered. Your information will be combined with that of other participants and will only be used for the purposes of research. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person, and will only be

processed the researcher. The tape records will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

If you have questions about this research you can contact **Ms ZL Zikode** on 082 086 0503. For further information about the study you can contact the department of Industrial & Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated

Consent Form

I _____ voluntarily consent to being interviewed by **Ms ZL Zikode** for her study on: **The career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.**

I have read the information / it has been read to me and I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I understand that:

- I may refuse to answer questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- The interviews may be audio-recorded or notes may be taken
- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person besides the researcher.
- All tape recording will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Interviewer's signature: _____ Date: ___/___/___

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Interview Questionnaire/Prompt sheet

<u>**Research Topic**</u>: ***The career advancement experiences of female managers in the ICT sector.***

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. If you feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview, please let me know and please ask any questions that you may have.

<u>**Section A - Biographical Information**</u>

Ethnicity	
Black	
White	
Indian	
Coloured	

Age	
19 and younger	
20 - 29	
30-39	
40-49	
50-60	

Marital Status	
Single	
In a relationship	
Engaged	
Married	
Divorced	
Separated	
Widow	

Who do you live with?	
Family – spouse and children	
Family – spouse, children and parents	
Parents and/siblings	
On your Own	
With Partner	

Home Language	
Afrikaans	
English	
Tswana	
Pedi	
South Sotho	
Tshivenda	
Ndebele	
Zulu	
Xhosa	
Xitsonga	
Swati	
Other	

Highest Qualification	
Grade 1-11	
ABET 1-4	
Matric	
Competency Certificate	
Diploma	
University Degree	
Honors Degree	
Masters Degree +	

Employment Category	
Junior Management	
Middle Management	
Senior Management	
Executive	

Duration in Current Position	
0-2 years	
2-5 years	
5 + years	

Duration within ATIO	
0-2 years	
2-5 years	
5 + years	

Duration within the ICT Industry	
0-2 years	
2-5 years	
5 + years	

Section B – Work Related

Organisation/Industry:

1) How would you describe the culture here?

2) What are the greatest strengths of this organization?

3) Does the organisation have the human capital required to support career development?

4) What is your view on the current talent management programmes/initiative/plans in place?

5) In your view, does the organisation strive to promote gender equality in the workplace?

Personal Experience:

1) What do you like about working for this organization?

2) What would you change about this organization if you could?

3) How many positions have you occupied in this organisation?

4) Have you been promoted before?

5) Do you believe people are always promoted on merit in the organisation?

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Drivers of Career Advancement

1. What does the organisation do to support career advancement of females?

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2) What would be the benefits of supporting female employees' career advancement?

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3) What more needs to be done to support career advancement?

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Deterrents of Career Advancement

1) What have you identified as career obstacles in this organisation?

Recruitment

1) Does the organisation consider qualification/skill/or experience when promoting employees?

2) Your view on internal recruitment vs external recruitment (advantages and disadvantages).

Retention

1) How satisfied are you with your current role?

2) Do you have ambitions to advance your career beyond this point?

Work life balance

1) How do you balance family responsibilities and your workload and responsibilities?

2) How do all these responsibilities and expectations affect your career advancement?

Leadership

1) Your view about women taking leadership roles in organisations?

2) As a manager do you get equal career opportunities as your male counterpart?

Training

1) How important is training towards career development?

2) How important is mentoring towards career development?

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3) Is the organisation doing enough with regards to training?

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Thank you for participating in this study