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**LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES OF SIX FEMALE DEANS IN SOUTH AFRICAN
UNIVERSITIES**

A thesis submitted as the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy: Faculty of Education

University of Fort Hare



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June 2021

ABSTRACT

The leadership of universities should be aware of and acknowledge the needs of female academics in order to facilitate the creation of an atmosphere that is welcoming to women. Currently, the needs of female academics are not being met by universities. In this study, the experiences of women from the Eastern Cape Province who have held positions as faculty deans in South African universities are investigated from the perspective of leadership. The interpretive paradigm was utilised throughout this qualitative research project. As a means of gathering information for the study, an interview guide with a structured format was combined with personal diaries. The questioning during the interview itself was unstructured because it was determined by the responses received from the people being interviewed. Interviews were conducted with six female deans from three different universities, using a technique called convenience sampling. After finishing the interview using an audio recorder, the recording was transcribed, and a technique called thematic analysis was applied to it. Because the study used theoretical lenses, the standpoint theory and feminist empiricism were both used in its analysis. According to the findings, despite the fact that South Africa has taken steps to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities and that legislation such as the Employment Act has been passed, women continue to face obstacles when trying to occupy higher leadership positions. Even though the study was not explicit in terms of the support they get from their colleagues, they mentioned the lack of support from their male counterparts. They experienced some major challenges as a result of the interaction between their leadership roles and the roles they held in their organisations. The participants suggested the underlying masculine conceptualization of leadership in their day-to-day interactions, such as working after hours and extensive travel, both of which were in conflict with their roles as mothers. According to the suggestions that have been made, the execution of the leadership roles and responsibilities shouldn't just be seen from a man's point of view. The performance of these roles ought to take into account gender sensitivity at every stage. Since things have not really moved in the direction that was anticipated, the government of South Africa ought to move more quickly to implement the equality law.

Keywords: Barriers in Leadership, Executive Leadership, Growth and Success, Female Deans, Phenomenological, Universities

DECLARATION ON PLAGIARISM

I, the undersigned, Mandisa Mankayi, student number 200509278, hereby declare that I am aware of the University of Fort Hare's policy on plagiarism and have taken every precaution to comply with its regulations.

Mandisa Mankayi



07/07/2021

Signature and date



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

- My late parents, Nelson and Tabita Mankayi, for teaching me to be a woman of value.
- For their much trust in me, I will always do good and be the best of myself.
- Lastly, their unconditional love has made me believe in myself. I am who I am because they are!

- My one and only sister, Nosisana, my confidante, this life journey would be miserable without you.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My Saviour, the Lord my Refuge, thank you for the strength and wisdom.

Prof Duku, my supervisor, thank you very much for constantly guiding me throughout this journey.

Your patience and inability to be angry is an everlasting lesson learnt. Your guidance has been phenomenal in this challenging journey that I had to endure.

Stush, you are appreciated!

My friends, thank you for believing in me and taking the time to check my study progress; your helpful and genuine caring attitude gave me the wings to fly.

I applaud you for your lack of jealousy. P.C you are a star!

My fellow students, I appreciate how we jointly encouraged one another to keep moving forward and taking notes on one another's behalf during presentations.

Ones never alone.



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I wish to extend a word of gratitude to GMRDC for the fee waiver support throughout my study period.

To the respondents, I sincerely thank you for allowing me to take your time; your shared experiences have reshaped my life and contributed much to my personal development.

PhambiliBafazi!

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is the product of my own original work. Where other people's work has been used has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the departmental requirements.

Candidate: Mandisa Mankayi



07/07/2021

Signature and Date



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BDPA	Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action
CCPR	Convention on Civil and Political Rights
CEDAW	Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment Act
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
SADC	South African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNMG	United Nations Millennium Development Goals
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VC	Vice-Chancellor



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Women in higher education are underrepresented in senior positions despite efforts that many universities in South Africa have made. In addition, national policies and legislation that create an environment where women can take up any position have been enacted and implemented since the end of apartheid in South Africa. These include the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill and the Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act 55 of 1998). At the university level, interventions that include mentoring programmes, workshops, leadership, and professional development have been undertaken. However, in a survey conducted in 2008, it was revealed that out of the 369 leadership positions within South African higher education institutions, women occupied merely 23 percent of them. This number has not changed much in a decade. For example, a survey that was conducted for the Global Collaborative Research Project in 2015 and 2016 revealed that only 3 to 12 percent of vice chancellors are women in South Africa.

South African women have increasingly accessed higher education and reached middle management positions, but have yet to break through to the upper echelons, as is the case globally (Shambare, 2011; Chanana, 2013; Shevel, 2014; Bulick & Frey, 2017). This means that even a celebrated democracy like South Africa is still far from achieving gender equality, especially in higher leadership positions (Naidu, 2018). In addition, regardless of the increase of women in positions such as deanship, it has not fundamentally resulted in changes in other senior management positions (Pearson, Saunders, & Oganessian, 2014). In the context of this study, "senior management" refers to faculty deans.

1.2. Background to the study

The gender characterization of organisational culture and discourses of leadership shape the environment in which men and women work. Leadership is perceived with certain traits and qualities, and usually, male traits are regarded as necessary for anyone who wishes to occupy leadership positions (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Thus, organisational, institutional, cultural, and structural conditions favour the masculine view of

leadership (Bertrand, 2018). In this context, women often struggle to adapt to leadership traits that favour masculine traits and qualities. It is possible to change this way of thinking and attitude (Mun & Jung, 2018). However, the problem is that most of these organisations and institutions are led by men who are relaxed and not willing to introduce an effective, radical policy that would result in change (Jauhar & Lau, 2018).

To address the imbalances in employment by gender, countries worldwide have introduced legislation and policies that promote employment equity. Inequality between men and women is historical; as such, women find it difficult to compete for opportunities with men because of their disadvantaged past (Kerr & Miller, 2014). In order to improve the chances of women, special laws had to be formulated and implemented to bring them on par with their male counterparts with regard to employment opportunities (Burton & Weiner, 2016). Hence, countries like South Africa have an Employment Equity Act, while the UK has an Equal Employment Opportunities and Equal Pay Act (Peterson, 2018). These laws are meant to ensure that women have an opportunity to assume any position in their respective countries. Despite these equal opportunity policies, the reality on the ground shows that few women occupy executive positions across the world. Globally, women hold only 24 percent of senior business roles, while the rest are held by men (Al-Sudairy, 2017).

Recent statistics also show that in the Group of Seven (G7) countries, only 22 percent of senior business positions are held by women. These statistics highlight the importance of understanding why women are underrepresented in top positions and their current leadership experiences. Although there have been studies (Kassa, 2015; Moodly & Toni, 2017; Naidu, 2018; Choudary, 2018) to investigate the challenges faced by women in their ascension to higher office, the majority of which have been conducted in the developed world, few studies have been conducted to investigate the direct experiences of women in leadership. Of interest in this study are the lived leadership experiences of women, which may affect their interests in pursuing higher positions like vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor in South African higher institutions, particularly in the universities.

In the South African context, the transition from the apartheid era has brought numerous policy changes and has accompanied changes and legislation that attempt to ensure that women are not marginalised in terms of employment opportunities. The constitution and institutions like the Commission on Gender Equality affirm this. However, this has never necessarily resulted in effective changes in terms of barriers and restrictions. As a result,

certain barriers still exist for women to progress in leadership, especially in higher education institutions.

Generally, this stems from particular patriarchal attitudes that prevent or act as barriers for women to be employed in higher positions; these attitudes are recycled and facilitated by the lack of women in key positions, especially those influential regarding policy making. This trend where fewer women hold top positions in higher education institutions is not peculiar to South Africa but is prevalent across the globe. This argument also fits with the findings of Peterson (2017) that women continue to be underrepresented in academic decision-making in Europe. This is particularly apparent when considering the proportion of female heads of institutions in the higher education sector (O’Neil & Domingo, 2016).

The US has described the leadership ideal in US higher education with reference to discursive formations such as the statesman, the warrior, the tyrant, the hero, the expert, and the negotiator, which are all traditional masculine positions (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Similarly, references to what can be interpreted as masculine leadership ideals appear in a report about Swedish higher education, where vice chancellors are described as traditionally “lonely and strong leaders,” “charismatic,” “magnificent,” and “the vice chancellor is king!” (Peterson, 2018) Owing to these perceptions of an ideal vice chancellor, the world continues to witness the absence of women in top positions in higher education institutions.

In South Africa, for instance, if the majority of senior executive management positions were to be analysed, like vice chancellors and deputy vice chancellors, women only occupied 25 percent of these positions, while the remaining 75 percent of the senior executive management positions were held by men (Zulu, 2016). Because women make up 58 percent of university students in South Africa and men make up 42 percent, the structure of leadership positions should reflect this gender disparity. National data on gender representation with respect to staffing in universities in 2016, drawn from the Higher Education Management Information System, shows that only 27.5 percent of professors in South African institutions (from a total of 2,218 total) are female, while the figure is slightly higher at 39.5 percent for associate professors from a total of 2,131 (Kele & Pietersen, 2015).

At the senior lecturer level, women occupy 45.1 percent of the 4,890 posts, while at the lecturer and junior lecturer levels, they make up 53.3 percent (out of 8,498 posts) and 56.6 percent (out of 1,035 posts), respectively. These statistics show that some changes in policy

and legislation are needed to allow women to be in higher leadership positions; however, such changes would not be effective without understanding the challenges and barriers that restrict women from getting into these positions. Therefore, the session below dwelled on the empirical facts regarding the challenges women face in attaining desired positions, including gender and leadership and women's experiences in leadership.

Literature on leadership does not consider the gender dynamics in the lives of female leaders; it further fails to fully illuminate the experiences or choices women in leadership positions must make (Ngwenya, 2014). Experience, which is the knowledge or skill acquired through practical experience of something, especially in a particular profession, should earn equal recognition for everyone who has acquired that experience, regardless of gender. This qualitative research aims to unearth the lived leadership experience that South African women, as is the case internationally, are still experiencing breaking through the upper echelons (Shambare, 2011; Chanana, 2013; Shevel, 2014; Bulick & Frey, 2017).

1.3. Women, Gender and Leadership

Existing bodies of literature show that the factors that lead to inequalities in the leadership composition between women and men in higher education institutions are vast (Moodly, 2015; Flynn & Jeudin (2016). Some factors are similar among countries, while others are different with reference to cultures and geographical spaces (Moodly, 2015). Further study conducted by Flynn and Jeudin (2016) also revealed that in Indonesia, although the number of female students is increasing in higher education institutions, the percentage of women in leadership roles continues to stagnate. While women hold between 21-72 percent of faculty positions, they only hold 6-20 percent leadership positions within their academic institutions. A study by Peterson (2015) discusses what he coins the glass cliff within higher education management. The study was conducted in Sweden and revealed that Sweden has the highest percentage of women university chancellors in Europe. Figures from 2012 showed that the average ratio of female vice-chancellors in the twenty-seven European Union member countries was estimated at 10 per cent. This paper's main objective was to understand the factors that led to women successfully attaining these higher management positions.

A study conducted by Ndandala (2016) in Canada also reveals that women struggle to get promoted in higher education institutions. For instance, in Canada, women only represent 21.8 percent of assistant professors and 60 percent of university student populations. In

contrast, 78 percent of men are full professors, despite the fact that only 40 percent of students are enrolled. Women in Canada encounter systemic limitations in promoting or advancing an androcentric academic culture and struggles linked to motherhood. Regardless of various employment equity policies, women still face challenges concerning gender equity. The implications are that women tend to remain in the lower and middle faculty ranks as course instructors, administrative assistants, and associate professors. Gendered organisational cultures and socio-cultural belief systems result in the marginalisation and restrictions of women in higher education institutions in most countries. What leads to these restrictions is gender imbalance and discrimination, which persist as a barrier to women's advancement or promotion (Moody, 2017). Higher education institutions are a microcosm of the larger problems with regard to gender imbalances within society. Their unaccommodating nature and unfriendliness to women reflect how the broader society treats women in general.

What makes it difficult for women to be promoted or advance in leadership in these institutions is that they remain the mainstay of male power and privilege, which makes it complicated for women to enter and hold positions of higher leadership and execute their duties comfortably (Kammah, 2010). This circumstance is worsened by the continuation of stereotypical attitudes towards women as leaders, inevitably resulting in the marginalisation and restrictions of women (Morley, 2014). However, these restrictions are not clear and are very subtle in nature. The literature further suggests that these limitations reflect people's perceptions of an ideal leader in society, and women do not fit this ideal of leadership.

The ideal leaders are usually masculine, which supports the conventional idea of leadership as being male (Shambare, 2011). This has broader implications for organisations because they do not become gender-neutral as expected. In addition, women tend to follow non-conventional career paths, leading to restrictions in terms of their promotion opportunities. There are also challenges with access to fundamental networks, the absence of strong female role models, and the shortage of formal mentoring programmes for women in general with regards to their advancement in higher leadership positions. There are specific obstacles that are unique to women's ability to be promoted or advance in leadership positions, and these are universal (Dobele, Rundle-Thiele, & Kopanidis, 2014). They might differ in terms of approaches and policies, but these are recurring in society; the above-mentioned societal attitude towards women is one of them.

However, worth mentioning is the issue of family responsibilities (Wessels, 2014). Literature regards this as one of the most intractable restrictions or challenges. The majority of the studies conducted concerning the limitations of women in higher leadership positions regard family responsibilities as one of the most common challenges. This results from culturally defined gender roles and gender socialisation patterns that link women to homemaking (Tessens, White, & Webb, 2011).

1.4 Experiences of Women in Leadership

This gender-role distinction is sharply reflected in systems organised along patriarchal lines, such as in South Africa and other African countries. This line of thinking is substantiated through broader empirical studies that have been conducted in numerous countries. A paper by Odhiambo (2011) studied women and higher education in Kenya. The study's main objective was to critique the gendered nature of leadership in modern universities in Kenya. Odhiambo argues that the inclusive nature of African feminism makes it easier for both men and women to be part of this discussion. His study argues that there is a need to develop policies and strategies both at the national and local levels to improve women's participation in decision-making and leadership in higher education in Kenya.

A study by Redmond et al. (2016) argues that issues of gender imbalance in leadership have long been a major issue in universities, as they are across the majority of industries. While the experiences of women in leadership positions within higher education institutions differ, the study contends that there are some specific similarities in the challenges and adversities faced by women, as well as their perspective on what has allowed them to succeed in leadership positions. The study provides a number of recommendations for women aspiring to be leaders in higher education, such as committing to ongoing development, taking opportunities when presented, developing resilience, developing a track record, seeking support, and making recommendations for institutions.

Read and Kehm (2016), in a study titled "Women as Leaders of Higher Education Institutions: A British-German Comparison," reflect that in most countries, women are fundamentally marginalised in higher academic positions, and in addition, as of 2013, only 17 percent of vice chancellors of UK universities and 12 percent of vice chancellors of German universities were women. Their study takes a feminist poststructuralist approach to look at how the characteristics of "ideal" leaders in academia are discursively produced in a myriad

of gendered ways and examine the influence of dominant academic cultures, the status of institutions, and national policy landscapes.

According to Flynn and Jeudin (2016), despite the fact that women make up the majority of undergraduate student enrollment, they hold only 10% of leadership positions in higher education. Internationally, men outnumber women in higher education management by about 5 to 1 in middle management and 20 to 1 at senior management levels. While women have excelled in post-secondary settings, the opportunities for women to be in leadership positions continue to be fraught with challenges. According to UNESCO, women often experience invisibility, exclusion, isolation, and a lack of support within higher education, which translates into fewer women holding key positions.

These barriers can result in lower levels of women's self-efficacy and confidence, reinforce the barriers that prevent advancement to leadership positions and work against higher education institutions' goal of attracting and retaining qualified women.

Patriarchal practises still affect the systems of tenure and promotion, and women are confronted every day by systemic discrimination due to gender bias. Their organisational citizenship and career advancement are inhibited by an androcentric culture that gives less recognition to their scholarly contributions. For example, in existing studies, it is pointed out that they are less likely to be recommended (Abramson et al., 2016; Caplan, 2015; Gentry & Stokes, 2015) for full professorships than male faculty. Even when male and female associate professors present identical research, teaching, and service inputs, university tenure committees are more inclined towards male candidates than female ones. The "balance of power" still favours men, manifesting at times in inequalities in remuneration and advancement (Nguyen, 2013; Grimshaw & Francis, 2014).

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Women's experiences are not isolated accounts that affect only a small group but a systemic process through which universities fail to address issues that impact a significant segment of their population. Given that women have historically been under-represented in the higher education sector and continue to be so, it is important to gain insight into their experiences and to inform the process of creating institutional environments that support their professional endeavours.

Regardless of several equal opportunity policies and legislation that have been introduced in South Africa (the Employment Act) and other countries across the world, there are still few women occupying top leadership positions in academic institutions; hence, their voice is missing. Although there has been a growing body of research investigating the scarcity of women in top leadership positions in universities (Kassa, 2015; Flynn & Juedin, 2016; Ndandala, 2016; Moodly & Toni, 2017; Jauhar & Lau, 2018; Ndebele, 2018), there are little or no recent studies that have been carried out to explore the experiences of women in university leadership. The majority of the existing literature on the absence of women in top leadership positions (management and executive) is either quantitative (Ndandala, 2016; Flynn & Juedin, 2016; Winchester & Browning, 2016; Jauhar & Lau, 2018; Moodly, 2015; Kassa, 2015; Moodly & Toni, 2017; Naidu, 2018; Choudary, 2018); Thus, this study would unearth the leadership experiences of women faculty deans in South African universities.

1.6 Research Questions:

Main research question

What are the leadership experiences of six female faculty deans in the selected South African Universities?



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Sub research questions:

- How do female deans conceptualize leadership in their respective positions and their experiences in fulfilling their mandate?
- Which roles do the selected deans perform, and why do they choose to perform these roles?
- From the female deans' perspectives, what are factors contributing on how they perform these responsibilities?
- On the basis of the leadership experiences of the female faculty deans, what can be done to improve their experiences?

1.7 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study's main objective is to understand the lived leadership experiences of female deans in the context of higher education institutions. The focus is to explore whether gender appears to impact leadership roles in universities by examining female participation in leadership in three selected universities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and highlighting the female deans' experiences.

The specific objectives are:

- To investigate how do female deans conceptualize leadership in their respective positions and their experiences in fulfilling their mandate.
- To identify which roles do the selected deans perform, and why do they choose to perform these roles.
- To identify factors contributing on how they perform these responsibilities.
- To determined ways of improving the leadership experiences of the female faculty deans, what can be done to improve their experiences.

1.8 Significance of the Study



This study advances critical conversations around women's leadership experiences in higher education. There is an increasing discussion with regards to the promotion of women to senior management roles; however, much focus is on the scarcity of women in top leadership positions in universities (Kassa, 2015; Flynn & Juedin, 2016; Ndandala, 2016; Moodly & Toni, 2017; Jauhar & Lau, 2018; Ndebele, 2018). The current study aims to fill gaps in the existing literature on the experiences of women in university leadership in terms of visible and invisible challenges they face in senior management positions. Previous studies such as Epitropaki (2017) and Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-zalabak, and White (2015) have looked into the career progression of women in organisations with a special focus on family factors and organisational cultures.

The study also sheds light on the factors that help women remain in positions of power, which is an important aspect of the topic. Access to data on women's support in leadership roles in higher education would be beneficial to the understanding of how women can break

down barriers and thrive in leadership roles in higher education. Because of this, this research adds to the existing body of literature and makes the ongoing discussion about sexism in the academic world more comprehensive.

A feminist theoretical framework would be utilised in order to hone in on the specific ways in which these women face challenges in their professional lives. In a similar manner, the earlier research on women working in administrative positions in higher education serves as a foundation for the current investigation, which also builds upon that work. By going about things in this manner, we are better able to listen to, comprehend, and value the perspectives of the women we interviewed.

It is anticipated that the findings of this research will have a significant impact on the continued movement toward gender parity in administrative roles held at universities in South Africa. In addition to this, in light of what has been discussed thus far, the researcher makes a significant contribution to the scientific community while also exerting influence over organisations and the management of those organisations by describing, explaining, and offering to improve existing practises on the subject that is the subject of the study.



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1.9 Rational of the study

Personal

I am the right candidate for this study because I am a female who is vocal about dealing with patriarchy. Throughout my work as a learning facilitator, inspirational speaker, and community developer, I devote extra time to helping young adults, particularly girls, build self-confidence and maintain a positive self-image. I am a gender activist who, in collaboration with church organisations and communities, offers leadership and management development programmes for women at their various managerial levels. A societal contribution I take pride in. Therefore, this study would benefit organisations empowering the girl child to becoming the leader she wants to be, hence I am determined to take this study to its completion.

Professional

Exploring and understanding women business deans' journeys to academic leadership is significant for several reasons. First-person accounts of women currently serving in a business deanship can provide necessary insight into the experiences, obstacles, and supports

that influenced their attainment of the deanship as well as their leadership preparation for the role. This insight can help aspiring female academic and business leaders navigate the leadership journey. In order to keep women engaged on the path to academic leadership, it is important for those already in leadership roles to understand and reflect upon how they got there since “experiences are not truly yours until you think about them, analyse them, question them, reflect on them, and finally understand them” (Bennis, 1989, p. 92). The phenomenologist knows that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others (van Manen 1997). Acquainting current and aspiring female leaders with strategies learned from women who have already achieved success in top leadership positions in higher education institutions can help to eliminate gender-based challenges (Chamberlain, 2001).

Conceptual

Data gathered from this study may also inform research-based recommendations on how colleges of business and professional organisations can develop and support women on a path towards academic leadership. As women are encouraged to pursue and attain top-tier academic leadership positions, their underrepresentation in business school leadership may diminish, which can further empower aspiring women leaders and lead to business schools that better reflect the diversity of their student population. Educators, researchers, and practitioners focusing on the development, training, and preparation of academic women leaders may utilise findings from this study to inform the design and development of customized, women’s-specific leadership development programming for women in, aspiring to, and/or preparing for the business deanship. Fulfilling the demands and expectations of the dean’s role can be stressful, and research suggests it often leads to burnout and ineffectiveness (Montez et al., 2003; Rosser et al., 2003). The intentional design of leadership training and preparation for women business deans could serve to reduce the learning curve coming into the role and, in turn, potentially reduce the stress that can lead to burnout and ineffectiveness in the position.

By framing the findings through the theoretical lens of human agency, further insight is gained into individual-level strategies that helped women pursue, maintain, and achieve the path to academic leadership in South African universities. This insight may inform frameworks for future training and education and ensure that leadership development geared towards this group of women leaders is customized, useful, and relevant. The findings may contribute to the study of women in higher education leadership in general because

understanding the importance of cultivating and actualizing agency may help other women prepare for and navigate a professional path leading to academic leadership. The topic of the academic leadership journeys of women business deans in higher education was a new area of inquiry. However, some research has been published on the leadership journeys of women academic leaders in architecture (Woosnam, 2007) and nursing (Blass, 2011), as well as women in other senior leadership positions across higher education institutions, such as presidents (Madsen, 2007; 2008). Research has also examined the experiences of women academic leaders in other male-dominated departments such as athletics (Samble, 2017), agriculture (Kleihauer et al., 2012), and medicine (Ruger, 2015), yet a paucity of research on women business school leaders remains (Davies, 2016).

1.10 Research Methodology and Design

1.10.1 Interpretivist paradigm

According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), the interpretivist paradigm, also referred to as the phenomenological approach, is a research approach that seeks to understand human beings and their behaviours. The natural sciences are centred on abstract explanations, while the human sciences are based on an understanding of human beings and their experiences (Creswell, 2014). Babbie and Mouton (2011) noted that all humans are constantly trying to understand their worlds. As a result, it is accepted that human beings incessantly create, interpret, give meaning to, and rationalise their daily actions and behaviours.

The interpretivist research paradigm is thus aimed at gaining insights into and interpreting daily events, social structures, experiences, and values that human beings attach to such phenomena (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). This augurs well with the study's intention, which is to explore women's experiences in university management positions. Interpretivists are of the view that social reality is nuanced and subjective since it is shaped by the perceptions of research participants together with the aims and values of the research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). To that end, an interpretivist researcher or inquirer advances the theory that there is no universal truth. Furthermore, an interpretivist researcher comprehends, understands, and interprets human action from his or her point of reference and orientation (Babbie & Mouton, 2008).

As a research paradigm, interpretivism holds that social action causes a lie in people's definition of a situation and their interpretation of events, rather than in some pattern of

objective laws governing from the outside (Lancaster, 2011). Therefore, it means that we have to understand them the way the participants do if we want to explain reality. Thus, based on all this, the proposed study would be guided by the interpretivist research paradigm in order to explore the experiences of female faculty deans in South African universities.

1.10.2 Research approach

There are two broad categories of data collection at the centre of any research methods classification: the qualitative and quantitative approaches (Krauss & Putra, 2005). The choice of approach depends on the type of data that the researcher intends to collect from respondents (Burns & Bush, 2013). Sekaran and Bougie (2010) identified a persistent conflict between researchers who follow the interpretivist-aligned qualitative research approach and those positivists inclined to take a quantitative approach. This research would follow a qualitative research approach because it allows for the collection of non-numerical data. Experiences are non-quantifiable data, and this study requires qualitative data collection methods and interpretation.

The qualitative research approach is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises understanding and exploring the meaning that groups or individuals attribute to a human or social problem (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Qualitative research is when data that cannot be meaningfully quantified or summarised in numerical terms is collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2010). Flick (2011) contends that the qualitative research approach emphasises drawing meaning from people's reactions, opinions, and experiences. Creswell and Poth (2017) proclaim that in qualitative inquiries, the researcher gathers images and words regarding the studied topic to make sense out of them. A prominent characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is considered an instrument used for data collection (Schwandt, 2014). The researcher or investigator becomes an instrument by asking open-ended questions that enable selected participants to share their opinions, experiences, and reactions to the phenomena under investigation. This study would harness participants' opinions, reactions, and experiences to the challenges faced by women in management within South African universities.

1.10.3 Research design

A research design refers to an outline, plan, or framework for a research project. It comprises pre-planned decisions that provide a master plan for executing a research project (Lacobucci

& Churchill, 2010). Research designs are classified into three categories: exploratory research, causal design, and descriptive design (Cant, Strydom, & Jooste, 2007). This research would follow an exploratory research design.

Exploratory research is used when a researcher intends to understand the general nature of a problem and the variables that need to be considered (Churchil & Brown, 2004). The research is usually carried out without strong preconceived expectations of what will be found (Bradley, 2013). Exploratory research is useful and appropriate when a researcher wants to gain insights into a problem with little or no information about it (Churchill & Brown, 2004). Therefore, the adopted research design enables the researcher to explore the trajectory involved in the leadership experiences of the female deans in selected South African universities.

1.10.4 Target population

In research, the target population refers to the theoretically identified total of study objects from which a sample is drawn (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A slightly different definition of the population is provided by Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013), who posit that the research population refers to a group of individuals with one or two homogeneous characteristics that are of interest to a researcher. The targeted population for the proposed study is female faculty deans in South African universities.

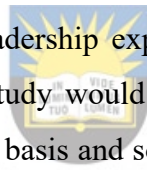
1.10.5 Sampling technique

Sampling is a process whereby a group of individuals, households, or companies are selected from the population to participate in research whose results may be generalised to the entire population (Creswell, 2014). Sampling is essential in research because it makes it possible for a researcher to study only a portion of the population, which is affordable and time-effective because only a portion of the target population is studied (Patton, 2005). Based on this, a purposive sample selection method was adopted to select the participants for this study. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample selected based on the characteristics of a population and the study's objective. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palys, 2008). This is appropriate because the knowledge and experience of female deans across the selected universities are peculiar and could not be placed with other personalities.

In the context of this study, accessibility referred to the geographical proximity of the sample elements (female faculty deans) to the researcher. Data would be collected from a sample of six women at three South African universities. From each of the three universities, two participants would be selected to take part in this study.

1.10.6 Data collection instrument

For the current research, data were collected using one long, in-depth interview. According to Flick (2011), in-depth interviews are qualitative data collection methods that seek to understand the world from the participant's perspective, unfold the meaning of people's experiences, and uncover their lived world before scientific explanations. Participants in this study were asked to share their views and opinions concerning challenges encountered by women in higher education management, the characteristics of women in higher education management, and resources needed by women in higher education to advance to top management levels. In the in-depth interviews, participants will not be tied to any question and told to answer in a certain way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews are expected to collect sufficient information on the leadership experiences of female faculty deans at the three universities where the proposed study would be conducted. The researcher conducted the in-depth interviews on a face-to-face basis and sought permission from the participants to audio-record the interview process.



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1.10.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data, using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided to see whether some patterns or trends can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in interpretation (De Vos, 2011). The study employed a thematic method of analysis in analysing the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews. Creswell (2004) defines thematic analysis as the process of encoding qualitative information that requires an explicit code. An inductive thematic analysis method would be adopted for this study. Katz (2015) describes the inductive approach as a method used to condense extensive raw data into brief formats that create understandable links between the research objectives and its outcomes. The thematic analysis follows six steps: (1) familiarisation of data, which includes transcription, reading, and rereading material; (2) generation of codes or systematic coding features relevant to the research questions; and (3) looking for connections (3) searching for themes and gathering codes relevant to text; (4)

reviewing the themes to cross-check suitability and creating a thematic map; (5) naming and defining themes by generating clear definitions; and (6) producing a report by selecting relevant extracts of chosen themes and relating them to research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to discuss the common themes from the thick, rich, and in-depth descriptions obtained from the female faculty deans. It also enables the researcher to adequately respond to the objectives of the study, which have already been formulated (Omodan, 2020).

1.10.8 Research trustworthiness

Researchers have questioned the trustworthiness of narratives as they do not address aspects of reliability and validity as in quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In justifying the use of narratives, Guba (1981) constructed four criteria that he believed would ensure qualitative research trustworthiness, including dependability, credibility, transferability, and conformability. The study employs the triangulation method, employing more than one strategy to ensure the reliability of the data.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of research findings over a period of time (McNeill & Chapman, 2005). It allows the involvement of participants in evaluating the findings, the interpretation, and the recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). However, due to time constraints involving the participants in evaluating the findings, this strategy would not be used in the study. Furthermore, the study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed restrictions on human interaction and travel.

Credibility

Credibility is mainly used to evaluate non-numeric data and refers to the objective and subjective components of a source or message (Salkind, 2010). Credibility has become an important quality dimension as it is difficult to judge accuracy directly; hence some additional information is needed to judge the raw data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In this study, credibility would be ensured by explaining to the participants that what is expected of them is their personal experience as women in management positions rather than what they think to be a social response. This study would ensure credibility by recording all interview data.

Transferability

This refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other participants as an interpretive equivalent of generalisability (Sekaran& Bougie, 2016). Transferability is not comparative in this study; therefore,sufficient descriptive data would be presented.

Conformability

According to Silverman (2016), conformability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. What conformability is concerned about is that the data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but clearly derived from the data (Tracy, 2013). In this study, conformability is not comparative and therefore, a true reflection of data and interpretation of the findings would be presented.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The data collection process started in February 2020. At the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, schools were interrupted and classes had to take a long unplanned break for the safety of everyone. That created much free space for the researcher and the study participants because there were no students around. Face to face interviews happened in a very conducive space, free from noise,there was no reason to close the room, and there was enough open space for social distancing in a well-ventilated room, enough for two people who could be loud and clear as possible. The table between the researcher and the respondent served a good purpose for social distancing, which was a regulation for the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher had to take extra precautions to disinfect surfaces, and neither the researcher nor the participant removed their face masks during the interview.After data analysis and transcription, a follow-up session became impossible due to stricter travel measures as the rise of the infection was alarming. Participants were also not eager to avail themselves again, as we preferred to stay in our own safe spaces due to the fear of infection from COVID-19. Getting hold of the participants became a challenge. Thus, only two of them could connect with the researcher over the telephone; the others were not cooperative as they held back-to-back meetings in their faculties and institutional management engagements.

1.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research is defined as the expected norms or principles that guide moral choices about the behaviour of a researcher during the research process (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). To ensure that the research aligns with expected research ethics, the researcher sought ethical approval from the University of Fort Hare's research ethics committee with approval number DUK041SMAND1. The researcher ensured that participants were given informed consent, which they signed. This was done by availing all relevant and adequate information to the participants to enable them to make knowledgeable choices on whether to take part or not. Participants were also ensured of confidentiality and anonymity by not being asked to share their names or identities. Data collected from respondents was kept in confidence. The research was conducted in conformity with ethical research requirements which outline that research findings, validity and the reliability of data should be made public (Wiid & Diggins, 2013).

1.13 Definition of Key Terms

Pseudonyms –not their real names.



Participation- in this study, it means to be part of the proceedings.

Female deans- women occupying management positions from a departmental level and going upwards

Conceptualisation -the act or process of forming an idea or principle in your mind.

Feminist perspective - has to do with gender inequality and examines women's social roles, experiences, and interests.

Lived experiences - their day-to-day affairs in a work environment

1.14 Organisation of the Study

This study is organised into six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Provides an introduction to the study, which details the background of the problem, significance of the study, limitation and definition of key concepts.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework – these include the feminist perspective theories that shape the life experiences of females. The standpoint theory and feminist theory are engaged in a detailed manner.

Chapter 3: Provides a review of relevant literature with regards to the problem under study. This includes understanding the role of females in leadership and what society detects. The review also tries to explain why this status quo of fewer females in leadership is maintained in the 21st century.

Chapter 4: Offers a methodology and procedures that would be used to gather data and how the data would be analysed. The chapter further provides the steps that were used to interpret collected data from the female deans. Also, how the issues of trustworthiness, credibility and validity were maintained throughout the study.

Chapter 5: Contains the discussion and findings of the study. This chapter provides evidence on why certain female experiences are dominant in institutions of higher learning based on previous studies which engaged similar topics.

Chapter 6: Concludes the study and provides recommendations on the way forward and further direction for future studies in the same domain.



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CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the theoretical frameworks necessary for analysing women's leadership experiences in management positions in South African universities. Discussing the theoretical framework is important because it helps lay out the fundamental assumptions that guide the research questions, methodology, and interpretations of the current study (Merian, 2009).

The scarcity of women in top management positions within South African universities mirrors the existing reality within many organisations where women find it difficult to occupy top management positions instead of their male counterparts. The dynamics of the reproduction of historical gender inequalities can be analysed through the lenses of feminist theories. Amongst the feminist theories, it should be noted that there is no predominant theory; however, there are central tendencies that characterise various feminist theories (Intemann, 2010). The tendencies encompass employing gender as the principal factor of analysis and applying praxis to improve the lived experiences and social circumstances of varied genders, but particularly women. Harding's (1987) classification of feminist theories into three epistemological categories, namely feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint, and postmodern feminism, acts as a way to structure and organise the various feminist theories. Each of these categories offers a different explanation of the phenomenon of gender inequality. The current study employs standpoint theories and liberal feminism (which belongs to the feminist empiricism epistemology) to analyse women's leadership experiences in management positions within South African universities.

2.2. An Overview of Categories of Feminist Theories

As propounded by Harding (1987), feminist theories can be grouped into three main epistemological categories which are namely, feminist standpoint, feminist empiricism and postmodern feminism. Although the current study is guided by two theories from feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory, the three groups of theories must be briefly

explained to get a background and perspective of where the current study is located in the existing group of theories.

2.2.1 Feminist empiricism

Feminist empiricists believe that men and women must have similar rights and treatment because they are basically the same. Scholars who develop feminist theories that fall under feminist empiricism accept that there are multiple truths and that knowledge is value-laden (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). A feminist empiricist locates women's experiences in the natural world as a reliable source for investigation (Hundleby, 2012). A key characteristic of feminist empiricists is that they also view knowledge as being shaped and influenced by values, and thus some authors link it to post-positivism (Doucet & Maunther, 2006). This link to post-positivism matters because it underscores that feminist empiricism supports the view that value-free knowledge cannot exist, including within an empirical context. Simply put, feminist empiricists do not hold on to traditional standards of objectivity, truth, and neutrality. Instead, feminist empiricists believe in the existence of multiple truths that come from subjective and value-laden methods (Anderson, 2016).

Prominent theories that belong to feminist empiricism epistemology include the liberal feminist and socialist feminist approaches. The liberal feminist approach tends to utilise the strategy of multiple truths to enhance equitable outcomes for womankind (Bryson, 2007). On the other hand, socialist feminism is located in feminist empiricism because theorists tend to investigate and analyse social arrangements, assuming that women's unpaid work at home is the principal source of gender equality (Lorber, 2001). For instance, in South Africa, 56 per cent of South African women's work is unpaid compared to 25 per cent for men (Masuku, 2017). This study investigates the experiences of women in management positions in South African universities through the lenses of the liberal feminist theory. The theory influences the methodology that is used to understand reality. In line with the feminist empiricist epistemology, which accepts multiple truths, a qualitative research methodology was used to gather the different experiences of the women who took part in the study.

2.2.2 Feminist standpoint theories

While the feminist empiricists are of the view that men and women should have equal rights and be treated in the same manner because they are primarily similar, standpoint feminists believe that fundamentally women and men are different (Anderson, 2016). In contrast to the

feminist empiricists, feminist standpoint theorists believe that the knower's position is critical in establishing the existing reality (Harding, 2013). From a feminist viewpoint, this means that women's position as the marginalised and discriminated against grants the unique claim to knowing (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006).

The category of feminist standpoint theories has been called into question due to the fact that it is predicated on an undifferentiated and generalised position of women (Harding, 2004). It disregards the particular intersectional matrices of oppression that are present due to the fact that the speaker is a woman of colour, has a varied ability, or is sexually diverse, among other forms of diversity. In the view of standpoint feminists, the path to achieving gender equality does not involve gender neutrality; rather, it entails illuminating the subversive nature of patriarchy, in which men control the lives of women (Lorber, 2001). In general, the standpoint of feminism places an emphasis on the singular perspective of women and the experiences they have. They contend that the concept of differences between men and women is one that should be given special consideration (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). Feminists who take a standpoint make an effort to reorient research in such a way that it places women and the experiences that they have in their everyday lives at the centre of the research process (Tanesini, 1999). The feminist standpoint theory is utilised in this investigation of the voices of women holding influential positions within South African universities. This theory is utilised because it enables the research to delve beneath the surface and gain an understanding of the fundamental issues that are driving the trend (Wyle, 2013). To accomplish this goal, we would make use of the expertise of female managers and support their efforts to increase the number of women holding top management positions in South African universities. Later on in the chapter, we delve into a more in-depth discussion of the feminist standpoint theory.

2.2.3 Postmodern feminism

Postmodern feminist theorists reject any claim to truth by drawing attention to situated knowledge and knowing in all contexts (Hawkesworth, 1988). Aptly put, they argue that all claims to knowledge are situated in particular and unique contexts making it impossible for there to be common knowledge, such as the kind supported by feminist standpoint theorists and feminist empiricists (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). Postmodern feminists disagree with the idea of a common feminist position and thus support a plurality of perspectives regarding knowing and truth (Wylie, 2012).

One central tendency of postmodern feminism is to destabilise what is considered normal or natural in relation to gender (Alcoff, 1997). Postmodern feminists view gender inequality as stemming from the division of gender into a dichotomy. Calling for an end to gender inequality, postmodern feminists believe in challenging the gendered social order, which is the basis of gender division. Their focus tends to deconstruct symbols and processes, which structure and maintain the unequal gender order (Lorber, 2001). These theorists deconstruct the gendered social order by increasing the categories and obscuring the boundaries between previously taken-for-granted divisions such as men/women and homosexual/heterosexual as unified categories.

2.3. Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning the Study

This section discusses the theories underpinning this study. These are namely the liberal feminist theory and the feminist standpoint theory

2.3.1 Liberal feminist theory

The liberal feminist theory is a theory rooted in feminist empiricism which advances that there is no difference between men and women (Grant, 2013). In other words, liberal feminists believe that men and women are the same and thus should be given equal opportunities and status in all spheres of life (Hackett & Haslanger, 2006). Originally, the liberal feminist theory came up between the 18th and 19th centuries when Western Europe witnessed increased industrial innovations. Powered by raw materials from colonised states, the availability of machinery and capital resulted in accelerated economic growth. As a result, bourgeois men who used to work at home moved to public workplaces (Tong, 2009). At that period, according to Tong (1989), women who were married to businessmen (bourgeois) were left at home with less productive work to undertake. Gradually, this led to the emergence of unequal opportunities between women and men in the political, economic and educational sectors. Mulugeta (2007) notes that women were allowed such responsibilities as child caring and household chores and were not allowed to take up political or business leadership positions. Women who were ambitious to contest for political positions were suspected of being unstable or had male challengers. From a South African context, women were culturally considered to be suitable for less influential, less risky and small responsibilities such as child-rearing, household chores, gathering fruits and preparing food while men could become hunters, miners, army personnel and leaders at various levels (Kemp, Mdlala,

Moodley&Salo, 2018). Today, it is evident that no woman is a chief or king in present South Africa.

To further weaken women's chances of attaining influential roles, school authorities were unwilling to admit female students into programmes that prepare them to do certain jobs (Whitehead, 2004). In South Africa and Africa at large, women were viewed as objects that could be exchanged for *lobola* and were not worth investing in, in terms of education. As a result, more men had access to formal education at the dawn of western civilisation in Africa (Frenkel, 2008). Owing to these restrictions, women ended up not accessing esteemed and influential positions in society (Tong, 2009). Consequently, women were socialised to believe that only men could occupy influential positions in society, thus, blocking women's emancipation. According to Tong (1989), women lacked virtue and liberty because they were not afforded opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes both at the individual and society level.

At this stage, the liberal feminist theory is believed to have been a reaction to the social contract theory put forward in 1895 by Rousseau (Whitehead, 2004). These authors agreed that men and women had a role to play but contended that men and women are not equal, so they cannot compete. Tong (2009) cites that Hobbes and Locke hold that women were equal to men but were opposed to the idea of giving women political rights, arguing that women were weaker than men due to their biological characteristics. In addition, Tong (1989) explains that from the beginning, Rousseau believed that women were naturally created without the capacity to participate in political decision-making and leadership. Furthermore, Tong (2009) also notes that Rousseau depicted the development of rationality as a key and important educational goal for boys instead of girls. Rousseau (1895) showed commitment towards sexual dimorphism by advancing that a rational is an equal match for an emotional woman. According to him, boys and men should be taught to be courageous, temperate and fortitude, while women were supposed to be taught about such virtues as good humour, docility and flexibility. Similarly, from an African cultural context, women were supposed to be taught good motherhood, housekeeping and submission (Volpp, 2001; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2018).

In contrast, the liberal feminist theory advocates that women and men are equal and can assume similar roles regardless of different biological characteristics (Wendell, 1987). The liberal feminist theory argues that the equality of opportunities between men and women can

be achieved by removing the customary and legal constraints that hinder women from their success. Liberal feminists argue that women should have equal chances with men in the “academy, the forum and the marketplace” (Tong, 2009). Similarly, this study advocates that women should be significantly visible in top leadership positions in South African universities currently male-dominated. According to the liberal feminist theory, women’s participation is the epicentre for women to access equal opportunities between them and their male counterparts. Implicitly, advocates of liberal feminist theory conceptualise gender imbalances and inequalities based on the view that participation in social and public domains should be equal between men and women (Storkey, 1985). This means that opportunities in the community, workplace, government and higher education should be equal between men and women and should be illustrated by the availability of women enjoying those opportunities. As Tong(1989, p.38) noted, “we owe to liberal feminists many, if not most, of the educational and legal reforms that have improved the quality of life for women.” Such reforms referred to by Tong include increased access to tertiary education by women, voting rights, equal pay for the same work as their male counterparts, equal opportunity to run for public office and to be appointed in ministerial positions. Currently, South Africa boasts of 50 per cent female representation in the cabinet and in terms of access to tertiary education, available statistics indicate that more than 50 per cent of the students enrolled in tertiary institutions are females. However, these trends have not been reflected in the top management positions of South African universities.

Liberal feminist theory advances that equal opportunity and affirmative action policies should be utilised as mechanisms to deliver equal opportunities between women and men (Tong, 1989). In addition, the liberal feminist theory affirms and emphasises the role of public institutions and government in the protection of civil rights that are sacred to all humans. The rights that should be protected and guaranteed by governments and relevant public institutions include freedom of speech, freedom to information, freedom of conscience, freedom of association, expression, privacy, rights to education, justice, health, shelter and equitable opportunities (Tong, 2009). Kensinger (1997) further argues that guaranteeing and ensuring people’s basic rights and freedom is likely to result in legal, political and social equality. Once equality is achieved in these angles, it is believed that the participation of women would improve. Liberal feminists are also of the view that through the creation of more public opportunities for women, a new dispensation would emerge where women’s social and public participation is increased and equal to that of their male counterparts

resulting in the reversal of gender inequalities that disadvantage women who would want to pursue certain goals (Grant, 2013).

Literature on liberal feminism also state that all people have the right to make choices without restrictions rooted in stereotypes, beliefs and oppressive rules (Davies & Gannon, 2005). Pro-liberal feminist theorists are largely concerned and focused on redeeming women's unequal and disadvantaged position in society, although they sometimes contrast each other in some instances (Grant, 2013). The current study is concerned with liberal feminists who put more emphasis and effort in addressing sexism and discrimination against women in the workplace, educational institutions and society, as is with this study which is formulated to gain insights into the issues surrounding the scarcity of women in top management positions within South African universities.

Typically, liberal feminists push for women's equality cause protecting and establishing equal opportunities for women through such instruments as legislation and other campaigns (Mulugeta, 2007). Much of Liberal feminists work is done and achieved through lobbying as well as putting pressure on the existing systems. A key and notable characteristic of liberal feminists is that they are moderate in their aims and modus operandi as opposed to radical feminists who tend to be extreme in their goals and methods of addressing existing gender inequalities and imbalances (Brown, 1988). For instance, radical feminists call for a rapid and complete overhaul of the existing system, while liberal feminists believe in a gradual process towards addressing inequalities (Whitehead, 2004).

At a global scale, to counter inequality, liberal feminists led to the adoption of several conventions which promote equal access to opportunities, such as the Seneca Falls Convention, the Equal Rights Amendment Act (ERA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Byrnes & Freeman, 2012). The conventions that advocate for and introduced by liberal feminists have led to the enactment of various laws that seek to enhance the participation of women at local, regional and international levels. These laws advocate for equal participation, opportunities in education at all levels, politics and employment (Whitehead, 2004).

Besides using existing government and other public institutions such as parliaments to push for equality, liberal feminists have also formed and joined political action groups as platforms

to advance the cause of women's equality to men on all fronts and levels. For example, for women working in tertiary institutions, there are organisations such as HER-SA (Shober, 2014). According to Tong (2009), the main thrust of these action groups is to enhance the position of womankind by making sure that enacted laws are put into practice to give women a platform and environment that is conducive to equal participation opportunities.

These liberal feminist groups/organisations also aim to galvanise public pressure on public and private institutions to ensure they are gender-sensitive in their operations. These pressure groups have resulted in the emergence of women activists organisations that seek to advocate for equality of opportunities in various fields. In South Africa, these groups include HER-SA, Sonke Gender Justice, Masimanyane Women's Rights International, and the South African Commission for Gender Equality.

In essence, the liberal feminist theory stresses that all people (men and women) should be accorded the freedom to participate socially, economically and politically without hindrances caused by age-old and unjust beliefs which leave women at a disadvantage (Tong, 2009). More interestingly, the liberal feminist theory believes that gender inequalities and imbalances that exist in various sectors of the society, economy and political arena would not be attained through a change of social structures in communities. Instead, the liberal feminist theory strongly promotes the use of means such as gender-neutral socialisation, equal representation laws, offering financial and material resources to women who intend to run for public office and getting rid of the glass ceilings that hinder women from assuming positions of influence and authority (such as top management positions in universities in the case of this study). Additionally, the liberal feminist theory emphasises that gender inequalities can be achieved by changing and transforming existing laws and regulations to become gender-sensitive (Whitehead, 2004).

2.3.1.1 Weakness of the liberal feminist theory

Although the liberal feminist theory is one of the theories that have been used as the foundational basis of the current study, it should be noted that it has its shortcomings. As observed by Holmes (2007), liberal feminists are criticised for their assumption that women will gain equality by becoming more like men and that this change can happen within the current system. Bryson (2007, p.41) also critiqued liberal feminism as "the focus on individuals' right to compete equally abstracts people from their society and does not consider the gendered starting-point of the competitive marketplace".

According to Bryson (2007), individual, social and participation, no matter how equitable they may be, are not enough to address existing inequalities usually caused by invisible causes. Bryson (2007) goes further to argue that without addressing the causes of gender inequality, such as patriarchy, cultural stereotypes, result in the undervaluing of women's social, labour, political and leadership contributions, as equitable participation alone is not sufficient in addressing the disadvantaged position that women find themselves in as far as leadership positions are concerned.

Another criticism of the liberal feminist theory is present by Gaskell, McLaren, and Novogrodsky (1989). They argue that the idea of equality of opportunity is an example of a liberal slogan with little efficacy to do more than add women into existing social structures, such as hiring them as managers and principals. As revealed in the existing literature, adding women as seem to be advanced by liberal feminism is inadequate in the fight to end gender imbalances and inequalities. This is because liberal feminism does not offer a solution to deal with the structural cause of inequalities such as those that lead to the cheapening work and contribution that women can offer. This has manifested through the absence of women's perspectives in science, the exclusion of women from governance and decision-making embedded in the polity, economy, and society and in the context of this study. All these concerns play out in institutions of higher learning, both in South Africa and beyond, and this is evidenced by the scarcity of women in top management within South African universities.

Liberal feminism was further criticised because it does not interrogate the hierarchical division of labour and power relations in organisations (Mouffe, 2013). As a result, women end up finding themselves under the perpetual control of men even if they are installed into positions of authority and influence (Stronquist, 2007). Furthermore, the liberal feminist theory is criticised for promoting individualism instead of communal participation which is regarded as an African value engrained in the Ubuntu concept. The individualism fuelled by liberal feminists can be seen in the fact that women who manage to ascent to positions of influence and authority do not often promote other women to positions of influence (Gerson, 2002). The theory also explicitly state that women usually aim or contest for lesser positions regardless of the availability of opportunities and chances for them to get into positions of authority. This portrays women as self-disadvantaging, a position disputed by other feminist writers (Tong, 2009).

Regardless of the highlighted weaknesses of the liberal feminist theory, the theory presents and explains conditions that lead to the scarcity of women in powerful and influential positions (Storkey, 1985); thus, the liberal feminist theory was utilised as a theoretical framework in this study because it encourages women to take up duties that were historically reserved and regarded exclusively for men. All over the world, leading institutions of higher learning was considered a male job mainly due to beliefs that such roles demand masculine characteristics which are not found in women (Acker, 1987). Besides that, this research believes that if liberal feminists-inspired policies such as Affirmative Action are effectively put into practice, women's presence in top management positions in South African universities will improve. In addition, conventions such as CEDAW, which is in line with the tenets of liberal feminism, created the basis for the promotion of equal access to employment opportunities, basic health care, political, education and economic rights. CEDAW is a revered initiative because it led to the formulation and subsequent adoption of gender equality policies such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BDPA), the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, as well as the Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), among others.

According to Acker (1987: 419), liberal feminists who write about education “use concepts of equal opportunities, socialisation, sex roles and discrimination”, and their strategies involve altering socialisation practices, changing attitudes, and making use of relevant legislation. For example, liberal feminists may seek to see the increased participation of women in universities; however, the participation may not be illustrated at the top management level because of glass ceilings. Several studies have demonstrated the applicability of liberal feminism to gender equity policies in South Africa, Africa and overseas (Romany, 1995; Morrell, Jewkes&Lindegger, 2012; Gouws, 2017). Cases of the applicability of the liberal feminist theory include the appointment of women into public management positions, the use of women quota in the election of public officials, as well as the promotion of women into leadership positions, with the expectation that their addition would help in addressing the gender inequalities and imbalances that exist in various sectors(Gouws, 2017).

The attainment of independence by South Africa in 1994 marked the change of fortunes for liberal feminists, which saw them making headways in government, national representation and law (Morrell, Jewkes&Lindegger, 2012). The headways began with the declaration of the bill of rights, enshrined in the national constitution of South Africa, which declares equality

by gender and race as opposed to the dictates of the autocratic apartheid regime that discriminated against people by colour. This meant that there were differences between white female citizens of the apartheid regime and black citizens. While liberal feminists' efforts to improve women's lives must be applauded, a critique of this work is that it left firmly in place the structural facets that supported women's inequality largely because it neglects the hegemonic system, which perpetuates gender inequality (Bryson, 2007). Indeed, liberal feminism added women to politics, the economy, and the field of education, but these approaches are proving insufficient in addressing the structural roots of women's inequality. Thus there is a need for a new framework that looks at how those structural differences can be addressed or capitalised for the benefit of women.

2.3.2 The feminist standpoint theory

The feminist standpoint theory belongs to the feminist movement, which emerged around the 19th century. The feminist movement is divided into three phases known as waves. The first wave began in 1840-1920. The second started in 1960-1988, while the third movement started from 1988-2010 (Baumgardner, 2011). According to Hartsock(2017), the first wave of feminism was mainly concerned with securing women's civil rights. After those rights were secured, a second wave emerged, which sought to push for social justice for women and more importantly, the second wave advocated equality for women. Finally, third-wave feminists retained some of the critiques of the second wave but expanded the definition of feminism beyond the experiences of white middle-class heterosexual women (Baumgardner, 2011).

When the second wave of the feminist movement came into being around the 1960s, the feminist standpoint emerged and demanded an alternative power relation (Hartsock, 2019). The liberal feminists ignored the power relation issue; thus, the feminist standpoint theory sought to correct the weaknesses of the liberal feminist theory. With the emergence of the feminist standpoint, feminists started to argue about the care ontology of knowledge as well as the use of feminist epistemology to see the different apparatus of producing knowledge such as culture, religion, class and women's participation in the decision-making process (Krolokke, 2000). At this point, women began to examine their knowledge that is acquired through lived experiences collectively. This makes the feminist standpoint theory a relevant theoretical framework for understanding the scarcity of women in top management university positions by interrogating women's current leadership experiences in management positions.

In the context of the ever-changing human society, active and equal participation in decision-making is considered a necessity for the success of women's cause (Konsell, 2005). In light of this, the feminist standpoint theorists view that the participation of women in decision-making is a must to achieve the redistribution of power and bring gender balance in all spheres of life through a woman's perspective. This is important because it makes the maximum mobilisation of people potential for the nation's prosperity a real possibility (Winkler, 2004). As such, the use of the feminist standpoint theory research aimed at unearthing and identifying knowledge, experiences and skills of women as an oppressed, marginalised and subordinate cohort is essential (Preece, 2015).

A major objective of the feminist standpoint theory is to mainstream oppressed, subordinated and marginalised women as well as their skills, life experiences and knowledge to realise egalitarian societies (Littlejohn & Foss, n.d.). To achieve this, the feminist standpoint theory advocates for the total eradication of cultural beliefs, practices and norms with deep roots in the male-biased patriarchal system (Preece, 2015). These beliefs are often blamed for the existence of glass ceilings that hinder females from getting into positions of authority and influence, which, in the case of this study, refers to the executive management positions in South African universities. Owing to all this, women are encouraged to participate in rank and file power relations and decision-making platforms to strengthen the process and efforts towards social transformation, resulting in justice, dignity, and practical equality for women (Barreto, Ryan & Schmitt, 2009).

This study comes from that background that women's lived experiences in management positions within South African universities have not been adequately explored to understand what issues they are dealing with that could also hinder them from occupying more influential, decision-making senior management positions. For example, in the overview of the standpoint theory by Merriam Webster, "standpoint" is defined as a "position" from which objects or principles are viewed (MerriamWebster Dictionary, n.d.). Similarly, the Encyclopaedia of Communication Theory has pointed out that standpoint arises when an individual recognises and challenges cultural values and power relations that contribute to subordination or oppression in a particular society (Little-john & Foss, n.d.). This is in line with this study's objectives, which intend to unearth women leadership experiences as they carry out their responsibilities in management positions within South African universities.

At its core, the feminist standpoint theory focuses on the marginalised and comparatively invisible women (Ford, 2018). This is related to how knowledge is neither value-innocent nor value-free from cultural contradictions. In the social sciences, scholars believe that the process of producing knowledge and experiences is always value-laden (Preece, 2015). Taking these views and definitions into consideration, Pandey (2016) posited that people in a society could be classified into two dominant groups as centred and dominated as marginalised. Conventionally, most leadership roles are influenced by the people of the dominant groups. Feminists think that people from the marginalised group should also be considered knowledgeable and with similar experiences (Roof, 2012). Such knowledge and experiences certainly help formulate good policies to bring about justifiable change (Pandey, 2016). From this perspective, this study is carried out to explore the direct and lived leadership experiences of female university managers. Findings from the study are significant because, as Narayan (2004) suggested, practical understanding experiences help formulate effective policies to improve women's chances of access and utilise all available opportunities. Presently, some laws and legislations promote equality between men and women in workplaces, such as The Commission of Gender Equality Act, no 39 of 1996, and Employment Equity Act 108 of 1998. However, it is alarming that women continue to be absent in top university management positions (Sinden, 2017). This calls for a review of the current legislation and conditions to make them more gender-sensitive.

Hekman (1997) states that the feminist standpoint theory came about after blending with the critical theory, Marxist feminism, and social scientific disciplines. The feminist standpoint theory is thus considered as a means of understanding and explaining the world from a woman's perspective, as a marginalised and subordinated cohort in the society. Harding (2004) posits that the feminist standpoint theory is a feminist critical theory concerned with the prevailing relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power.

As stated by Winkler (2004), the feminist movement was inspired by Marxist, liberal, socialist and radical feminism. Liberal feminists emphasise the investigation of obstacles to socialisation and equality in gender roles. Liberal feminists contend that, at large, the differences between women and men are superficial. Radical feminists view the matter differently, and as a result, they put more of their attention and focus on patriarchy's exploitation and appropriation of the female body. On the other hand, the socialist and

Marxist feminists identified the economic system which results in exploitation and marginalisation as the principal source of inequality against women (Harding, 2004).

From this perspective, feminist standpoint theory can be synthesised as a process to mainstream the knowledge, skill and experiences of marginalised people, where the inequalities are located in gender, race, class, and sexual orientation with social hierarchy (Swigonski, 1994). Wood (2005) underscores the importance of defining the relation between knowledge and power in light of the feminist standpoint theory. As opined by Harding (2004), various feminists have promoted the feminist standpoint theory in different ways. Notable differences exist in their aims, purpose, and scope. Benton and Craib (2001) observed that Nancy Hartsock, a feminist standpoint theorist, sought to blend the Marxist humanist materialism and feminist standpoint. Hartsock (1987) holds that women clearly hold leadership positions differently from men. This is due to women's dual roles as wage and domestic workers. In the context of knowledge, Hekman (1997) says, "the feminist standpoint theory represents the beginning of a paradigm shift in the concept of knowledge, a shift that is transforming not only feminist theory but also epistemology itself". Therefore, based on this logic, it can be concluded that the feminist standpoint theory was formulated to mainstream the crucial knowledge that is often kept in the periphery through the marginalisation and subordination of women (Pinday, 2016). Additionally, the theory was developed to unearth the existing reality through harnessing the lived experiences of women.

The feminist standpoint theory bears some resemblance with the feminist research where Speedy (1991) identified three main principles with regards to feminist research, which are (a) recognition of women as an oppressed community and examine the reason to take action for change, (b) valuing women's experiences and (c) consciousness-raising as alternative views of the world from women's perspective". Foundationally, the feminist standpoint theory is widely concerned about women's experiences and knowledge cultivated based on cultural values and power relations assigned by gender roles. Speedy (1991) went further to explain that feminist standpoint theorists are guided by three principles which are as follows: (a) knowledge is socially situated, (b) marginalised groups make it more aware to ask questions, and (c) the research focused on power relations.

Originally, the feminist standpoint theory was developed to extend Marx's class standpoint theory (Bowell, 2011). The feminist standpoint has been accepted by feminist scholars from various disciplines as a method of research that takes women's lived experiences seriously

because it facilitates articulating women's lived experiences at a specific place and time embedded within a given set of social relations (Harding, 2004). In the same vein, this research explores the issues surrounding the scarcity of women in top management positions within South African universities based on the lived experiences of the few women holding management positions in universities. Hekman (1997) added that the feminist standpoint theory enables an investigator to go beyond the surface of appearances in order to lay bare the concealed issues. Worth noting is a claim exhibited at the heart of Hartsock's (1987) argument, which posits that unless a systematic understanding of the world is provided, efforts to change the world will be unsuccessful.

Furthermore, feminist standpoint theorists believe in the diversity of women. This means that their knowledge and lived experiences vary because of their unique economic, social and political background (Wylie, 2003). For example, although South African women are disadvantaged, the degree differs amongst women of different races. Standpoint feminists stress gender mainstreaming in all sectors of social structure and recognition of women's leadership and knowledge (Harding, 2004). If achieved, this is earmarked to be the suitable drive towards gender-sensitive social transformation. Brooks (2014) mentions that feminist standpoint epistemology is a unique philosophy of knowledge building that challenges researchers to see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of disadvantaged women; apply their vision and knowledge into social activism and social change. The feminist research model works on the theoretical proposition that women's personal and social experiences are in a better position than men to face and understand the world of women (Intemann, 2010).

The feminist standpoint theorists are considered to have inspired women from various backgrounds to come together and share their experiences and map the way forward to improve their position in society (Basu, 2018). This is seen in the Beijing Women's Conference of 1995, which improved women's participation in political, economic, and social activities. At the global level, women's participation has tripled in the past two decades because it is sustained by national and international efforts. Nevertheless, the participation of women across the world is pegged at 22 per cent though still far from the 33 per cent set by the Beijing Women's conference of 1995 (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2015).

In a study carried out by Kralik, Loon and Watson (2008), through the feminist standpoint, it was discovered that most women face some forms of exploitation and oppression. The study

further unearthed that women experience their struggles, oppression, and strengths differently due to their diverse identities and realities. To this effect, present-day feminist movements have recognised that to consider and include the diverse experiences of women, there is need for flexibility in the feminist standpoint theory (Hartsock, 2019).

From a feminist standpoint theory perspective, gender-biased discrimination results from an imbalance between the two sexes (male and female) (Kralik, Loon & Watson, 2008). In the present material world, relations between men and women are seen, from different philosophical perspectives, as having different needs, characters, nature and demands (Hartsock, 2019). Thus, the feminist standpoint theory views women and men differently, not because of biology but other factors mentioned above (Pandey, 2016). In addition, women and men exhibit psychological and mental differences, which result in different necessities and needs as well. This is why issues have to be addressed differently to make sure they are substantively equal (Merchant, 2012).

For instance, according to Lieberman (2011), men and women differ in communication styles. He contends that while women use communication as a way of connecting, men tend to use communication to converse with the hope of gaining power and being assertive. To further demonstrate differences between men and women, Merchant (2012) added that women are generally more expressive, polite, and tentative in conversation, whereas men are usually more assertive and display signs of power-hunger. However, Solberg (2013) disagrees with this view and advances the idea that such differences can shape human behaviour and culture, which are not static and universal. Solberg (2013) further states that there is no difference in working leadership styles between women and men; instead, she opines that differences in leadership styles result from the working environment with gender imbalances and gender inequality in organisations. A feminist standpoint is the way to see the matter with feminist epistemology, which can have differences in its foundation based on different regions, professions, cultures, and societies (Merchant, 2012). Moreover, the perspectives on the existence and role of different sexes are different but sometimes controversial because some see masculine and feminine characters complementing each other (Kralik, Loon, & Watson, 2008).

Generally, South Africa is fast in accommodating new and progressive ideas concerning gender equality and the emancipation of women. However, the practical reality on the ground still shows the footprints of gender stereotypes and the age-old characteristics of patriarchy

(Sinden, 2017). The use of the feminist standpoint theory to investigate the social reality of women's lived reality for social transformation is yet to be fully adopted and realised.

The feminist standpoint theory acknowledges the existence of multiple realities in the world. people's perspectives bring about differences in the knowledge production process (Intemann, 2010). Experiences in the women's movement have revealed that there are different dynamics in the process. While women find themselves in peripheral and inferior positions, they have proven to be focal and vocal about the women's agenda. Gilligan (1982) noticed that women's subordination and patriarchal tendencies adequately esteem women's thinking, working, writing, and leading. Grant (1986) proposes that the destruction of patriarchal systems, institutions, practices, and structures, which perpetuate power differences between sexes, is an imperative needed to achieve gender equality.

Mitchell and Mishra (2000) also pointed out that women's role in the sexuality, reproduction, production and socialisation of children is a key determinant of women's status in society. Mitchell and Mishra (2000) argued that gender roles in these structures should be changed to be substantively equal to that of men. Unless women are convinced of their value, change in their exterior world cannot totally liberate them. To achieve equality, the world needs to move away from viewing men as a symbol of human standards and consider that women are capable in their own way (Olgia, Shapiro, Bodlin & Verborgh, 2002).

The principal goal of feminist standpoint theorists in society is to bring about respectful discussions that involve careful listening of disadvantaged, discriminated and marginalised voices to make every person feel affirmed in the value of their ideas and contributions (Swigonski, 1994). Although biological differences exist between women and men, they only result in differences in perspective and need, not capabilities. This produces different experiences, social construction and approaches that make differences in feminist standpoint (Hekman, 1997).

Since patriarchy is deeply rooted in social culture, equality on paper does not work to make tangible change in women's lives as a collective (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). Therefore, there is a need for real transformation to bring real equality for women in South Africa. A reflection on South African society today shows that patriarchal values and norms are still dominant, even though policies and laws have been passed to ensure gender equality. For the cause of equality amongst men and women, research should be carried out from the

feminist standpoint theory point of view because it includes and considers women's life experiences (Pandey, 2016). This will assist in the process of social development and change. In the context of this study, the use of feminist standpoint theory allows the researcher to go beneath and unearth hidden issues underlying the scarcity of women in top, influential positions, while also unearthing women's voices on their leadership experiences in management positions within South African universities.

2.3.2.1 Weakness of the feminist standpoint theory

A significant criticism of the feminist standpoint theory has been levelled against its reliance on essentialism, regardless of its inherent challenge (Rolin, 2006). It is argued that although the standpoint theory dispels false generalisations about women, its focus on social class and groups of women is still considered essential. According to feminist standpoint theory critics, generalisations about the entire female gender can be divided into smaller and more specific groups based on women's different social and cultural backgrounds, but are still seen as distinct groups, resulting in women's perpetual marginalisation (Hennessy, 1993). The credibility of strong objectivity versus subjectivity is another criticism of feminist standpoint theory. The standpoint theory outlines that women's standpoints are subjective, and therefore, there are no absolute criteria that can be used to evaluate the standpoints; however, they make the assumption that only the marginalised or biased are compared to the privileged (Hekman, 1997). According to critics, this leaves room for an overbalance instead of the balance of power and creates a situation where the marginalised group becomes the architect of the marginalisation of the other group.

Since its inception, the feminist standpoint theory's focus has been mainly feministic (Clough, 1994). It has therefore been challenged for enveloping other minority groups within the 'women' tag. These groups include the disabled or those that have a disability. In addition, when Harding and Wood conceived the standpoint theory, they ignored that there are various subgroups of women in the same social group based on race, culture, location, and religion. Thus, Wylie (2013) argues that people's identities are too complex to be reduced to binaries. Despite all these weaknesses, O'leary (1997) asserts that the feminist standpoint has helped revive women's experiences as a vital area of research. As such, this study adopted the feminist standpoint theory as a tool to investigate how women conceptualise leadership based on their current leadership experiences within South African universities.

The use of feminism as a theoretical framework leads directly to the use of the theory as a method of analysis, which in turn informs the design of the research. In spite of this, there is a paucity of research available on this methodology, particularly in terms of the degree to which we are able to accurately measure the factors that we assert to be under investigation. As a result, we found that using life history narrative as a social constructivist approach was appropriate for studying the lives of Black women as marginalised groups and gaining an understanding of their experiences on the one hand, as well as the structural mechanisms and institutional arrangements that shape these experiences on the other. "the context of the lived experience of Black women... provides us with a deeper understanding of both structural and political linkages" is something that we acknowledge when we study the lives of the participants within the context of their own personal histories. This is because it enables us to comprehend how the participants themselves experienced feminism.

We therefore interviewed the six Black women leaders using the life-history interview method, following a set of topics that informed the interviews, allowing personal narratives to emerge. of marginalisation within their organisations'. As we investigate the lived experiences of Black women in a variety of geographical locations with comparable historical legacies, these aspects are particularly pertinent to our analysis in this study because we are looking at how they have been affected by those legacies. According to the hypothesis presented by Smooth (2010), the processes that lead to the formation of identities and the organisation of power structures differ depending on the geographic locations in which they are investigated. We are interested in comparing this variation as a means of assessing marginalisation and privilege within the context of particular histories, sociopolitical environments, and economic opportunities.

Because it enables analysis "within, through, and across cultural differences" (Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 78), while at the same time staying true to "cultural specificities," we find that our use of feminism is particularly useful in this analysis.

2.4 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter focused on discussing the theoretical frameworks that informed the present study. The epistemological categories of feminist theories were discussed in order to gain a

perspective on where the two theories considered for this study are located. The epistemologies discussed are empiricist feminism, standpoint feminism and postmodern feminism. Liberal feminism, rooted in empiricist feminism, and standpoint theory, grounded in the feminist standpoint, were discussed as theoretical frameworks informing the present study. The weaknesses of the theories were highlighted. However, because the theories complement each other to a greater extent, the effects of each theory's shortcomings are minimized.



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CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores a published literature review on the leadership experiences of women in universities through various headings and subtitles. An empirical literature review refers to the exploration of existing knowledge gained through the observation and measurement of phenomena based on theory or beliefs. Empirical literature is important in a research study because it guides and forms the basis on which the current research is shaped (Ford & Richardson, 2013). This chapter presents a review of the available literature related to the topic under investigation. The topic of employment equity and equality between males and females continues to attract policymakers, researchers, and academics across the world. This study focuses on women's leadership experiences in management positions in South African universities. Despite various policies and legislation enacted to provide women with equal access to employment opportunities in all sectors, available evidence indicates that few women hold top management positions within South African universities, hence the desire to hear the voices of women in leadership in institutions of higher learning.

A number of studies (Kassa, 2015; Flynn & Juedin, 2016; Ndandala, 2016; Moodly & Toni, 2017; Jauhar & Lau, 2018; Ndebele, 2018) have looked into the lack of women in top management positions in universities; however, none of them have looked into the lived experiences of women in management positions. The literature reviewed in this chapter was obtained from journal articles, books, conference papers, and other scientific sources acceptable in the academic field.

3.2 An overview of women leadership experiences in Management Positions

An experience is a knowledge or skill that is functional and/or practical and can be obtained through doing, seeing, or feeling things. Spending time in a real-world setting to gain knowledge about a specific occupation, business, or industry is the definition of "work experience." Understanding a job function through the accumulation of time spent performing that function is what constitutes "experience." Women's experiences of leadership

can be defined as the accumulation of information learned, difficulties overcome, exciting accomplishments achieved, and the expression of these emotions as a result of a collection of activities performed in a particular job category over the course of time. When confronted with trying or dangerous circumstances, there is a widespread misconception that women lack the requisite toughness and experience to handle the situation effectively. In South Africa, pro-democracy policies that were repressive on the basis of race, coupled with patriarchy, held women, especially black women, back in terms of career development and progression into senior leadership positions. This was especially true for black women (Bodalina & Mestry, 2020). When it comes to the development of resilient and responsive leadership, it is widely acknowledged that strong and transformative leadership is essential. A number of women became the "first" to hold senior management positions as a direct result of the new democratic dispensation's implementation of affirmative employment policies, which were designed to combat the discriminatory legacy of previous administrations (Bodalina & Mestry, 2020).

Regardless of increased opportunities and professional eligibilities, female employees remain underrepresented in the top management positions across the world (Pillai, Prasad & Thomas, 2011). The present-day workforce is distinctive from what was witnessed during the early industrialisation days because it has become so diverse with the integration of women and other minority groups (Yusufoglu, 2014). In South Africa, the post-independent employment trends have seen the number of women getting into the workforce increasing in all sectors. Abbas, Azad, Ashraf and Ahmad (2018) observed that the participation of women in the labour market is on the rise. However, across the world, women continue to be less represented in top management positions. Korkmaz (2016) notes a remarkable increase in the availability of women in the labour force; women's entry into diverse managerial posts remains limited and is more visible in top management positions across the world.

Although the geographical focus of this study is South Africa, it is relevant and important to review the situation in other parts of the world in order to put this study into perspective. This is because glass ceilings are a global phenomenon, not just a South African one (Saleem, Rafiq, & Saf, 2017). In the Arab world, where there have been limitations on women's participation in the labour force, improvements in the number of women joining the workforce have been noticed. According to the Supreme Council for Women (2013), the proportion of Bahraini women working increased from 4.9% in 1971 to 33.5 % in 2010. It is

estimated that 29.8 percent of Bahraini women are employed. Nonetheless, these increases in labour force participation have not resulted in an increase in top management positions (Evangelia, 2014). Instead, the majority of women are mainly found at lower and middle management levels rather than at senior management levels. In India, it has also been established that despite increased participation by women in the workforce, they remain absent in managerial positions in all disciplines of the economy (Azeez & Priyadarshini, 2018). Statistically, Pereira (2014) demonstrates a low representation of women in decision-making, with only 22 percent of legislators, senior officials, and managers being women, while only 26 percent of listed companies in India have a woman on their board of directors.

Available statistics show that women hold only 24 percent of senior business roles on a global scale, while men hold the rest (Al-Sudairy, 2017). This is regardless of the fact that women constitute 48.5 percent of the global workforce (ILO, 2018). In addition, recent statistics also show that in the G7 countries, women hold only 22 percent of senior business positions. These statistics invite the need to understand why women are not in top positions despite their large numbers. Although there have been studies (Kele & Pietersen, 2015; Naidu, 2018) to explore the challenges faced by women in their ascendancy to higher office, much of which is concentrated in the developed world, few or no studies have been carried out to tap into the direct experiences of women in leadership in light of the glass ceiling in the South African higher education sector.

Therefore, there is limited information about women's experiences in management concerning how they experience glass ceilings in their quest to become executive managers. A number of published articles revolve around management topics in the corporate world (Baxter, 2016; Person, May, & Mayer, 2016). Ndebele (2018) carried out a related study to investigate the challenges faced by female school principals in a South African rural district and found out that they face challenges such as being regarded as incompetent by their male colleagues because of deeply rooted cultural stereotypes. This was carried out to fill the knowledge gap regarding the experiences of women who aspire to be in top management within South African universities. A review of the available literature reveals that the primary areas of interest are how culture (the patriarchal norm structures) (Mayer & Barnard, 2015), globalisation (Harrison & Michailova, 2012), gender equality, and diversity (Syed, Burke & Acar, 2010) affect women at work. In addition, other studies investigate women's career

patterns (Chinyamurinfi, 2016) and work-life balance (Fatoki, 2017). Understanding the experiences that shape women's lives and the resulting under-representation in top management positions is a concern when studying women in university management. The scarcity or underrepresentation of women in top management positions has been attributed to the "glass ceiling" phenomenon. This is discussed below.

3.3 Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is a concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt, or aspire, to attain senior positions (and higher salary levels) in corporations, government, education and non-profit organisations. It can also refer to racial and ethnic minorities and men when they experience barriers to advancement (Lockwood, 2004). Knutson & Schmidgall (1999, p. 64) define the glass ceiling as an “invisible, generally artificial barrier that prevents qualified individuals – in this case, women – from advancing within their organisation and reaching their full potential”. In the context of this study, it means invisible and artificial barriers that prevent women from getting into top management positions within South African universities. Glass ceilings may differ between regions, countries and organisations; however, the way it is managed determines the success at the workplace. Unfortunately, there is very limited knowledge available on the experiences of women managers in organisations in South Africa, let alone women managers in the higher education sector.

Glass and Cook (2016) outline that it is the accumulation of these barriers that prevent women from advancing into senior-level positions that create invisible glass ceilings that are difficult for women to break. The term glass ceilings emanated from the fact that limitations are not immediately apparent and are generally unwritten and unofficial (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001). This is why, despite various legislation and regulations at the global level to promote equality by gender, there are still gender inequalities in top management.

The glass ceiling is a common topic in the discourse on gender and management. It helps describe barriers that block female managers from moving up the ladder in an organisation (Glass & Cook, 2016). These challenges or barriers are usually related to gender stereotypes and roles. As a result, women find themselves confined to lower and less influential positions

in institutions (Betrand, Black, Jensen & Lleras-Muney, 2018). Even though women comprise 48.5 per cent of the global labour force, they account for only 6 per cent of top management (ILO, 2018).

Barriers to breaking the glass ceiling manifest in two ways: first, the barriers can be from within whereby women themselves are reluctant to get into senior management positions owing to limitations imposed on them by gender roles such as motherhood and prejudices that females should take up top management roles (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016). Secondly, the barriers come through stereotypes of what effective leadership is perceived to look like. According to (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011), effective leadership is supposed to be tough, shrewd and masculine. Traditionally, women are seen as weak leaders compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, in a previous study, Carvalho, Costa, Lykke and Torres (2019) discovered that women managers had been conditioned to view male traits as prerequisites for being a successful female manager. Therefore, being tough, assertive, and forsaking family life is considered the sole option for advancement in women's careers. However, many women tend to choose their families, resulting in them being underrepresented in top management positions (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016).

A number of authors have pointed out that women are more likely to be appointed to positions with less influence, autonomy, control and authority. Other studies (Glass & Cook, 2016; Ingersoll, Glass, Cook & Olsen, 2017; Milliken & Kneeland, 2019) have proven that women have fewer prospects of being promoted to senior management positions than their male counterparts. Consequently, more men than women exist in top management positions of an organisation/institution, such as chief executive officers, company directors, principals, and vice-chancellors, which wield control and power (Ingersoll, Glass, Cook & Olsen, 2017). The fact that more men than women are found in top leadership positions may indicate gender preferences in the hiring and promotion to senior positions within an organisation. According to Milliken and Kneeland (2019), men tend to hold more powerful management positions while their female counterparts occupy subordinate positions in the formal authority structure.

Women constitute 48.5 per cent of the world's workforce (ILO, 2018). It has also been identified that women work approximately two of the world's total working hours.

Regardless of all this, there is little in gain to show for women. For instance, despite their total contribution, women earn a mere 10 per cent of the world's total income. In addition, women are reported to own only 1 per cent of the world's total property. As of 2018, only 24 (4.8 per cent) women were CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (Grand-thorn, 2018). 20-first (2018) reports that women account for only 24 per cent of senior roles globally. All this show the extent to which the issue of representation in leadership is heavily tilted against women.

The issue of glass ceilings and gender stereotypes exists in political leadership. A relevant case is Hillary Clinton, who is considered one of the most influential women in American politics who shared her experience, indicating that she kidded, ribbed and chided in boardrooms across the country for defending women issues (Chu, 2013). In 2013, only three women were listed in the top 20 most influential people in the world. These were Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, Sonia Gandhi – President of Indian National Congress and Brazil's former president, DilmaRousseff (Forbes, 2013).

Although glass ceilings are prevalent in essentially every part of the world and all sectors of the society, the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (2012) reports that discrimination and glass ceilings are high in countries situated in the sub-Saharan Africa region while the Latin American region records low levels discrimination against women. Although South Africa falls in the sub-Saharan African region, it has made some inroads in improving the position of women through various legal instruments. However, those improvements have not been significantly reflected at the management level. This has thus attracted interest from researchers and feminists who are bent on understanding the reasons behind the glass ceilings that inhibit women from advancing to the highest level in their careers. In the context of education, glass ceilings have been investigated in relation to certain faculties such as engineering and other opportunities regarded as suitable for men. For instance, Moraba and Babarunde (2018) investigate the underrepresentation of women in construction. However, fewer or no studies have been carried out to explore the glass ceilings that women have to break to get into top management positions in South African universities, especially by understanding their current experiences.

3.4 Glass ceilings in the Higher Education Sector

Just like in any other discipline, glass ceilings also exist in the higher education sector. This is true in the South African context and beyond. In the higher education sector, top management positions are dominated by males. In a study to investigate the promotion of academic staff for the past eleven years at the University of Cape Town, Sadiq, Barnes, Price, Gumedze and Morrell (2019) discovered that males dominated senior positions and that the promotions to senior management positions were not demographically representative of the population in the university. Many barriers to women who aspire to top management positions within higher education institutions are perpetuated by gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs that regard women as not being fit for authoritative and influential positions (Jamil, Shabudin, Raman & Ling, 2019). Typically, existing organisational and institutional culture and structural conditions favour a masculine view of leadership (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018).

Historically, learning institutions have been dominated by male principals and vice-chancellors because of leadership qualities perceived to be traits of effective leadership. The absence of women in top management positions within universities stems from particular patriarchal attitudes that prevent or act as a barrier for women to be employed in higher positions. According to Alsubaihi (2016), these attitudes are facilitated by the lack of women in key positions, especially those that are influential with regard to policymaking. Peterson (2016) hold that women continue to be under-represented in academic decision-making in Europe. The common reason for the scarcity of women in top management positions within universities is gender. For example, the United States of America has described the leadership ideal in the US higher education with reference to discursive formations such as the statesman, the warrior, the tyrant, the hero, the expert, and the negotiator, which are all traditional masculine positions (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Similarly, reference to what can be interpreted as masculine leadership ideals appear in a report about Swedish higher education, where vice-chancellors are described as traditionally being regarded as “lonely and strong leader,” “charismatic,” “magnificent,” and “the vice-chancellor is king!” (Subbaye & Vithal, 2017). Owing to these perceptions of an ideal vice-chancellor, the world continues to witness the absence of women in top positions in higher education institutions.

Regardless of the national policies and legislation that create an environment where women can take up any positions since the end of autocratic apartheid rule in South Africa, more men than women continue to occupy influential and powerful positions in South African universities (Ndebele, 2018). Although there is no written policy or law which prohibits women from taking up top management positions in universities, women just find themselves less represented at the top management level (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). This scenario resulting from invisible and artificial obstacles is known as glass ceilings. The notion of a glass ceiling refers to hollow upper restrictions in organisations, making it complicated for women to be promoted to top management positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

There is a continued lack of more women in key positions in South African universities and beyond, which restricts the capacity and possibility for women assuming top positions. For example, a survey conducted in 2008 reveals that of the 369 leadership positions within South African higher education institutions, women occupied merely 23 per cent. This shows that even a celebrated democracy like South Africa is still far from obtaining gender equality, especially in higher leadership positions (Naidu, 2018). In addition, regardless of the increase of women in positions such as deanship, it has not fundamentally resulted in changes in other higher management positions (Person, Saunders, & Oganessian, 2014). For instance, Naidu (2018) observes that out of South Africa's twenty-six universities, only five were led by female vice-chancellors.

In South Africa, for instance, if the majority of senior executive management positions were to be considered, which includes vice-chancellors and deputy vice-chancellors; it showed that only 25 per cent of these positions were occupied by women, while the remaining 75 per cent of the senior executive management positions were held by men (Zulu, 2016). Since 58 per cent of the students in South African universities are women and 42 per cent men, the structure of leadership positions should also reflect this percentage. National data on gender representation with respect to staffing in universities in 2016, drawn from the Higher Education Management Information System, shows that only 27.5 per cent of professors in South African institutions (from a total of 2,218) are female, while the figure is slightly higher at 39.5 per cent for associate professors from a total of 2,131 (Kele & Pietersen, 2015). At the senior lecturer level, women occupy 45.1 per cent of the (4,890) posts, while at lecturer and junior lecturer levels, they make up 53.3 per cent (out of 8,498 posts) and 56.6 per cent (out of 1,035 posts), respectively. This shows that regardless of the increased

representation and participation of women in the academic workforce, they continue to be underrepresented in top management positions within universities. These statistics show that some changes in policy and legislation are needed to allow women to be in higher leadership positions; however, such changes will not be effective without understanding women's experiences in relation to the challenges and barriers that restrict them from getting into these positions. Understanding the experiences of women who desire to occupy top management positions is in line with the feminist standpoint theory informing this study.

The feminist standpoint theory emphasises that people from the marginalised group should also be considered as knowledgeable and experienced equally (Roof, 2012). Their knowledge and experiences certainly help formulate good policies to bring about justifiable change (Pandey, 2016). The feminist standpoint theorists are considered to have inspired women from various backgrounds to come together and share their experiences and map the way forward to improve their position in society (Basu, 2018). This is seen in the Beijing Women's Conference of 1995, which improved women's participation in political, economic and social activities. In this study, women in management positions from three different universities in the Eastern Cape would be considered to share their experiences.

3.5 Gender Imbalances in Universities

A study by (Redmond et al., 2016) argues that issues of gender imbalance in leadership have long been a major issue in universities, as is the issue across the majority of industries. The study argues that, whilst women's experiences in leadership positions within higher education institutions differ, there are some specific similarities in the challenges and adversities faced by women, including their perspective of what has permitted them to succeed in leadership positions. The study provides many recommendations for women aspiring to be leaders in higher education, such as committing to ongoing development, taking opportunities when presented, developing resilience, developing a track record, seeking support, and recommendations for institutions. Read and Kehm (2016) study titled "Women as leaders of higher education institutions: A British-German comparison" reflects on the majority of countries where women are fundamentally marginalised in higher academic positions, and in addition, as of 2013, only 17 per cent of vice-chancellors of UK universities and 12 per cent of German universities were women. Their study takes a feminist poststructuralist approach to look at how the characteristics of 'ideal' leaders in academia are discursively produced in a

myriad of gendered ways and look at the influence of dominant academic cultures, the status of institutions and national policy landscapes. From an analysis of the findings, it can be argued that in addition to increasing the numerical proportion of women leaders in academia, it also crucially needs work to be done to challenge academic, cultural practices and dominant gendered conceptualisations of the 'leader'.

A study by Flynn and Jeudin (2016) reflects that despite women being in the majority of undergraduate student enrolment, they hold merely 10 per cent of leadership positions in higher education. Internationally, men outnumber women in higher education management, at about 5 to 1 in middle management and 20 to 1 at senior management levels. While women have excelled in post-secondary settings, the opportunities for women to be in leadership positions continue to be fraught with challenges. Women often experience invisibility, exclusion, isolation, and lack of support within higher education, translating into fewer women holding key positions (Jamil, Shabudin, Raman & Ling, 2019).

In addition, studies (Meyer, 2016; Rehfeldt, 2018; Skiba, O'Halloran & Hope, 2019) also show that men prefer to mentor other men, which further diminishes women's opportunities to leverage networks to serve in leadership positions in higher education. Mentoring plays a critical role in helping women succeed by significantly enhancing their self-esteem, managerial skills, income, and promotion possibilities (Peterson, 2018; Tianeni&Berki, 2018). These barriers can result in lower levels of women's self-efficacy and confidence, reinforce the glass ceilings that prevent advancement to leadership positions and work against higher education institutions' goals of attracting and retaining qualified women. Their study also reveals that in Indonesia, although the number of female students and faculty is increasing in higher education institutions, the percentage of women in leadership roles continues to stagnate. While women hold between 21-72 percent of faculty positions, they only hold 6-20 percent of leadership positions within their academic institutions. A study by Peterson (2016) discusses what he coins the glass cliff within higher education management. The study was conducted in Sweden and revealed that Sweden has the highest per cent of women university chancellors in Europe. Figures from 2012 showed that the average ratio of female vice-chancellors in the twenty-seven European Union member countries was estimated to be 10 per cent. The paper's main objective was to understand the factors that led to women successfully obtaining these higher management positions. In this context, the author utilises what he coins the notion of the glass cliff, which refers to a phenomenon when

women are more likely to be appointed to precarious leadership roles in circumstances of turbulence and problematic organisational situations. The study's findings reflect that women have been permitted into senior academic management, similar to the decline of the position in status, merit and prestige.

A study conducted by Ndandala (2016) in Canada also reveals that women struggle to get promoted in higher education institutions. For instance, in Canada, women only represent 21.8 per cent of assistant professors and 60 per cent of university student populations. In contrast, men are 78 per cent full professors, despite consisting 40 per cent of student enrolment. Women in Canada encounter the following systemic limitations in being promoted or advancing: glass ceiling, an androcentric academic culture and struggles linked to motherhood. Regardless of various employment equity policies, women still face challenges concerning gender equity. The implications are that women tend to remain in the low and middle faculty ranks as course instructors, assistant and associate professors.

With the gender imbalance in academia generally, feminist scholars argue that academia, like other societal institutions, is governed by paternalist values (Redmond et al., 2016). Patriarchal practices still affect the reward systems of tenure and promotion; women are confronted every day by systemic discrimination due to gender bias. Moreover, their organisational citizenship and career advancement are inhibited by an androcentric culture that gives less recognition to their scholarly contributions. For example, it is pointed out in existing studies that women are less likely to be recommended (Abramson et al., 2016; Caplan, 2015; Gentry & Stokes, 2015) for full professorship than male faculty. Even when male and female associate professors present identical research, teaching and service inputs, university tenure committees are more inclined towards male candidates than female ones.

3.6 Barriers Faced by Women in their Efforts to Occupy Top Management in Higher Education Institutions

When exploring the barriers that make up the glass ceiling, most authors touch on three categories of barriers that hinder women from climbing the ladder of leadership. Much of the barriers fall into one of the three barriers: individual, organisation, and societal (Barreto, Ryan & Schmitt, 2009). Organisational barriers refer to the organisational-level factors that affect the differential hiring and promotion of men and women (Wilson, 2014). These barriers vary significantly from organisation to organisation. This rings true in the context of

South Africa, as the country's higher education sector has seen about five women heading South African universities as vice-chancellors whilst the rest of the twenty-six state universities are headed by men. Although the barriers to women's rise to top leadership vary from organisation, they can create a considerable roadblock preventing women from advancement to top management (Cassidy, 2018). Ballenger (2010) considers societal barriers to be the greatest barrier inhibiting the ascendancy of women to top management positions in organisations.

Jones and Palmer (2011) establish that societal norms such as childbearing, certain career expectations and marriage have great potential to limit a women's likelihood and ability to progress the more demanding and time tasking senior management positions. In addition, barriers against women can be individual. These include a lack of internal motivation to take up senior management positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Although some barriers can be individual, women's ascent to higher leadership positions is impacted by organisational barriers. Bertrand and Rodela (2018) argue that the glass ceiling is more of a societal blocker than an individual barrier. On the other hand, others argue that corporate culture or organisational barriers are to blame (Pasquerella & Clauss-Ehlers, 2017). These barriers include the selection process, organisational culture, workplace relationships, globalisation, management styles, internal motivation, lifestyle conflicts, and gender stereotyping discussed below.

3.6.1 Selection process

The selection process within an institution is one of the common and well-known barriers to career advancement (Commonwealth, 2015). When selecting or considering candidates for management positions, regardless of one's qualifications, organisations tend to be biased towards masculine qualities that naturally favour men over women. This is why, despite government efforts to create an environment conducive to fair recruitment, women continue to be underrepresented in top management positions in South African universities. Since the dawn of majority democracy and the end of apartheid regime, the South African government has advocated for a fair selection process regardless of gender through women empowerment and gender equality bill and Employment Equity Act, 1998 (act 55 of 1998). Nonetheless, few women are selected for top management positions in the higher education sector (Kele & Pietersen, 2015). It is argued that the pool of women that are qualified for promotion

to executive positions is quite small, and therefore, women's chances of getting promoted are slim. Contrastingly, another study found that universities have a large pool of qualified women and they are simply not considered for top positions (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). For instance, in South Africa, 52 per cent of students enrolled in universities are females.

This shows that more women are getting qualified and ready to enter the workforce. However, more relevant to the current topic are statistics, which show that women constitute most of the academic labour force. According to Naidu (2018), women make up the majority of academic positions in South Africa while the remainder is men; however, they remain scarce in top management positions with universities. A rationale that is used to explain the absence of women in top management positions within universities is that since men hold the majority of existing top management positions in universities, those men in top positions tend to promote other men who are similar to themselves (Hannum et al., 2015). Besides these explanations based on the empirical literature, there is a lack of knowledge on what women experience when selected or appointed to top management positions within South African universities.



3.6.2 Organisational culture

Another barrier that impedes women from occupying top management positions within South African universities is organisational culture. Moorosi (2019) asserts that glass ceilings are usually embedded in the culture of organisations. Culture is defined as a way of life of a group of people: the behaviours, values, beliefs, and symbols that they generally accept without thinking about them and passed along from one generation to the next (Li & Krakowsky, 2009). The organisational culture refers to stereotypes and, in general, the organisational climate. Existing literature indicates that the glass ceiling falls within practices in the organisation and organisational culture; thus culture influences how things are done in the organisation (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016; Hurley & Choudhary, 2016; O'Callaghan & Jackson, 2016).

Many organisations' cultures are shaped by men's views of what an effective manager should be like. In addition, Eddy and Ward (2017) note that because men dominate most universities in terms of power and influence, the culture prevailing in the institutions tend to exhibit attributes that favour men. As such, structural barriers within organisations that block women

from entering top management positions in universities are entrenched in cultural practices. In most African countries, social and work relations are governed by traditional patriarchal structures (Ndebele, 2018). Based on these views, men are regarded as leaders from the family level up to the national level, which also reflects in universities.

3.6.3 Workplace relationships

Another barrier that hinders women from assuming top management positions in universities is relations at the workplace. These relationships can be with bosses, mentors, and female co-workers. According to Hofmeyer (2015), most employees tend to bond through similar interests. In many top management positions in universities, there tend to be few executive women; thus, many women cannot find a female mentor to prepare them for top management positions. Laff (2006) finds that women are inhibited from progressing to senior management positions in the workplace because of their limited access to capable mentors. Many people prefer to have mentors of the same gender because they tend to understand the most commonly faced challenges. Men do not face the same barriers, and they often do not want to mentor a woman. The needs of women from their mentors also tend to differ from the needs of men (Searby, Ballenger & Tripses, 2015). Many women claim to need more encouragement, an example to follow, and simply more tasks to complete. On the other hand, male mentors tend to be resistant to mentor a woman because they perceive women as more emotional, not as skilled at problem-solving, and because of the risk of workplace sexual harassment issues (Burkinshaw & White, 2017).

3.6.4 Globalisation

Globalisation presents many new barriers for women. Senior-level managers and top executives now have even more responsibilities and higher expectations than before. Due to many businesses' time pressures and relocations, top executives have had to move to new towns, cities, and countries (Morley, 2015). This presents a significant barrier for many women with families and a working spouse or significant other (Mlanga, 2016). Perhaps more surprisingly, the largest problem, however, has not been family issues but the adoption of new cultures and social norms. While the natural ability of women to adapt is higher than that of men, a large number of women have been unable to accept the culture shock and fail in their new environments (Searby, Ballenger & Tripses, 2015). Similarly, in other cultures, women may also experience resistance to female leadership. Many countries will not deal with a

woman executive because of their beliefs and perceptions that women cannot handle business effectively (Aga & Woldemariam, 2017). Therefore, the extent to which globalisation affects the ascendance of South African women to top management within universities is not known, and this study aims to close that gap. Because of globalisation, South African universities are getting into various partnerships with several universities from other countries; this will demand travelling from top management staff in transacting business on behalf of the university, and this may cause a conflict of interest for mothers who are not willing to leave their children behind.

3.6.5 Management styles

Differences in management styles between men and women pose threats to women's aspirations to top management positions within universities and other organisations. In a study to investigate the glass ceiling phenomenon in the promotion of women's abilities in organisations, Omran, Alizadeh & Esmaeeli (2015) established that almost 96 per cent of female managers indicated that the application of the male management style is an effective factor in the promotion of women into top management positions. More often, women are forced to accept the masculine culture and environment and deal with a phenomenon called masculine management style (Read & Kehm, 2016). As a result, women fail to execute the male-biased masculine management style leading to them not getting selected or appointed to top management positions. It is widely acknowledged that existing management styles in universities are dominated by male methods and characteristics (Gallant, 2014).

These styles put women in a dilemma such that if they apply female management styles, they are considered unsuccessful managers and if they accept the males' methods, they are criticised as women who use male styles (Davis & Macdonaldo, 2015). In addition, other factors such as traditional employment networks, bias in employment and promotion of women, lack of endorsement of the right to equal opportunity, lack of enough education for occupying management positions, and considering the female style of management as a direct threat to the men's opportunities for development are seen as other obstacles which create glass ceilings (Taleghani, Pourezat & Faraji, 2009).

3.6.6 Internal motivation

Lack of internal motivation has been noted as a barrier to women's desire to occupy top positions. Women often lose internal motivation due to obstacles which they encounter in their efforts to occupy top positions. These obstacles include discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice, family demands, and lack of opportunities (Emory, 2008). Although there have been claims that women do not desire to excel in their current job positions, there is a view that contradicts and asserts that more than half of women who are not in management positions desire to be in the top levels of their organisations (Van-Vianen & Fischer, 2012; Glass & Cook, 2016).

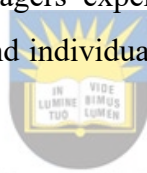
3.6.7 Lifestyle conflicts

Another barrier that has been identified as contributing to the scarcity of women in top management is lifestyle conflicts. This barrier is also referred to as work-family conflict and is worsened by women's family responsibilities (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017). Family responsibility refers to instrumental activities relating to child upbringing, providing goods and support services for the family. Family responsibilities have played a significant role in whether or not women accept certain job offers. Some of them had delayed accepting them until their children were older (Kolade & Kehinde, 2013). In addition to the roles they hold in their institutions, for many women, they remain the primary caretakers of their families (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2009). As time constraints and demands from the job become more important for promotion, many women choose between family and career. According to Shepherd (2017), very few women CEOs and women executives have children due to its effect on their careers. Conversely, many women have voluntarily left their jobs due to family decisions (Wallace, 2008).

While a decreasing number of women are taking pregnancy or childcare leaves, 32 per cent of women still leave their jobs once they have children. Also, once a woman has children, she is more reluctant to travel and work long hours due to the responsibilities at home, further hindering her promotion likelihood (Woodard, 2007). In his study on work-life balance, Gartzia & Marloes van (2012) established that motherhood significantly impacted women's career progression opportunities. For career women, motherhood implied a complex relationship between working hours and breaks in careers. This contributes to the explanation of gender disparity in top management positions. The study also showed that women with

children of school-going age were further disadvantaged. Nyangiwe-Ndika (2015) suggests that there should be a transformation of top leadership management characteristics to match the lifestyle demands of women. According to Sahoo and Lenka (2016), lifestyle conflict or work-family conflict negatively affects women flexibility. Flexibility is considered to be a key factor that has a bearing on effective management. Because of the various family responsibilities that fall on the shoulders of women, such as caring for children, they often find themselves less flexible to work out of working hours than their male counterparts. As a result, women are not able to meet some informal commitments.

Guille et al. (2017) assert that even if they have the potential and possibility to meet those commitments, they usually tend not to like to work overtime and they are consequently excluded from elevation to top management posts. It has been demonstrated that almost half of the women who leave their jobs and start an independent job will be seeking more flexibility. Suraj-Narayan (2005), in his research, studied the occupational stress that women faced and concluded that women managers experienced several sources of stress: work stressors, family stressors, personality and individual stressors as well as extra organisational sources of stress.



3.6.8 Gender stereotyping **University of Fort Hare**

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Gender stereotypes are ranked as the biggest challenge women face in their quest to be top management office bearers. Gender stereotype is described as a kind of thinking that views all women in the same way and see no distinction between them in terms of their abilities (Glass & Cook, 2015). Block and Crawford (2013, p. 9) assert, “people exhibit gender stereotyping when they assign traits, behaviours, and roles to individual men and women on the basis of gender”. Due to the high prevalence of gender stereotypes, people generally view men and women differently in relation to their capabilities. As a result, gender stereotypes and the assumptions suggested by them receive priority over other classifications and characteristics such as qualifications and experience (Ng & Sears, 2017).

Some of these negative stereotypical assumptions which distinguish men and women are the beliefs that women are more willing to give precedence to family duties over business concerns; they are required to take care of their children; therefore, they lose the time and enthusiasm for their work; they work to earn extra income and do not have enough

enthusiasm for success in business; women take negative feedback personal instead of taking it professionally; and finally, women are not suitable for top management positions because they are too sentimental and without aggression (Powell & Butterfield, 2015). Although these assumptions are probably valid to a great extent for working women, they cannot describe women who are determined to pursue management as their professional career.

Gender stereotypes in society have led to normative beliefs about the different roles expected to be performed by men and women (Katuna, 2014). The lineage of these normative dogmas may be attributed to the sexual division of labour in society. Furthermore, the persistence of such normative dogmas in society is reinforced by the fact that individuals in society, irrespective of their gender, practices gender stereotypes (Kameshwara & Shukla, 2017). Thus, gender discrimination at the workplace can typically be traced back to the roots of certain segments of time and contexts of society. However, just like in prior times, modern and industrial life have reshaped social roles and these transformations have also impacted men and women differently (Cundiff & Vescio, 2016).

Historical perceptions of leadership competence, skills and assertiveness may hinder the ability of women to get top management positions in higher education institutions (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). These perceptions are moulded by the cultural beliefs that men are assertive and firm leaders (Hannum et al., 2015). Many organisations associate masculine characteristics with solid leadership and, to some extent, success and achievement. The characteristics include being assertive, aggressive, and task-oriented (Envick, 2008). Other stereotypes of women include the expectation of being modest, quiet, selfless and nurturing (Aga & Woldemariam, 2017). These superficial characteristics may be seen as non-executive material. Organisations desire to have managers who are prepared to execute, take criticism, and act in the company's best interest at all costs. Leadership styles are closely associated with common perceptions and stereotypes of women leaders. In early 1990, studies discovered that men emerged as task-oriented leaders more frequently than women, who emerged as social leaders more frequently than men. Due to the demands of leadership positions, it became a socially accepted tendency for men to assume leadership because their task-oriented style was more widely accepted (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). As time moved on, the social leadership style of women was more accepted and valued in some circumstances (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017).

3.7 Interventions at Breaking Glass Ceilings

With the realisation that despite the enactment of various laws and statutes, women continue to be underrepresented in positions of power and influence (Sahoo&Lenka, 2016),perhaps, this suggests that legislation and statutes alone are not enough to solve the current imbalances between the number of men and women in positions of power and influence. In response to the glass ceiling effect, several interventions to aid the ascendancy of women into top management higher education institutions such as universities have been put forward. These include capacity building, research, getting mentoring and networking (ILO, 2018). Implementation of these interventions is considered a panacea to the under-representation of women in top management positions within higher education institutions. The effectiveness of these interventions can be seen in Swedish higher education, where participation of women has increased remarkably (Ekman, Lindgren &Packendorff, 2018).Cama, Jorge and Pena(2016) outline that increased participation of Swedish women in leadership positions suggests that appropriate interventions can produce similar positive results in other parts of the world as well.



3.7.1 Capacity building

As a leadership building programme, capacity building remains at the forefront of preparing and supporting women in their early stages of academic careers and preparing them to advance to top management positions (Redmond et al., 2017). Literature is awash with examples of countries in which capacity building programmes designed to spearhead the development of female academics were implemented and yielded positive results. For instance, the University Grants Commission in India undertakes development initiatives to equip women with higher education leadership skills. In the United States of America, the Office of Women in Higher Education's Inclusive Excellence Group and Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) provide leadership development opportunities for women faculty and administrators (Katuna, 2014). Additionally, in Norway, the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development reflects on leadership attributes and on strategies to enhance and use them effectively. Finally, in South Africa, the New Generation of Academics Programme enables universities to recruit new academics into permanent posts from the outset and support high-level performance (Naidu, 2018).

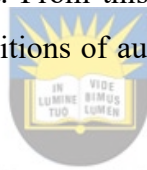
Programmes like these are credited with developing competencies and leadership skills necessary for transforming institutions into favourable environments for women to reach their full potential (Wesarat& Matthew, 2017). Since context plays a vital role in defining leadership practices, these programmes should be designed in contextually appropriate ways as result formulation and development of such programmes have to be informed by research. Research is essential in developing capacity building programmes because it facilitates identifying challenges and shortcomings within a specific context and developing weak areas (Jamil, Shabudin, Raman & Ling, 2019).

In the context of this study, the key focus would be the challenges and limitations of women aspiring to be in top management leadership of higher and tertiary education institutions like universities. It has been proven that the use of training modes such as problem-solving exercises, designing a case study to manage the given issues, and strategic planning or developing a model for consultancy projects to expand women's capacity for effective leadership roles can increase the effectiveness of capacity building programmes (Johns, Fook&Nath, 2019). Furthermore, cognisant of women's social and biological nature, capacity building programmes ought to incorporate elements of resilience and grit, which are essential in the leadership environment dominated by men. However, the lack of adequate financial resources and training expertise in most developing countries is often cited as a hindrance to these initiatives. Hence, it is advised that appropriate arrangements such as collaboration with international partners or international funding should be sought (Henry, 2017).

3.7.2 Research

Among other strategies for eliminating glass ceilings, research is earmarked to play an important role in eradicating all the causes that lead to the scarcity of women in top management positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). In addition, deliberations on the role of research have been tabled by pro-woman development organisations across the world (Campos, 2016). As a result, developing countries such as South Africa are encouraged to focus on research agendas that lead to initiatives and programmes aimed at eradicating gender equality and inclusion for senior management leadership in higher education institutions.

A focused research agenda is important because it allows the collection of important data on gender statistics in higher education leadership roles in South Africa (Dear, 2016). It will also help define a parameter to monitor and interpret growth patterns. According to Tan & DeFrank-Cole (2018), research facilitates the unearthing of ‘invisible’ obstructions that hinder women from getting into top management positions. Through research, factors that facilitate or hamper women’s participation in top management roles in higher education can be explored systematically to construct a framework that is informed by empirical and theoretical underpinnings (Morley, 2014). Focused research agenda should encourage the investigation of this issue from a critical perspective where challenging data could be analysed with an innovative technique to gain insights into the formation of national policies and legislative frameworks for women’s development into academia (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). One example of such initiative can be found in Murray, Tremaine and Fountaine’s (2012) work titled “Breaking through the glass ceiling in the ivory tower”, where they used a case study to investigate the factors in a particular context that helped female professors in getting ahead in academia. From this study, recommendations were made on how women can attain and maintain positions of authority and influence in higher education institutions.



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3.7.3 Mentoring

Lack of mentors has been identified as an impediment to the participation of women in top management leadership in higher education institutions. Smith-McKoy, Banauch, Love and Smith (2018) state that men who dominate higher education top management are reluctant to mentor women. This demonstrates a need for mentoring women as this will help prepare them for top management leadership. Reeves (2015) found that the scarcity of women in top management positions within higher education institutions results from women’s attitudes, psychological attributes, organisational and socio-cultural issues. These negatively affect women’s ambitions; hence there is a need for adequate support from the experienced to increase self-determination, self-efficacy and aspirations to make them feel motivated to rise to top management positions (Smith-McKoy, Banauch, Love & Smith, 2018).

As observed by Harris and Leberman (2012. p.34), ‘developmental relationships within organisations is limited for women leaders due, in part, to the small number of suitable potential mentors and their exclusion from informal male-dominated networks, the impact of

extra organisational developmental relationships for women leaders may be more important for their advancement into senior leadership roles”. Existing studies recommend that getting mentors or leadership coaches, preferably females, is one potential strategy for addressing gender imbalances at the top management level. Senior women in similar power positions can share personal experiences and insights that have helped them to overcome their difficulties during their journey to the top (Brunner, 2018). These mentoring sessions can initiate an honest and practical interaction into the unknown during the process of leadership development for women while at the same time, these senior women can serve as models for others (Awang-Hashim, Noman& Kaur, 2017).

3.7.4 Establishing network

To break the glass ceiling in tertiary education Awang-Hashim, Noman and Kaur (2017) suggest that women who aspire to top management positions are encouraged to set up networks of women within similar roles and similar interests. This belief will “disrupt the patterns of social connectivity at work that have for so long privileged men, and in so doing provide a new way to alter the balance of power between the sexes” (McCarthy, 2004, p. 11). It is recommended for women in developing countries to network with women from developed countries such as Sweden, which have seen a remarkable increase in women who take up management positions in higher education institutions (Awang-Hashim, Noman& Kaur, 2017). Such networks would create an opportunity for aspirants to understand the role of women in the management of higher education, develop skills and competencies to make well-informed decisions, learn strategies for a better balance in their personal and professional lives and build a community to exchange support and address exclusion (Sahoo&Lenka, 2018).

According to the ILO (2018), education is the first step towards breaking the glass ceilings that women face in their aspirations to become managers. Al-Manasra (2013) argues that education has the potential to increase ambitions and aspirations for high-income jobs and improved living conditions. Through these aspirations and ambitions, the traditional barriers are weakened, thus helping more women get into the labour market, and with more efforts and a combination of other strategies, women will break the glass ceilings (Sahoo&Lenka, 2018).

3.8 Importance of Having Women in Leadership Positions

The significance of having women leadership positions has been explored by many management scholars and researchers (DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Neidermeyer&Wheatly, 2016; Fox-Kirk, Campell& Egan, 2017;Kanadli, Torchia&Gabaldon, 2018). As Burkinshaw (2015) identified, there are four reasons why having women in leadership positions is important. These reasons are (a) for enhancing the quality of what is facilitated by diverse leadership styles, (b) for social justice that advocates institutions to be just and treat people with equality, (c) for equity and parity that focus on the issue of gender pay and opportunity gap and (d) for economy and business, as organisations with equality and inclusion are looked upon and perceived in a positive light.

Hannum, Muhly, Shockley and White (2015) outline that appointing women into top management positions in institutions of higher learning is not only an issue of addressing gender imbalances but that the presence of women academic leaders will have a positive effect on other young women. Essentially, the presence of women in leadership roles in higher education contributes to the positive and unique experiences which they will not have under gender-homogenous leadership (Awang-Hashim, Noman& Kaur, 2017). According to the White House Project (2009, p.4), women leaders are important because they can serve as “powerful role models and mentors to younger women starting out on the path to leadership themselves.”

Worldwide, women in leadership positions within higher education institutions have been instrumental in ensuring sustainability and economic growth by contributing from a different perspective. On the under-representation of women in leadership positions in higher education, Morely (2013) states that there is a business case resulting from the under-representation of women in leadership positions (skills wastage), a social justice case (removing exclusionary structures), processes and practices, and cognitive errors case (gender bias in knowledge, technology, and innovation for investigating and overturning this state of affairs). To stress the importance of women in leadership, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), in their book titled *Women and educational leadership* (2011), remarked that female leaders in higher education institutions tend to bring an instructional focus to leadership by bringing the spiritual dimension to their work and can provide a diverse perspective on a variety of societal and educational problems. Furthermore, through their participation in

leadership positions, women can become agents of change in fighting the gender disparity battle around the world (Klenke, 2017). Therefore, understanding women's experiences with glass ceilings in their struggle to get into top management positions in South African universities is an important matter.

3.9 Legislation for Employment Equity at the Global Level

In order to improve the chances of women, special laws had to be formulated and implemented to bring them at par with their male counterparts with regard to employment opportunities (Burton & Weiner, 2016). Legislations and statutes that are meant to foster equality between men and women were championed by liberal feminists who argued that men and women were the same (Tong, 2009). They further argued that equality of opportunities between men and women could be achieved by removing the customary and legal constraints that hinder women from success. The removal of customary and legal constraints also means the enactment of other laws and statutes that promote the progression of women in the workplace (Grant, 2013). As a result, several laws, statutes and conventions were introduced locally and globally to improve the position of women.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (United Nations, 1948), marked the dawn of a wave of pro-women legislation across the world. Article 2 in the same document also stresses that a person should not be discriminated against for his or her race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (The United Nations, 1948). Therefore, gender equality is a human right that no one can take from other people.

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, a number of regulatory and statutory directives have been instituted to address gender imbalances and inequalities, more specifically in the workplace (Gloppen, 2019). The journey to address the gender inequalities in South Africa began with the supreme law of the country, which is the Constitution Act 108 of 1996, whose overall purpose is to create and build a society where women and men are equal, regardless of race and other distinctions (Hills, 2015). The issue of gender equality is captured in the South African constitution in section 9(3). It outlines that no person shall be discriminated directly or indirectly on the basis of gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status or any ground or

combination of grounds listed or unlisted in the section. Although the envisaged equality has not been fully realised in all spheres of life in South Africa, it is worth noting that the Constitution of 1996 clearly outlines equality as the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. The adoption of the Constitution was a vital step towards a strategy to address historical legacies of inequalities between men and women in South Africa (Scribner & Lambert, 2010). Cold-Ravnkilde (2019) holds that the introduction of the South African constitution of 1996 came with various cultural, social rights and individual rights and established a commitment to overcome historical inequalities while at the same time recognising diversity in the country.

3.9.1 Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998 is another significant legislation that was enacted to address all forms of discrimination in the workplace. The legislation was formulated after the realisation that due to the discriminatory apartheid regime, there were disparities in income, employment, occupation and income within the South African labour market (RSA Employment Equity Act, 1998). The identified disparities posed disadvantages for certain categories of people that cannot be corrected simply by removing discriminative laws; therefore, this Act was adopted to increase equal opportunities in the workplace with the purpose to do away with unfair discrimination. In addition, the Act requires companies to be socially and morally mindful of their employees and react to their legitimate rights and claims according to ethical standards of fairness and justice (RSA Employment Equity Act, 1998).

A way to ensure this law bears fruit is to implement affirmative action measures to address employment disadvantages experienced by previously designated groups such as women, blacks, and people with disabilities (Burger, Jafta & von Fintel, 2016). Affirmative action ensures equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace (Thaver, 2017). This study focuses on the representation of women in top management positions within South African universities. In light of this, organisations will expect positive employment equity measures by training, developing and retaining people from designated groups, and through these measures, create equal employment opportunities, especially for the previously disadvantaged groups (Burger, Jafta & von Fintel, 2016).

Jain, Sloane and Horwitz (2015) note that affirmative action is the purposeful and planned placement or development of competent or potentially competent persons. They suggest affirmative action requires proper planning to ensure that appointment is made on a competency basis, reflecting the country's demographics. McGregor (2006, p. 387) observes that the purpose of affirmative action is to ensure the achievement of substantive equity through the long-term goal of reducing inequality. It has been suggested that the promise of the equal-opportunity approach is a legal right afforded to all South Africans, especially women who were part of the disadvantaged group. The right to equal opportunity should be woven into every organisation's strategic planning to offer persons from disadvantaged groups the opportunity to equal employment (Sinden, 2017). Organisations should institute this legislation as a supportive strategy for the advancement of employment equity objectives with the vision of transforming the work environment, ensuring that persons from designated groups such as women maximise their full potential (McGregor, 2006).

3.9.2 The Commission on Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996

Realising that women were a significantly disadvantaged group, the government of South Africa sought to establish a commission that was specifically meant to deal with gender equality issues (RSA Commission on Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996, 1996). To that effect, the Commission on Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996 was enacted in 1996. According to Hills (2015), the Commission on Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996 is an important law that was mainly adopted to evaluate and monitor the practices and policies of all government institutions, at all levels with the sole goal of promoting gender equality and making recommendations to the country's lawmakers (parliament) where necessary. Additionally, the Commission on Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996 was enacted to perform functions such as developing, conducting and managing educational programmes meant to spearhead the public's understanding of issues related to the promotion of gender equality in South Africa (RSA Commission on Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996, 1996).

3.9.3 The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act no. 4 of 2000

Another law that was passed to promote gender equality in South Africa is the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act no 4 of 2000.

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act no 4 of 2000 was formulated to prohibit or prevent unfair discrimination (Kok, 2017). This Act gives effect to the fundamental principles of the Republic of South Africa's Constitution; and promotes the essential values of non-sexism and non-racialism. The main purpose of the Act was to educate the public and raise awareness about the mean of substantive equality. This includes developing and implementing measures to advance and protect people who are disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. Aply put, it emphasises redressing past discriminative practices that affected groups like women, the disabled and the black majority (RSA Constitution, 1996).

3.9.4 National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2000

The National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality of 2000 is enough proof to show that the post-apartheid dispensation acknowledges the important role that women can play in the economy (Sinden, 2017). As a result, there has been a commitment from the democratic South African administration to end gender discrimination and improve women's status in the workforce by introducing this framework. The National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2000 was specifically enacted to guide the process of developing policies, laws, procedures and practices to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres and structures of government, the workplace, community and family (RSA, South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2000).

The framework also proposes that women empowerment and gender equality should be put at the core of the government's agenda. This means that gender equality needs to be the focus of transformation processes within all the structures, institutions, procedures, practices and programmes of the government, its agencies and parastatals, civil society and the private sector (RSA, South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2000). Ruppel (2008, p. 21) agrees with this statement, and he posits that "the overarching goal of this framework is to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of both female and male persons, and in this respect, the policy framework provides mechanisms and guidelines for all sectors and other stakeholders for planning,

implementing and monitoring gender equality strategies and programmes in order to ensure that these would facilitate gender equality and women's empowerment”.

3.9.5 Gender Policy Framework for Local Government (2007)

The Gender Policy Framework for Local Government of 2007 came about after the realisation by the Department of Provincial and Local Government that there was low participation and underrepresentation of women in the local government sector. The main purpose of the framework is to provide support and guidance to local governments on issues related to the gender mainstreaming of women empowerment (Hicks, 2011). This policy framework outlines a comprehensive institutional arrangement to address and implement gender mainstreaming, and it recommends a women's caucus to act as an empowering forum for women councillors as well as a gender equality committee at the council level to provide political oversight to municipal gender mainstreaming processes. Additionally, the framework provides a clear and concrete guide on how and when councils should integrate gender in their internal functions and procedures to establish an enabling environment for women to flourish in all municipalities (Sinden, 2017).

This means that every strategy or policy developed by South African local municipality should ensure that gender equality and employment opportunities for women are promoted. In addition, it also means that municipal strategies are formulated in a way that addresses gender mainstreaming in their practices and policies (Gender Policy Framework for Local Government, 2007). Sinden 2017 states that the envisaged and ultimate goal of the Gender Policy Framework for Local Government is to help municipalities deliver their mandate in a way that ensures women are uplifted and do not stay unequal to their male counterparts in the workplace. This framework also advocates for the establishment of institutional arrangements in particular gender focal points in municipalities; it requires that these processes be budgeted for with a clear stipulation of performance targets. Furthermore, the framework provides fair and equitable selection and recruitment, career patching and the overall improvement of working conditions for women in municipalities.

3.9.6 The Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013

The Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill was adopted in 2013 to promote equality in participation and representation at all levels. The bill aimed to prevent and

criminalise all forms of unfair discrimination against women and provides punishment for not observing the dictates of the law (RSA, The Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013). However, this bill was scrapped, as it was viewed as a duplication of other relevant legislation (Hartley, 2014).

3.10 International Statutes

Globally, various statutes, conventions and international laws are put in place to promote gender equality and end all forms of discrimination against women. At the national level, South Africa subscribes to the global framework for gender equality and is presented by a number of international, regional and sub-regional instruments. Some of the frameworks include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979; Beijing Platform for Action (1995); South African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol (2008); The United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

3.10.1 The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 is considered the most important framework in the fight to achieve and attain gender equality across the world. At this convention, women's right to be free from discrimination was declared, and the primary principles to protect this right were set (Cook & Cusack, 2018). The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women establishes an agenda for national action to end discrimination. It provides the basis for achieving equality between men and women by ensuring women's equal access to and equal opportunities in political and public life and education, health, and employment (United Nations, 1979).

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is credited to the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was established in 1946 to monitor the promotion of women's rights. The convention is also rooted in the key objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reiterates the importance of fundamental human rights, the dignity of all human beings

and equal rights for men and women (Ntlama, 2010). Up to today, the convention has been ratified by 180 states, making it one of the most ratified international treaties.

3.10.2 Beijing Platform for Action (1995)

After the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action followed in 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a significant event towards ending historical discrimination against women and gender equality because it generated global commitments to advance a wider range of women's rights (Meyer, 2018). The Beijing Platform for Action affirmed the signatory nation's commitment to the inalienable rights of women and girls, their empowerment and equal participation in all spheres of life, including in the economic domain (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995). It recognised women's role in the world's economic affairs and individual countries as a critical area of concern. In addition, it underscored the need to give attention to the need to promote and facilitate women's equal access to employment and resources and the harmonisation of work and family responsibilities for women and men (United Nations, 2015). As part of its efforts to promote gender equality, South Africa ratified the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, adopting the strategy as a way to promote gender equality in its country (Meyer, 2018).

3.10.3 South African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol (2008)

South Africa as a member of the SADC, is bound by the South African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol which was adopted in 2008. The SADC Gender and Development Protocol compels member states to speed up efforts and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in the region (South African Development Community, 2008). The protocol targets 50 per cent parity between men and women in all areas of decision-making by 2020, with an incremental approach adopted by each country. To accelerate gender equality, member states committed to take measures aimed at improving women's participation in decision-making (South African Development Community, 2008). Member states also agreed to an elaborate multi-faceted approach to capacity building that empowered women and engaged men.

3.10.4 The United Nations Millennium Development Goals

Another instrument South Africa has agreed to is the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. These goals sought to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014, with goal three especially tracking key elements and indicators of women's social, economic and political participation, guiding the building of gender-equitable societies (United Nations, 2009). The centrality of gender equality and women empowerment in the Millennium Development Goals also emanates from the fact that women constitute approximately half of humanity, yet their potential is underutilised, their aspirations undermined, and their rights to access opportunities marginalised (United Nations, 2009). Ntlama (2010) posits that the protection of human rights requires countries such as South Africa (who have become international role models) to ensure other states adhere to the prescripts of the international community. The adherence to international norms is essential for the actual enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the conventions.

3.10.5 The Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are an extension of the MDGs, and just like the MDGs, the SDGs also seek to achieve gender equality between men and women by 2030 (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). There are 17 SDGs, and relevant to this study is goal number five, which explicitly states that even though there is progress concerning the plight of women across the world, there are still gross inequalities and discrimination against women. The goal also stresses the need to achieve gender parity and end all discrimination against women in 2030 (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). As a United Nations member, South Africa has agreed to work on these goals and has incorporated them in the Vision 2030 national development project.

Given the above, it can be seen that South Africa has created a platform for gender equality and equal employment opportunities in the workplace through the implementation of various legislative frameworks. Although it is important that the necessary legislative frameworks are in place to ensure gender equality and the equal employment of women, having documents in place will not change women's positions, it is only the practical implementation thereof that will do so. Formulation and implementation of adequate policies should be informed by research on women's experiences and the challenges they encounter in trying to achieve parity with their male counterparts in the workplace. Hence, this study explores the glass ceilings faced by women in higher education based on the narration of their lived experiences.

3.11 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter discussed the literature related to the current study. The content used in the discussions were obtained from sources such as journals, reports, textbooks, conference papers and other credible sources acceptable in the academic field. The chapter gave a brief overview of the situation of women in management. In addition, the chapter also discussed the concept of the glass ceiling and how it impacts women's desire to get into management positions. The literature reviewed indicates that glass ceilings are the reason why women do not go further in their careers despite laws that promote gender equality in the workplace. The chapter also discussed glass ceilings in higher education based on related studies conducted within and beyond South Africa. Furthermore, the chapter discussed barriers that women encounter in their efforts to occupy top management positions and interventions that can be made to break glass ceilings. Lastly, the study discussed the laws, statutes and frameworks that promote gender equality.



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CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the research process, the research site, research paradigm and research design that were used in collecting and analysing primary data in this study. Research methodology is a key factor that is important in achieving the objectives of a study and answering research questions. Specifically, the chapter discusses the research design employed in conducting the study, the research philosophy informing the research methodology, sampling method used in selecting research participants, data collection method, data analysis and ethical considerations observed in the study.

4.2 Research Paradigms

A research paradigm is a broad perspective that explains the patterns of beliefs and practices that standardise inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is fulfilled (Wiid&Diggins, 2015). The main research paradigms which inform research studies are the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. The interpretivist philosophy argues that reality is best understood by focusing on how individuals construct, modify and interpret the world (Allmer, 2012). Conversely, positivism focuses on the belief that reality is best understood through universally accepted concepts and laws. In addition, Dascombe (2010) posited that positivists believe in the pursuit of knowledge through experience and the belief that observation and measurement are at the centre of research endeavours. The enquiry seeks to discover the experiences of women in their leadership positions in South African universities; therefore, the enquiry will be grounded in interpretive research philosophy. These two main paradigms, namely the interpretivist paradigm and positivist paradigm, which lay down the basis of a research design, are further explained below.

4.2.1 The positivist paradigm

The positivist research paradigm of understanding reality is centred on the philosophical concepts put forward by Auguste Comte, a French philosopher, who underscored the

importance of reason and observations as a way to understand human behaviour and actions (Kaboub, 2008). Over the past years, positivist inclined thinkers have adopted his scientific methods to create and generate knowledge. Dawson (2014) corroborated the same research method when they postulated that positivism accepts that social phenomena are best investigated through natural sciences.

Aliyu, Bello, Kasim & Martin (2014) described the positivist paradigm as a “research strategy and approach that is rooted in the ontological principle and doctrine which says that truth and reality is free and independent of the viewer and observer”. Many intellectuals and researchers who are into this research philosophy and investigation agree with the above definition (Denscombe, 2010). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) advance that positivism is a concept that excludes everything from consideration save for natural phenomena together with their interrelationships. At the centre of positivism is the principle of verifiability, which outlines that something is only meaningful when it is measurable and observable by human senses.

Denscombe (2010) stated that the positivist paradigm consists of beliefs based on trends (patterns), methods, generalisations, cause-effect issues, and relevant procedures to the social sciences. This interpretation of positivism sustains that humans, as the object of social science, are appropriate for the application of scientific methods (Mouton & Marais, 2003). In that regard, positivism may be interpreted as a strategy to social science research that aims to utilise the natural science research methods as a point of departure on studies of social phenomenon (Denscombe, 2010).

Accordingly, the positivist research paradigm's epistemological position is best derived from sense experiences and demonstrable, objective facts. In addition, in the positivist paradigm, it is accepted that facts and values are very distinct, thus making it possible to conduct an objective and value-free inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2020). This means that the researcher should distance him or herself from any impact on their research findings. In addition, positivism epistemology holds the position that meaning and meaningful realities already reside in objects awaiting discovery, and they exist apart from any kind of people's consciousness (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, this view believes that when we recognise objects around us, we simply discover meanings that have been lying in them all along.

Correspondingly, the ontological position of the positivist paradigm is that reality can be observed and measured directly and accurately. In the same way, the only material or physical world is considered 'real' (Dufresne, Leonard & Gerace, 2014). The ontological position that life should be defined in measurable terms rather than inner experiences and that notions of choice, freedom, individuality and moral responsibility should be excluded made positivism an inappropriate paradigm for this study which seeks to understand the lived experiences of women in management positions.

Muijs (2011) noted that a positivistic inquirer/researcher prefers to work with measurable and observable social reality because it produces generalisable findings like those produced by a natural scientist. Babbie & Mouton (2008) alludes that positivism accepts an objective reality beyond personal experiences and has its cause-effect relationship.

Furthermore, a positivist view sustains that it is possible to assume a detached, distant, non-interactive and neutral position in social science inquiry (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim & Martin, 2014). Such a position allows a researcher to be an objective analyst who makes detached interpretations of data that would have been collected. As a result, positivists are biased towards analytical interpretations, quantitative and quantifiable data.

The positivist paradigm rejects the view that invisible things such as people's attitudes and thoughts can be accepted as valid knowledge or evidence (Babbie, 2010). However, positivists accept that scientific and objective knowledge can only be realised through building a base of verified facts. Such facts are usually referred to as laws relevant to a particular field. Denscombe (2014) alludes to the scientific model viewed by positivists' researchers as providing hypotheses that are empirically tested. Logically, this encompasses the formulation of a particular theory to describe the laws in a specific field. Consequently, hypotheses are thus formulated to allow research to expose the hypotheses to empirical examination before accepting or rejecting the proposed hypotheses.

Positivists put more emphasis on reliability as the most characteristic of scientific methods of research (Hasan, 2016). It is argued that the research methods used in any piece of research should enable repetition by other researchers in order to verify and check its scientific accuracy (Feinberg, Kinear & Taylor, 2013). In addition, positivists regard research methods that produce quantitative data as more reliable than other methods because they are usually organised in standardised and systematic ways (Smith & Albaum, 2012). This philosophical

paradigm was not considered in this study because it is not suitable for investigating experiences. People's experiences are subjective and can therefore not be explored based on positivist inclined methodologies. This study focuses on exploring the lived experiences of women holding senior positions within South African universities. The adequate philosophy to inform this study would be the one that accommodates the gathering of qualitative data such as experiences. For this study, the appropriate philosophy would be the interpretivist research paradigm.

4.2.2 Interpretivist paradigm

According to Flick (2011), the interpretivist paradigm, also referred to as the phenomenological approach, is a research approach that seeks to understand human beings and their behaviours. This paradigm can be linked to postulations made by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833) and Max Webber (1864-1920). Dilthey pointed out that there are two primary but different types of sciences: human and natural sciences. Natural sciences are centred on abstract explanation, whilst human sciences are based on an understanding of human beings and their experiences (Neuman, Baron, Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011). As noted by Babbie and Mouton (2008), all humans are constantly trying to understand their worlds. As a result, it is accepted that human beings incessantly create, interpret, give meaning and rationalise their daily actions and experiences as well as behaviours (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). This notion resonates with feminist standpoint theorists who emphasise the importance of knowing reality through the experiences of disadvantaged women.

The interpretivist research paradigm aims at gaining insights and interpreting daily events, social structures, experiences and values that human beings attach to such phenomena (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). This makes it an appropriate philosophy to ground this research because its focus is to understand women's leadership experiences in management positions in the South African higher education sector. Interpretivists are of the view that social reality is nuanced and subjective since it is moulded by perceptions of research participants together with the aims and values of the research (Robson & McCartan, 2016). To that end, an interpretivist researcher/inquirer advances that there is no universal truth. This enables the research to accept various truths as put forward by women who share their lived experiences of the studied phenomenon. Furthermore, the interpretivist researcher comprehends, understands and interprets human action from his or her own point of reference and orientation (Flick, 2011)

Interpretivists accept that the subject matter of social science differs fundamentally from that of natural sciences (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Subsequently, a different research methodology is needed to reach an interpretive explanation and understanding that would allow research to appreciate the subjective means of social actions (Packard, 2017). The methods commonly used by interpretivists include exploratory analysis, qualitative analysis, and field experiments (Katz, 2015).

The interpretivist paradigm is also a paradigm whose main objective is to identify and understand a person's social behaviour (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The interpretivist paradigm accepts that facts and values are not distinct, and findings are inevitably influenced by the researchers' perspective and values, therefore making it impossible to conduct objective research. However, he can declare and be transparent about his or her assumptions (Scotland, 2012). It should be noted that the methods of natural science are not appropriate because the social world is not governed by law-like regularities but is mediated through meaning and human agency; consequently, the social researcher is concerned to explore and understand the social world using both the participants and researchers understanding (McNeill & Chapman, 2005). It, therefore, means that the researcher and the social world impact each other. Thus, in phenomenological research, research participants are sometimes referred to as co-researchers as they help each other find meaning in the studied phenomena (Olivier, 2017).

This research is carried out with an ontological view which assumes that the phenomenon under investigation consists of multiple realities and there is no absolute truth to it. Furthermore, the researcher accepts that various ways in which human beings respond to the social environment are based on their perceptions and experiences. These assumptions helped shape the research in a way that enables the researcher to effectively explore the leadership experiences of women in senior management positions in South African universities.

More specifically, the assumption of a relativist ontology means that the researcher believes the phenomenon studied have multiple realities which can be explored and meaning construed through interactions between the researcher and participants (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2014). This tilts the research towards a naturalist methodology where data is collected through in-depth interviews.

As the interpretivist research paradigm stresses, emphasis should be placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2014). This way of viewing knowledge is influenced by the epistemology to which a researcher subscribes. This study follows the subjectivist epistemology assumption, which means that the researcher makes meaning of their data through their interpretation and cognitive processing of data informed by their interactions with participants (Alise & Teddlie, 2010).

Hence this involves collecting data through flexible tools that allow for flexible and in-depth interactions with research participants in order to get a sense of the phenomenon under investigation. In the subjectivist epistemology, it is accepted that the researcher-respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and interdependent; reality is multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable; the values of the researcher, respondents, research site, and underlying theory undergird all aspects of the research, and that, the research product is context-specific (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). These assumptions helped the researcher employ strategies and methodology appropriate and adequate to carry out the current study. These strategies include in-depth interviews and qualitative data analysis techniques.

Likewise, the researcher will interview each of the selected participants to give their views on the lived leadership experiences in their management positions in South African universities. This also in line with the interpretivist view that realities are multiple and are socially constructed (Lancaster, 2011). Owing to the above justifications and reasons, it, therefore, means that, if we want to explain social actions, we have to understand them in the way that the participants do. This is mainly achieved through the gathering of qualitative data. Qualitative data concentrates on presenting the quality of life described rather than presenting statistics (Salkind, 2010). Qualitative data is mostly in the form of words, and data is collected from a small sample. Based on all the above, the research is grounded in the interpretive research paradigm.

4.3 Research Design

Research designs refer to strategies used by the researcher to consistently integrate different elements of research such that the research problem and research question is adequately addressed (Proctor & Brownson, 2012). Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) described a research design as the foundation and framework of a study and helped find answers to the

proposed research questions. A research design determines the data collection methods. Various research designs include causal descriptive, exploratory and phenomenological design (Creswell, 2014). The research design serves as a master plan of the methods used to collect and analyse data. In the plan, the researcher must consider the data-collection approach and the sampling method (Smith &Albaum, 2012). There are various forms of research design, namely, causal design, exploratory design, descriptive design and phenomenology research design. In this study, the phenomenology research design was adopted.

4.3.1 Causal design

A causal research design is more concerned with determining if there is a causal relationship between variables; that is, its purpose is to determine if a change in one variable leads to a change in the other variable (Cahnmann-Taylor &Siegesmund, 2017). In causal research, the research is conducted to reveal the cause and effect between variables or occurrences (Wiid&Digginnes, 2015). Under causal research, the intention is to try to explain certain phenomena in terms of particular causes. Examples of causal research techniques are laboratory and field experiments (Cahnmann-Taylor &Siegesmund, 2017).

4.3.2 Exploratory design

Exploratory research is designed to provide clarity and an understanding of a particular problem (Creswell, 2014). It is normally used when little or nothing is known about a particular concept or field of study or when the research problem is vague, and it is used to determine whether the known information is actually correct (Wiid&Digginnes, 2015). In other words, exploratory research can be explained as a design used to gain insight into ideas in a particular field of study which makes use of informal and flexible research techniques; for example, qualitative research methods usually use exploratory designs (Quinlan, Babin, Griffin &Zikmund, 2011).

4.3.3 Descriptive design

Descriptive research studies use statistical techniques to discover patterns. This research design is essential when information on a particular aspect is vague (Feinberg, Kinear& Tailor, 2013). It describes opportunities and threats. The main emphasis of this research design is on the exhaustive description of specific situations, groups, tribes, subcultures and interactions (Salkind, 2010). There are two methods of descriptive research, which are

classified as the longitudinal and cross-sectional methods. A longitudinal study is when data is collected for the same study repeatedly over a certain period to compare trends, whilst the cross-sectional involves people gathering data from a sample just once and is generally performed by way of surveys (Wiid&Diggines, 2013).

4.3.4 Phenomenological Research Design

Since this study aims to unearth female faculty deans' leadership experiences in South African universities, the study engaged phenomenology but used semi-structured interviews as its research technique.

Phenomenology, according to Cohen et al. (2018), aims to describe, explain and interpret a phenomenon, situation or experience by identifying the meaning of these as understood by the participants (Brinkmann&Kvale, 2015; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016), often as individuals as well as at a group level by allowing the essence to emerge (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Phenomenological research is about producing thick descriptions of people's perspectives and analysing people's perceptions (Delport, Fouche & Schurink, 2018), stories, beliefs and memories and their lived experiences (Gray, 2018) within their natural settings (Dane, 2018). Phenomenology is often based upon relatively small case studies, emphasises inductive logic, seeks the opinions and subjective accounts and interpretations of participants, relies on qualitative analysis of data and is not so much concerned with generalisations to larger populations but with contextual description and analysis (Denscombe, 2014; Gray, 2018).

According to Gray (2018), the German philosopher Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), who argued that social reality has a specific meaning and relevant structure for the people living in it, thinking about it, and experiencing it, was the first person to apply phenomenological ideas to the study of social science. Phenomenological ideas have since been widely used in the field. Furthermore, these thought structures (objects) are what motivate their behaviour, which is why it is determined by these thought structures. It also follows that the thought objects constructed by researchers who are attempting to grasp reality have to be founded upon the thought objects of ordinary men and women living their day-to-day lives in the social world. This is because it is logically necessary. Therefore, in order to interpret and comprehend the actions that people take, it is essential for researchers to gain access to the common-sense thinking that people have. In other words, the goal of phenomenology is to gain an

understanding of the world from the perspective of the participant. This is only possible if the researcher "brackets out" their own preconceptions (Gray, 2018) and goes to great lengths to avoid introducing their own experiences into the experiences of the participants. This is the only way to accomplish this goal (Dane, 2018).

By engaging phenomenology, the study holds that any attempt to understand social reality has to be grounded first hand (Delpont, Fouche & Schurink, 2018) people's experiences of that social reality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The researcher chose phenomenology because it is of its social and cultural situatedness of actions and interactions together with participants' interpretations of a situation (Denscombe, 2014), meaning that the interest is in understanding a social phenomenon from actors' own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects "with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 30).

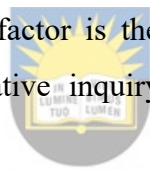
As a result of the fact that the study included a large number of participants, each of them provided their own genuine contribution to the overall meaning and interpretation; consequently, there were numerous realities and accounts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Therefore, the researcher had to put any initial concepts or suppositions to the side and focus on trying to gain an understanding of how everyday events and so-called "common sense" knowledge were, how they were perceived and maintained by the participants, and what the attitudes of the participants were towards them (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the context of this endeavour, the importance of individuals' fully described experiences, perceptions, interpretations, attitudes, beliefs, values, and feelings, as well as the meaning of their experiences, was emphasised (Denscombe, 2014). In its entirety, the depiction of lived experiences through the eyes of participants resulted in detailed description and fidelity to the initial experience, while categorization, abstraction, overinterpretation, quantification, and even theorization were eliminated (Denscombe, 2014).

Phenomenology insists that we must lay aside our prevailing understanding of phenomena and re-visit our immediate experience of them in order that new meanings may emerge (Gray, 2018). The questions are generally of this form "What is it like to be you?" (Dane, 2018). Current understandings by the researcher, therefore, had to be 'bracketed' (Dane, 2018; Gray, 2018) to the best of his ability to allow phenomena to 'speak for themselves', unadulterated by researchers' pre-conceptions (Denscombe, 2014; Gaudet & Robert, 2018; Gray, 2018). The researcher had to strive to set aside any of her values, beliefs, taken for

granted conceptual frameworks, pre-dispositions and everyday background to see the experiences for what it was in the eyes of the participants, free from the researcher's pre-conceptions, in other words, to act as a 'stranger' (Denscombe, 2014). The cost of bracketing one's experiences and voices allowed the researcher to be open enough to fully hear and see the participants' lived experiences (Gaudet & Robert, 2018).

4.3.4.1 Strength and weaknesses of using the phenomenological research design

Phenomenological design in qualitative research has various strengths. A notable strength of the design is that it enables the researcher to use her interest and personal motivation to drive the study (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). According to Cresswell and Poth (2017), the other strength of the phenomenological research design lies in how the data is collected. Through subjective, direct responses, the researcher can gain first-hand knowledge about the participants' experience through broad and open-ended inquiry (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). In addition, revisions can be made along the way as new experiences emerge, giving the researcher the ability to construct themes and patterns that participants can review (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Overall, the human factor is the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of phenomenological qualitative inquiry and analysis (a scientific two-edged sword) (Silverman, 2016).



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Although phenomenological studies provide compelling research data, they have their own limitations. The key limitation of the methodology is mostly biased in the research design resulting from the active role of the researcher in the data collection process (Janesick, 2011). As a result, it is cautioned that a researcher's role must include integrating biases, beliefs, and values upfront in the study (Janesick, 2011). Secondly, the design involves a process that can be labour intensive and time-consuming (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). The copious amount of data involved that has to be analysed can be a disadvantage. Furthermore, data is collected from this design and cannot be generalised to the entire population from which the sample is selected. Lastly, some of the phenomenological designs' weaknesses are linked to issues of reliability and credibility. To that end, Cresswell and Poth (2017) argue that there are no straightforward tests that can be applied to confirm reliability and validity. Resultantly, researchers are encouraged to do their best during the interviewing process to present the data and communicate what the data reveal, given the purpose of the study (Silverman, 2016).

4.4 Research Approach

There are three methods of conducting research, and researchers can pick one of these approaches based on the kind of data they want to collect and the goals they want to accomplish with their work (Salkind, 2010). A qualitative research approach, a quantitative research approach, and a mixed method approach, which is a combination of the qualitative and quantitative research approaches, are the three types of research approaches. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research are compared and contrasted for the purpose of this investigation. Quantitative research is helpful and appropriate when the research aims to collect numerical data from a larger sample of respondents, as this type of research requires a larger sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2017). On the other hand, qualitative research is more useful and appropriate when the researcher's intention is to harness and collect non-numerical data from a small sample of participants. This is because qualitative research focuses on the participants' experiences rather than the participants' numerical data (Creswell, 2014). The use of qualitative research is the method that should be pursued if one wishes to learn about the actual experiences that women in the South African tertiary education sector have had. Below, a discussion of the two different approaches is provided, followed by an explanation of why one of the approaches was chosen.

4.4.1 Quantitative research approach

Quantitative research involves asking people for their opinions in a structured way so as to produce hard facts and statistics about a phenomenon (Willis, 2014). Quantitative research is characterised by heavy reliance on a collection of numerical data and subsequent statistical analysis. According to Proctor (2012), quantitative research generally involves the collection of primary data from large numbers of individuals, frequently, with the intention of projecting the results to a wider population. It relies heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis. The quantitative research approach is rooted in the positivist research philosophy, which maintains that reality is objective (Wilson, 2010). It is useful in determining the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Notable advantages of the quantitative research approach are that it is free from researcher bias and its results are generalisable to the entire population. It further minimises the chances of subjective conclusions (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2011).

Although the quantitative research approach has been widely used in social science research, its use has of late been questioned. The quantitative approach has not been selected for this present study because it ignores the common meanings of social phenomena (Bryman, 2012). This approach is also criticised for its inability to establish underlying reasons and meanings. Lastly, this approach ignores the perspectives and experiences because it lacks a direct link between investigators and participants when gathering data (Bryman, 2015). This is, therefore, in contradiction with the objective of the current study, which is to discover the experiences of women in management positions at the university level.

4.4.2 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research refers to inductive, holistic, emic, subjective and process-oriented methods used to understand, interpret, describe and develop a theory on a phenomenon or setting. It is a systematic, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Brannen, 2017). Qualitative research is mostly associated with words, language and experiences rather than measurements, statistics and numerical figures. This makes it an appropriate research approach for the current study.

Using the qualitative research approach involves adapting to a person-centred yet holistic perspective to understand humans' lived experiences without being limited to specific concepts (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The original context of the experience is unique, rich knowledge and insight that can be generated in-depth to present a lively picture of the participants' reality and social context. These events and circumstances are important to the researcher. Each of the participants in this study was allowed to share their experiences as they have lived and encountered them. Unlike the quantitative research approach, the qualitative research approach involves using unstructured and informal research instruments (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The collection of data in the qualitative research approach is systematic and narrative data, which is subjective, is analysed in an intuitive and organised manner to locate significance and key characteristics of participants' lived experiences (Rubbin&Babbie, 2010).

Qualitative research is concerned with the emic perspective to explore the ideas and perceptions of the participants (Brannen, 2017). It develops an understanding of people's views about their lives and the lives of others. It also helps the researcher to generate an in-depth account that will present a lively picture of the research participants' reality

(Rubbin&Babbie, 2010). In qualitative research, the researcher is required to be a good listener, non-judgemental, friendly, honest and flexible.

The researcher examines the experience from the participant's point of view in order to interpret their words. The researcher, therefore, becomes involved and immersed in the phenomenon to become familiar with it (Sakind, 2010). This researcher will take an active role in collecting data to gain more insights into the experiences of women in management positions within South African universities. This researcher's immersion helps to provide dense descriptions from the narrative data gathered from the participants' interpretation and correct portrayal of their lived experiences and to generate empathetic and experiential understanding (Schwandt, 2014). However, immersion cannot be obtained without a researcher-participant trusting relationship. As such, this research will build trust by assuring participants that this research is for academic purposes, and contributions to this study will be kept in strict confidence.

Sakind (2010) indicates that the qualitative research approach employs strategies of investigations such as ethnographies, phenomenologists and grounded theory studies. This is because the complexity of human behaviour cannot be quantified numerically (Katz, 2015).

The qualitative research approach has been criticised for its limitations, including being prone to researcher bias and its generalisability to the larger population owing to small samples from which data is collected (Sakind, 2010). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research puts more focus on giving a complete detailed description of the studied phenomenon. However, its shortcoming is that there is no effort to assign frequencies to the linguistic features which are identified in the data, and rare phenomena receive (or should receive) the same amount of attention as more frequent phenomena, which can be a bit misleading (Schwandt, 2014).

Lastly, qualitative data has a low degree of accuracy. This is because the results are not statistically tested to establish their statistical significance. As a result of this disadvantage, findings from qualitative research cannot be inferred to the entire target population.

Despite these weaknesses, qualitative research is still considered a valuable approach to understanding people's lived experiences (Katz, 2015). This is because the qualitative research approach allows researchers to draw meaning from the processing of data through participants' descriptions and the researcher's creative abstractions to unearth the meaning of

human experiences (leadership experiences of female Faculty Deans in South African universities). Consequently, this research followed a qualitative research approach.

4.5 Research Process

Research processes are concerned with the steps that are taken in conducting a research study. This study is guided by the research process as put forward by Maholtra (2012). According to Malhotra (2012) and Descombe (2014), a research process should encompass the following processes: (a) identifying and formulating the research problem, (b) formulation of research objectives and questions, (c) research paradigm and design, (d) identification of research approach (e) data collection methods, (f) research instrument (including the pilot study conducted during the current study to test the instrument and feasibility of this study), (h) population and sampling methods, (i) data collection and (g) data analysis and presentation. The research processes adopted for this study followed the eight steps borrowed from Maholtra (2012), as outlined in Figure 4.1.

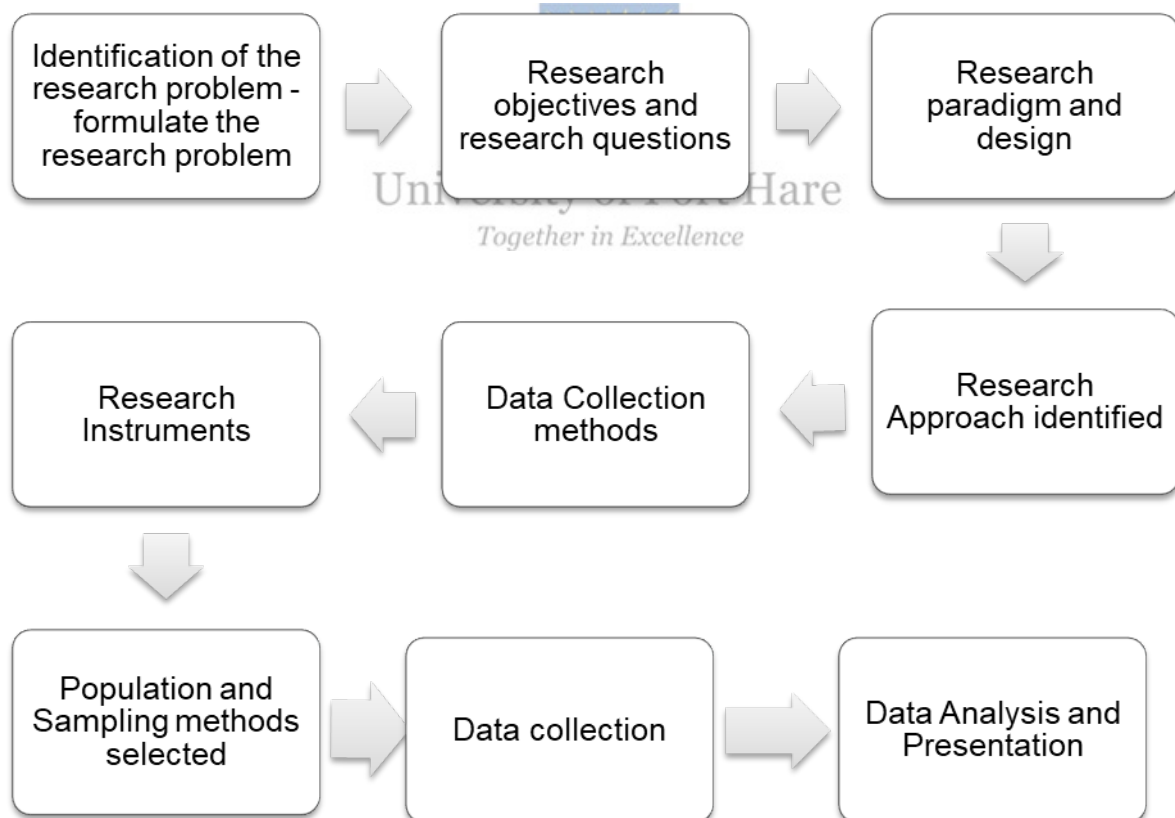


Figure 4.1 Research Process. Source: Maholtra (2012)

4.6 Research Site

This study was carried out in three state universities located in the Eastern Cape Province. The province was formed in 1994 out of the pre-independence Xhosa homelands designed by the apartheid regime, namely Transkei and Ciskei as well as the eastern part of the Cape Province. The province covers an area of 168 966 square kilometres (StatsSA, 2015). The province is dominantly occupied by the Xhosa people, who constitute +/- 80 per cent of the province's total population. Economically the province is one of the poorest and is characterised by low incomes for its occupants (StatsSA, 2015). As a research site for the present study, the relevance of the Eastern Cape is drawn from its efforts to promote women into top leadership positions. For instance, in the Eastern Cape Province, a woman was first voted to be the premier of a province. It is important to determine the extent to which such developments have cascaded down to other sectors such as the tertiary education sector in the province. On the political side, the province seems to have been following the trend, in that two female premiers have led the Eastern Cape Province in the past years (Stats SA, 2015). Qualitative phenomenological research was followed in collecting data from the participants in the locations considered for this research from the site described above.

The Eastern Cape Province





Figure 4.2 Map of the Eastern Cape Province. Source: South African Maps (2017)

The university map below shows the locations of South African universities in every province. In addition, the four universities in the Eastern Cape are also shown on the map.

South Africa's University Map

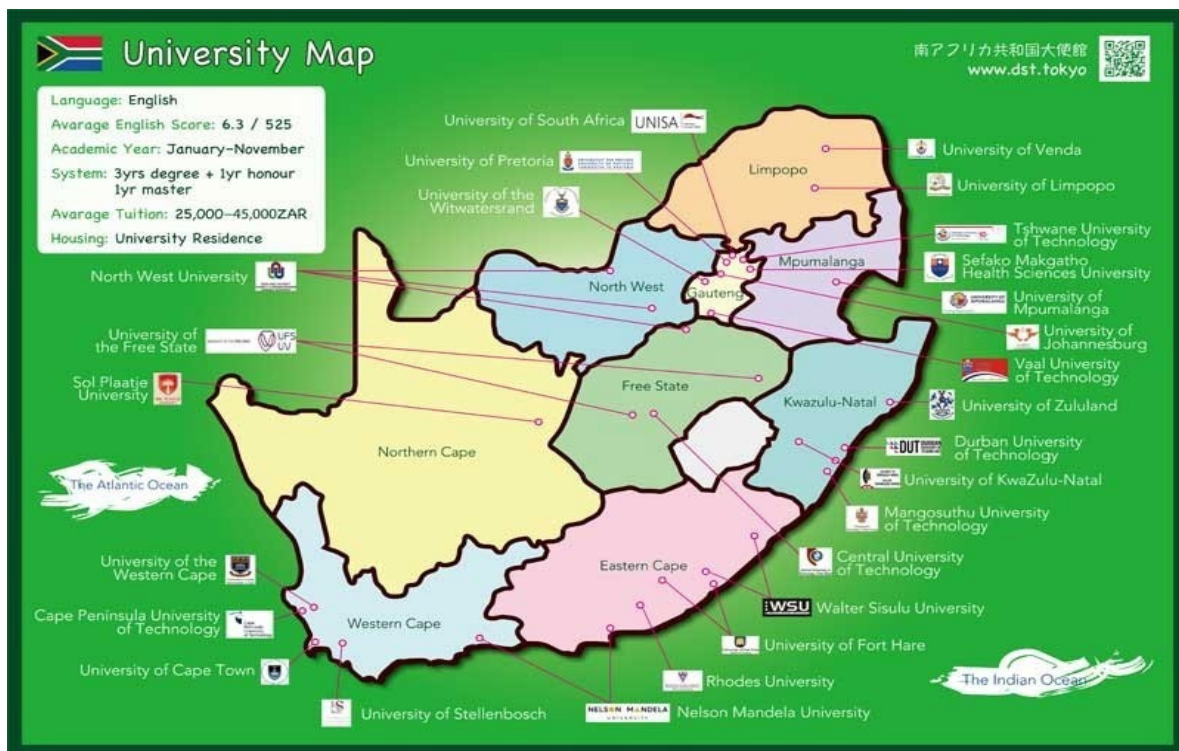


Figure 4.3 South Africa Universitas. Source: Department of Education and Training, 2009

4.7 Research Methodology and Methods

Research methodology is a key component of the research process. It determines how research is carried out from the beginning to the end. Research methodology is defined as how primary data and secondary are obtained, organised and analysed (Berndt & Pertzer, 2011). According to Dawson (2010), methodology means a framework of theories and principles on which methods and procedures are based. Kothari (2011) describes methodology as a coherent group of methods that complement one another and has the ability to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the researcher's purpose. Decisions regarding the appropriate methodology for a particular research study depend on the nature of the research questions. Descombe (2014) posits that a research methodology can be described as a theory of correct scientific research decisions. In this study's context, research methodology refers to methods, procedures, and the research process's logical sequence.

This study's focus is on the description and exploration of the lived experiences of women managers in tertiary education in South Africa. The research attempts to establish how

women view their leadership roles and responsibilities in South African universities. The study aims to answer the main research question through the chosen methodology (qualitative research methodology), which is “Unearthing leadership experiences of women in senior positions within South African tertiary institutions”. At the conclusion of the research, the objectives of the study provided in the following sections below will be achieved.

4.8 Target Population

In research, the target population refers to the theoretically identified total of study objects from which a sample is drawn (Babbie& Mouton, 2001). A slightly different definition of the population is provided by (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls &Ormston, 2013), who posited that a research population refers to a group of individuals with one or two homogeneous characteristics of interest to a researcher. The target population for the proposed study is female faculty deans within South African universities.

4.9 Sampling

Sampling is a process whereby a group of individuals, households or companies are selected from a population to take part in a research whose results maybe generalised to the entire population (Creswell, 2014). Sampling is important in research because it makes it possible for a researcher to study only a portion of the population, which is affordable and time effective because only a portion of the target population is studied (Robson&McCartan,2016). Sampling methods are classified into two broad categories which are probability and non-probability sampling techniques. These are discussed below.

4.9.1 Probability sampling

Probability sampling is a process that gives all the individuals in the population an equal likelihood of being selected (Bryman, 2011). The researcher must guarantee that every individual has an opportunity to be selected, and this is done through randomisation. This method is used to reduce both systematic and sampling bias (Creswell, 2014). When random selection is made accurately, the sample will be representative of the entire population. According to Henry (1990), with probability sampling, each unit in the population has a non-zero chance of being included in the sample (Etikan et al., 2016). Three common types of probability sampling are the simple random sampling, which involves a random method, like computer generation or flipping a coin; the systematic sampling, which involves ordering the

population of interest and choosing subjects at regular intervals; and stratified sampling, which involves drawing a sample from prepared stratum. Probability sampling allows us to estimate the accuracy of the sample (Bryman, 2011). Probability sampling techniques will not be used in this study because they are costly, time-consuming and are suitable for studies involving large samples, whereas a small sample was considered for the study.

4.9.2 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling uses the researcher's individual judgement to define the sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2017). The researcher decides which elements to include in the sample, and random selection techniques are not used. The key to this sampling method is that there is an assumption that the population is evenly distributed within the scope of the study. The study applied a non-probability sampling method. According to Bradley (2011), non-probability methods rely heavily on human judgement. Non-probability sampling implies that each element in the population does not have an equal chance of being selected. Therefore, chance selection procedures are not used to determine the sample (Bryman, 2011). Instead, the researcher decides which elements to include in the sample. The convenience sampling method was used in selecting participants in this study. This sampling method was applied for being the most appropriate, least time-consuming and least expensive for the circumstances, compared to other sampling techniques (Robson, 2011).

There are four sampling methods in non-probability sampling. Namely (1) Judgement sampling, (2) Quota sampling, (3) Snowball sampling and (4) Convenience sampling.

Judgement sampling is a form of sampling where elements are selected based on the researcher's judgement. In contrast, quota sampling refers to sampling conducted by dividing the sample into quotas (age and gender) of which the characteristics of interest represent the population (Malhotra, 2012). Additionally, snowball sampling involves identifying initial participants who will then refer the researcher to other suitable participants within the target population. These non-probability sampling techniques discussed above were not adopted in coming up with a sample for this research. Instead, the convenience sampling method was used in this study.

In convenience sampling, the researcher selects the elements (Malhotra, 2012). Often the respondents selected are those in the right place at the right time when the sample is drawn. Therefore, it becomes convenient for the researcher to use these respondents. In convenience

sampling, the sample is drawn from a segment of the population that is accessible and readily available to the researcher and has a probability of being chosen to respond to a questionnaire.

In addition, the respondents should be currently working in the specified positions of concern within South African universities. In the context of this study, accessibility refers to the geographical proximity of the sample elements (women in management positions) to the researcher. Data was conveniently collected from a sample of six female Faculty Deans from three universities in the Eastern Cape Province. From each of the three universities, two participants were selected to take part in this study. A sample of six participants is adequate for a phenomenological study like the current one. According to Creswell (2014), for phenomenological studies, the study sample should not exceed ten participants.

4.9.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the participants

In conducting this study, an inclusion or eligibility criteria to be considered as a participant was set. To be eligible to participate in this study, participants were required to hold deanship positions in one of the three universities located in the Eastern Cape Province. In addition, the participants should have worked in that position for three years or more.

Reasons for exclusion from participating in this study included not being a female faculty dean in any of the universities considered in the study. Additionally, potential participants were also excluded for not having enough experience in the deanship position (that is, not having experience of more than three years as a dean). Factors such as age and race were not considered as a basis for exclusion or inclusion in this study.

4.10 Personal Negotiation of Access into the Field

Gaining access to the field is considered particularly important for both the qualitative and quantitative research methods (Ngcwangu, 2016). Qualitative research is used to understand people's attitudes, behaviours, experiences, norms, and values. Therefore, for a researcher to gain this rich understanding in their research careers, there is a need to first gain access to the field. One way of gaining access into the field is by personally negotiating to be allowed to carry out a study in a specific research location (Fobosi, 2019). To gain access into the field, the researcher in this study negotiated with the targeted participants so that the whole process adhered to research ethics and laid rules of engagement. The selected participants were

provided with a letter explaining the study. Upon internalising the contents of the letter, a negotiation process began. The process included agreeing on how the interviews would be conducted considering that COVID-19 protocols were to be observed. Once everything had been agreed to, the interviews commenced.

4.11 Data Collection

Data collection refers to the precise, systematic collection of information relevant to the research problem and sub-problems, using methods such as interviews, participant observation, focus group discussion, narratives and case histories in the case of qualitative research designs (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan&Hoagwood, 2015). Data collection commences when the researcher decides where and from whom data is collected (Sakind, 2010). In this research, the researcher was the primary data collection instrument (Rubbin&Babbie, 2010). This means that there will be a high level of involvement of the researcher in gathering research data through conducting interviews with the participants. In the case of this study, in-depth interviews will be used to collect data to allow participants to share experiences without being shepherded to follow a particular line of responses.

The research instrument identified above would assist in collecting the primary data for the study. Primary data is the data collected for the first time to find solutions to the current research problem (Malhotra, 2012). For the purpose of this study, primary data was collected to explore lived leadership experiences of female faculty deans in South African Universities. Compared to secondary data, the collection of primary data can be expensive and time-consuming.

In this study, primary data was collected using in-depth interviews in line with the phenomenological research design. The research instrument used in this study was applied as follows:

4.11.1 In-depth interviews

In light of the insider–outsider debates in feminist research (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Riessman, 1991), we believe that it is prudent to be reflexive about our methodology in an effort to alleviate some of the methodological conundrums concerning the right to knowledge. Despite the fact that all of the researchers were female and one of the researchers was African, not a

single one of us believes there was any congruity between the researchers and the participants.

In point of fact, previous researchers have argued that, sometimes, even being black (Beoku-Betts, 1994) – or being a woman (Riessman, 1991) – is not enough because there are other cultural nuances that are more subtle that the researcher may not share with the participants. In other words, being black or being a woman is not enough.

Therefore, conducting research on a familiar terrain in which racial and/or gender congruity already exists may facilitate collaboration in both the narrative process and the interpretation of the participants' story in feminist research; however, congruity does not automatically legitimise the researcher's status as an illegitimate individual. We adhere to the concept of "giving voice" to those who are in positions of oppression (Hancock, 2007), and we believe in privileging a political and social standpoint that moves the experiences of marginalised groups "from margin to centre" of theorising, regardless of whether or not the marginalised groups themselves belong (Choo and Ferree, 2010: 132).

In the end, Riessman (1991: 234) acknowledged that "perfect congruity" between the researcher and the participants is "rarely possible." Before conducting the interviews, we built rapport with the participants by engaging in various forms of "self-disclosure" (Dunbar et al., 2002). This allowed the participants to learn a little bit more about us and contributed to the establishment of mutual trust. We were aware of Zinn's argument from 1979 on page 218 that "gestures of reciprocity" do not, in and of themselves, change the unequal power relations that exist between the researchers and the researched; despite the fact that self-disclosure may be a positive gesture of reciprocity, we were mindful of this argument. The adoption of a reciprocal relationship that is founded on mutual trust, on the other hand, enables us to be reflexive on our positionality and to take on the "political responsibility" of speaking for those that we represent, which are the Black women leaders. The difficulties we face as a result of our position as a "outsider" serve as a "compulsion for us to carry out our research with ethical and intellectual integrity" (Zinn, 1979: 218).

Because it allows participants to freely share their experiences, in-depth interviews are the most commonly used strategy for collecting data in phenomenological studies. [Citation needed] [Citation needed] Phenomenological interviews are a specific kind of in-depth

interviewing that are rooted in the theoretical tradition of phenomenology, according to Creswell (2014). In-depth interviews are a type of qualitative data collection method that, according to Flick (2011), seek to understand the world from the perspective of the participant, unfold the meaning of people's experiences, and uncover their lived world before turning to scientific explanations. In this study, the participants will be asked about their experiences in leadership, the roles and responsibilities of the dean, and how the female faculty deans understand these roles in practise. The participants would not be required to answer any particular question, nor would they be instructed to do so in any fashion (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is anticipated that the interviews will collect sufficient information regarding the levels of leadership experiences held by female faculty deans at the three universities that are the focus of the study.

When conducting interviews, a researcher is expected to display a certain set of skills in order to fulfil their role effectively. When taking a phenomenological approach, it is necessary to have specific research skills in order to avoid contaminating the evidence, as Jasper (1994) pointed out. This is done in order to get at the lived experiences of the participants in the study. One of these is called bracketing, and its purpose is to get rid of irrelevant information that has nothing to do with the phenomenon that is being researched (Lauterbach, 2018). "the use of reflection, clarification, requests, for example, description, and the conveyance of interest through listening techniques" are some additional important skills that are considered to be necessary. It is also recommended that researchers find a happy medium between empathising with the interviewee and retaining the necessary degree of emotional distance in order to effectively extract information from them (van Manen, 2016).

This interview is distinct from others because there is a connection between the philosophical tradition and the method. This is what makes it unique (Cresswell, 2014). In quantitative research, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is observational; in qualitative research, the relationship is dialogue-based; and in phenomenological research, the relationship is reflective. This is a clear distinction between the three types of research (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). These kinds of reflections give the impression that they acknowledge the researcher's role as an essential component in the research process.

The term "interview" generally refers to any form of verbal communication between a researcher and participants, whether it be structured or unstructured, during which

information is presented to the researcher (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Interviewing the research participants in a setting that was free from distractions and provided a feeling of safety allowed for the collection of the necessary data for this investigation. Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, and they were conducted individually. Interviews were conducted in person, one-on-one, face-to-face, between the researcher and a single participant, so that interviewees could freely express their opinion regarding the subject matter of the study. Every question that was asked during the interview was open-ended. In addition, the participants' permission was obtained prior to audio recording the interviews, which were then subsequently transcribed (Saunders et al., 2007).

The interview guide used in this study was made up of five sections. The first section contained questions related to the participant's leadership experiences in South African universities. The second section of the interview guide solicited information regarding the dean's roles and responsibilities at the university level. The third section of the interview guide solicited information concerning how the deans understood their roles and responsibilities. The fourth section of the interview guide consisted of questions that focused on how the female faculty deans feel about their roles and responsibilities. Finally, the last section of the interview, as recommended by King (2014), that phenomenological interviews should start with "please tell me about your experiences of..." clarification sought when necessary for further illumination. Likewise, questions generated for the purpose of this study follow the same format.

In conducting this study, the researcher followed these steps:

- (1) made an appointment with the participants to meet at a time during which they are free and comfortable to take part in the interview
- (2) ensured the use of a conducive room for the conversation
- (3) arranged table and chairs for a safe face-to-face interviewing
- (4) prepared a tape recorder
- (5) had a jar of water available.

Before the interview commenced the research:

- (1) Thanked the participants for the time and willingness to be part of the study
- (2) reminded the participants about the purpose of the research
- (3) explained that the interview was to be unstructured and that probing questions would be determined by the information given by the participant
- (4) asked permission to record the interview
- (5) explained to the participants that

their participation is voluntary and that they have a right to withdraw from the research when they feel like they can no longer continue with the research (Cresswell, 2014).

4.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided to see whether some patterns or trends can be identified or isolated or to establish themes in interpretation (De Vos, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2010) define data analysis as a mechanism that is used for reducing and organising data to come up with findings that require interpretation by a researcher. Data analysis is a challenging and creative process characterised by an intimate relationship of the researcher with the participants and the data generated (Sakind, 2010). In this study, data were analysed in line with a descriptive phenomenology design. In analysing data collected for this study, the research notes that qualitative data analysis is a continuous process and not linear as in quantitative research (Schwandt, 2014). According to Colaizzi (1978, p.48-7), phenomenology data analysis follows a seven-step process outlined below:

1. The first step involves the researcher thoroughly reading the transcribed interviews more than once to identify with the data and acquire a sense of each individual and her background and experiences.
2. The second step involves the researcher identifying significant statements which relate directly to the studied phenomenon. In this study, the studied phenomenon is the lived experiences of women in management positions at the university level.
3. The third step involves the development of interpretive meanings of each of the significant statements. Here, the researcher re-reads the research protocols to ensure the original description is evident in the interpretive meanings.
4. The fourth step involves the interpretive meanings being arranged into clusters, which allow themes to emerge. The researcher seeks validation, avoids repetitive themes, and notes any discrepancies during this process.
5. The fifth step involves integrating themes into an exhaustive description. In addition, the researcher also refers the theme clusters back to the protocols to substantiate them.

6. The sixth step involves the researcher producing a concise statement of the exhaustive description and provides a fundamental statement of identification, also referred to as the overall essence of the experience.

7. The reduced statement of the exhaustive description is presented to the study's participants to verify the conclusions and develop the essence statement. If discrepancies are noted, the researcher should go back through the significant statements, interpretive meanings, and themes in order to address the stated concerns.

The resulting data is then discussed in themes using the thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to discuss the common themes from the thick, rich and in-depth descriptions obtained from the women in university management positions.

Methods of thematic analysis explained

Finding, analysing, and reporting on recurrent themes is the goal of the qualitative data analysis technique known as thematic analysis. Quantitative and qualitative data are equally amenable to this strategy (Braun and Clarke 2006). Even though it's a method for describing the data, the steps of selecting the codes to employ and constructing the themes require some degree of interpretation. One of the things that makes thematic analysis stand out is how flexible it is in terms of theoretical and epistemological context, research question, study design, and sample size.

Some qualitative research methods, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), can be built upon the foundation of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis can stand alone as an analytic method, while Aronson (1995) and Joffé (2011, respectively) have described it as belonging to the realm of ethnography and being particularly suited to phenomenology, respectively. The principles of thematic analysis, such as how to code data, how to search for and refine themes, and how to report findings, are applicable to a variety of other qualitative methods, including grounded theory (Watling and Lingard 2012) and discourse analysis (Taylor et al. 2012).

Thematic analysis is not restricted to a single paradigmatic orientation; rather, it can be implemented within post-positivist, constructivist, or critical realist approaches to research

(Braun and Clarke 2006). The application of thematic analysis within a variety of research paradigms necessitates adapting this method to a variety of different outputs and purposes. Post-positivists can use thematic analysis to gain insights into the external reality by focusing on the meanings and experiences of individuals, which supports the development of conjectural knowledge about reality.

Many interpretivist orientations, such as constructivism, can emphasise the social, cultural, and structural contexts that influence individual experiences through the use of thematic analysis. This allows for the development of knowledge that is constructed through interactions between the researcher and the research participants, thereby revealing meanings that are socially constructed. In other words, thematic analysis can be used to reveal meanings that are socially constructed (Braun and Clarke 2006). Joffe (2011) suggests that thematic analysis is particularly suited to constructivism because it can illustrate how a particular social construct develops through the process of analysing a wide range of data. This is why thematic analysis is particularly suited to constructivism. Constructivist thematic analyses will search in the data in these ways for more latent themes that go deeper.



Finally, critical realism recognises that experiences and perceptions are grounded in material reality, but it looks beyond the topic itself to explore the social meanings and implications behind the topic (Joffe 2011; Clarke and Braun 2017). Researchers can study the power relations that shape reality and conduct emancipatory research that gives value to the voices of oppressed populations by using thematic analysis within the context of critical realism. The study's researchers immersed themselves in a critical realist setting designed to amplify the experiences of women in administrative positions. Researchers immersed themselves in interviews to pry out hidden meanings from participants. The information was recorded and transcribed into a readable format. Then, after reading the transcripts, drafting the answers and trying to make sense of them.

4.12.1 Adequacy and trustworthiness

Data adequacy refers to the amount of data obtained and whether saturation occurred. To ensure that data adequacy is attained, the researcher used data collection techniques and depth interviews, which allowed real and authentic face-to-face conversation. Confirming the study's results with a secondary sample can ensure the adequacy of the data (Schwandt,

2010); however, this method of ensuring adequacy was not used in this study. Silverman (2010) describe trustworthiness as “establishing the validity and reliability of qualitative research”. Qualitative research is considered trustworthy when it precisely captures and represents the experiences of the study’s participants.

Trustworthiness is used to determine the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Cope, 2014). Research demonstrates trustworthiness when the experiences of the participants are accurately represented (Silverman, 2010). Trustworthiness of data in method triangulation is demonstrated through the researcher’s attention to and confirmation of information discovery. This is referred to as rigour. The goal of rigour in qualitative research is to accurately represent the study participants’ experiences (Morrow, 2005). Trustworthiness of data collected would be ensured by applying credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability principles.

4.12.1.1 Credibility

The credibility of research is confirmed when participants can recognise the reported research findings as their own experiences (Cope, 2014). Credibility is the truth of how the participants know and experience the phenomenon (Morrow, 2005). Credibility would be achieved when the research findings of this study can capture the lived leadership experiences of female faculty deans in South African universities. To ensure this research attains credibility, the researcher ensured that participants were identified and described accurately (Holloway 2005). To ensure that credible findings are produced, more strategies including prolonged engagement reflexivity, peer and participants debriefing, triangulation and member checks should be utilised. More of the implemented strategies are discussed below.

4.12.1.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the probability that the study’s findings have meaning to others in similar situations. Transferability is also called “fittingness” because it determines whether the findings fit in or are transferable to similar situations (Branlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005). The potential user, not the researcher, determines whether the findings are transferable (Silverman, 2010). It is the extent to which the findings from the data can be transferred to other settings. Generality and applicability are irrelevant in qualitative research because the researcher wants to describe the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004). It is the

researcher's responsibility to provide a dense description of the research context and sufficient descriptive data that the reader can assess and evaluate the applicability or transferability of the data to another context. The researcher needs to describe the data sufficiently to allow comparison.

Silverman (2016) states that with purposeful samples, the selection of participants should fulfil the need of the study. Therefore, the researcher approached the participants that had experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under study. In the present study, transferability was ensured through member checks and presenting sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison. This would enhance the possibility that the findings have the same meaning for other women in management positions in South African universities, which were not considered in this study.

4.12.1.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of research findings over a period (Sakind, 2010). It allows participants to evaluate the findings and the interpretation, recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (Rubbin&Babbie, 2010). Robson and McCartan (2016) describe dependability as a criterion that is used to measure trustworthiness in qualitative research. Dependability is achieved by securing the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

It is a criterion that is met through obtaining credibility and cannot be present without credibility (Sakind, 2010). Since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter.

According to Katz (2015), dependability is related to the consistency of findings. This means that if the study is repeated in a similar context with the same participants, the findings would be consistent. In qualitative research, the instruments assessed for consistency are the researcher and the participants (Olivier, 2017). For the findings of a research project to be dependable, they should be checked and audited through external checks.

Two more techniques are Guba's stepwise replication and inquiry audit. Stepwise replication is a process that builds on the classic notion of replication as the means of establishing reliability. The inquiry audit is based metaphorically on the fiscal audit. The inquiry auditor examines the product (the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations) and attests

that it is supported by data and is internally coherent to accept the bottom line. This process establishes the confirmability of the inquiry. Thus, a single audit can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 332). In this study, dependability would be achieved by giving the participants an opportunity to evaluate the findings and recommendations of the study.

4.12.1.4 Confirmability

According to Silverman (2016), confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. What confirmability is concerned about is that the data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but clearly derived from the data (Tracy, 2013).

In this study, confirmability was achieved by comparing the research findings with previous studies on women leadership experiences in their management positions. Lastly, when the data is transcribed, copies were sent to the participants to verify the accuracy of the information.

It is a creation for evaluating data quality and refers to the neutrality or objectivity of the data by an agreement between two or more dependent persons that the data is similar (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Confirmability is a strategy to ensure neutrality (Silverman, 2010). It means that the findings are free from bias. In qualitative research, neutrality refers to data neutrality and not the researcher's neutrality. The purpose of confirmability is to illustrate that the evidence and thought processes give another researcher the same conclusions as in the research context (Cresswell, 2014). Confirmability occurs in the presence of credibility, transferability and dependability (Silverman, 2016). The researcher utilised the following auditing criteria.

4.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are defined as expected norms or principles that guide moral choices about the behaviour of a researcher during the research process (Hennik, Hutter & Bailey, 2014). In this research, the researcher had a moral obligation to strictly consider the rights of the participants who were expected to provide this knowledge (Creswell, 2014). The researcher considered it very important to establish trust between the participants and herself, to respect them as autonomous beings, thus enabling them to make sound decisions (Silverman, 2016).

Ethical measures are as important in qualitative research as in quantitative research and include ethical conduct towards participant's information and honest reporting of the results. This study's ethical measures include consent, confidentiality and anonymity, privacy, dissemination of results, and the right to withdraw from the study.

Consent

The researcher requested permission to carry out the study in the three respective universities. Informed consent was also obtained from the research participants. This was achieved by availing all relevant and adequate information to the participants to enable them to make knowledgeable choices on whether to take part or not.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher also ensured that participants' confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2011) state that confidentiality means that no information made by the participant is divulged, made public or available to others. The anonymity of a person or an institution is protected by making it impossible to link aspects of data to a specific person or institution. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed by ensuring that the data obtained are used in a way that no one other than the researcher knows the source (Bradley, 2013).

Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity by not being asked to share their names or identities. Again, no names were attached to the information obtained; instead, codes were used.

Privacy

According to De Vos (2002, p. 67), privacy refers to agreements between persons that limit the access of others to private information. In this study, the researcher ensured that when participants described their leadership experiences within South African universities, their information was not divulged. In addition, privacy refers to the freedom an individual has to determine the time, extent and general circumstances under which private information will be shared with or withheld from others (Flick, 2011). In this study, privacy was also maintained by not attaching participant's names to their information.

The right to withdraw from the study

The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished to. This right was explained to them before engaging them in the study and before interviews were conducted, as these rights form part of the informed consent.

Dissemination of results

Results are disseminated in the form of a research report. The report should stimulate readers to study it and determine its feasibility for implementation (Katz, 2015). Additionally, the report should not expose the secrets or weaknesses of the institutions involved to the readers but should recommend improving women leadership and management development strategies.

Participants were informed that the final thesis would be available in the University of Fort Hare's library as well as on its website. In addition, the information would be published in relevant journals.

Plagiarism

Another important ethical issue that should be closely guarded against in research is plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as the wrongful appropriation and stealing of someone's ideas, thoughts, language and expressions and presenting them as one's original work. Plagiarism is considered unethical because it is considered academic dishonesty and a breach of ethical standards in research. At the University of Fort Hare, a maximum of 15 per cent similarity index is accepted. Additionally, the research cited work taken from other authors publications using the APA referencing style.

4.14 Summary of the Chapter

This research was conducted at three state universities in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The methodology implemented in conducting this research was described and further outlined the research methodology covering the research philosophy, research approach, research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis procedures and acceptable ethical methods of conducting the research.

Based on the research objectives, a qualitative approach was employed as a reference point in choosing the appropriate research methods and strategies. In addition, data were collected

using face-to-face in-depth interviews. This allowed participants to share their experiences freely. Ethical approval for the study was obtained before the data collection process and the participants signed consent forms.

The research methodology discussed in this chapter emanated from an extensive consultation of secondary sources, namely textbooks, journals, internet and past dissertations. The primary aim was to devise a research design that would produce reliable and useful conclusions in the last chapter of this dissertation. Most importantly and specifically, the subsequent stages and chapters heavily depended on the effectiveness of the procedures encompassed in this chapter. The next chapter presents data interpretation and analyses of all the data obtained through the in-depth interviews.



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CHAPTER FIVE

PROFILING, DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the profile of the research sites alongside the participants. It majorly presents and discusses the findings that emerged from the data that was collected from the research field. This phenomenological study was initiated to explore the lived leadership experiences of women who occupy the deanship position in South African universities. Therefore, this study interrogated the experiences of the six female faculty deans selected from the three Eastern Cape Province universities to gain insight into their lived leadership experiences as they perform their roles and responsibilities. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect data.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were used for both the university and participants instead of real names. This was to ensure that all standard ethical principles are adhered to.

This chapter is structured as follows:

Section 1: The first section of the chapter discusses the demographic characteristics and profiles of the participants as well as the research sites.

Section 2: This section discusses leadership characteristics and leadership styles.

Section 3: This section discusses the participants' roles and responsibilities, including those they embrace and those they do not.

Section 4: The last section focuses on challenges faced by women in leadership and recommendations for improvement within tertiary institutions.

5.2 Demographic Profiles


This section presents the research sites and demographic characteristics of the participants who took part in this study and the sites from which the research was conducted. The discussions regarding research sites and participants profiles are meaningful because they give background and context of who and where the data was collected from.

5.2.1 Profiles of research sites

This section presents profiles of sites from which data was collected. The elements considered relevant included the gender of the immediate supervisor and the gender of the vice-chancellor. This information is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Research Sites' Profiles

Research site	Background	Gender of the dean's immediate supervisor	Gender of the VC
Uhuru University	Rural university	DVC-Male	V-C Male
Freedom University	Urban university	DVC-Female	V-C Male
Major University	Urban university	DVC-Male	V-C Male


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For the benefit of the study, they are presented as Uhuru, Freedom and Major Universities. The information presented above shows that Uhuru University is an institution that is mainly in a rural area. The table shows that Uhuru's faculty dean's immediate supervisor, the DVC, is male and has a male supervisor.

Table 5.1 also shows that Freedom University is largely an urban university, and the faculty dean's supervisor, the DVC is a female who has a male supervisor. Major University is an urban university, and the table shows that the faculty dean's immediate supervisor, the DVC, is a male who has a male supervisor, the vice-chancellor.

5.2.2 The participants' profiles

This section presents and discusses findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants. Demographics discussed in this section include age, race, marital status, highest qualification, faculty led by a female dean and experience as a dean. Pseudonyms have been used in place of participants' real names for the protocol of ethics in research as applied for the research sites where data was collected from. Results of the information gathered with regards to participants demographics are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Participants Demographics

Research site	Respondent	Age	Race	Marital Status	Highest qualification	Faculty	Experience as Dean of Faculty
Uhuru University	Sihle	56	Black	Single	Master of education	Education	4 years
	Sivuno	53	Black	Married	PhD in Business management	Business Management	6 years
Freedom University	Joy	59	White	Single	PhD in Higher Education Administration	Humanities (Executive dean)	8 years
	Sikho	55	Black	Married	PhD in Education Administration	Education (Executive dean)	5 years
Major University	Peace	57	White	Married	PhD in Law	Law (Executive dean)	6 years

	Faith	60	White	Married	PhD in Education	Education (Executive dean)	10 years
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Table 5.2 shows that three (3) universities participated in the study. Two participants represent each university. During this study, the participants occupied positions as faculty deans who had work experience for not less than three years as faculty deans. This was done in order to gather experiences of female faculty deans from different institutions' environments. Sihle and Sivuno were from Uhuru university, Joy and Sikho were from Freedom University, whilst Peace and Faith were from Major University.

Table 5.2 also shows the six female faculty deans who participated in the study. In line with ethical standards which outline that respondents have to be anonymous, pseudonyms were used for the participants, in no particular order; they are Sihle, Sikho, Sivuno, Joy, Peace and Faith. The participants are females from three universities within South Africa. The study sought to explore the lived experiences of female leaders in South African Universities. Women in the higher education sector encounter challenge at becoming leaders. This can be seen in that men dominate the current top management of universities as compared to females. As a result, there is a need for a dedicated study to understand the experiences of women in higher education institutions.

With regards to the age of the participants, Table 5.2 shows that the participants were aged between 50 and 60. Specifically, the age of the participants was as follows: Sihle aged 56; Sivuno aged 53; Joy aged 59; Sikho aged 55; Peace aged 57, whilst Faith is aged 60. These results support the view by Offermann, Thomas, Lanzo and Smith (2020), who suggested that women usually assume top management positions within the tertiary education sector later in their careers as compared to their male counterparts. This is usually caused by family duties which include taking care of children in their youthful age (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2019).

Although it was not the main thrust of this study to investigate the race of the faculty deans, it was necessary to determine the distribution of the participants by race. This is so because even though all South African women were disadvantaged in as far as occupying leadership positions is concerned, there is evidence that white women were more likely to be in leadership positions compared to their counterparts (Fatoki, 2017; Hills, 2015). The results of

the data collected show that three of the participants were of the white South African race while the other three were of the black South African race. There have been concerns in some researched studies with regards to disparities in leadership positions between white South African females and black South African females (Hills, 2015; Moodly & Toni, 2017; Seale, Fish & Schreiber, 2021). These studies identified that although women were primarily disadvantaged in leadership positions, black women were worse off than their white counterparts. The disparities by race have been perpetuated by historical systems such as the apartheid regime, which discriminated against people of colour in South Africa.

The research also investigated the distribution of the participants by marital status. The results presented in Table 5.2 show that most of the participants are married and only two were single. According to Fatoki (2017) and Hills (2015), married women experience leadership roles differently because they may be impacted by cultural beliefs that attaches certain responsibilities to married women, of which the responsibilities may conflict with leadership roles and responsibilities. As a result, women find themselves performing competing roles, which forces them to want to choose and prioritise other roles versus the other, a highly complex exercise to perform successfully. This negatively impacts their likelihood of ascending into positions of power.

With regards to the highest qualifications, Table 5.2 shows that the majority of participants have earned PhDs as their highest qualification, whilst only one participant had a master's degree. In South Africa, it is a generally accepted rule that a person who holds the position of dean should have at least a master's degree and nothing below that (Seale & Cross, 2016; Moodly & Toni, 2017).

The study collected data from deans who lead various faculties. Hence, the study also asked the participants to share information concerning the faculty in which they are appointed as deans. Data presented in Table 5.2 show that three of the participants are deans in the Faculty of Education, one from the Faculty of Business Management, another from the Faculty of Law, and the Faculty of Humanities. Participants from Uhuru University led the Faculty of Education and Business Management, those from Freedom University are deans in the Faculties of Education and Humanities, while those from Major University are Faculty deans of education and law. The absence of participants from a science-related faculty confirms assertions by Hong (2018), who established that female leaders are scarcer in science-related faculties in universities across the world.

Regarding the number of years that each participant has worked as a faculty dean, Table 5.2 indicates that participants have worked as deans for four to ten years. For example, Sihle indicated that she has worked as a faculty dean for four years; Sivuno has worked as faculty dean for six years, and Joy has worked as a faculty dean for eight years. Sikho indicated that she has worked as a faculty dean for five years; Peace has worked as a faculty dean for six years, while Faith has worked as a faculty dean for ten years. This shows that ten years is the longest that a female participant in this study has served as a faculty dean.

Further probing by the researcher revealed that all the participants had five-year terms with the option of being re-appointed for a second or third term. This research also discovered that three of the participants were appointed faculty deans for the second term. Reasons for re-appointment included superior performance, continuity and experience. Sivuno indicated that she was appointed a dean to ensure continuity as the faculty she leads was in the process of implementing new strategies which required stability and continuity. In addition, Joy and Peace were re-appointed due to good performance, whilst Faith had worked as a faculty dean in two different institutions. Each term was five years long.

5.3 Presenting Data and Discussing Findings

This section presents and discusses findings based on primary data that was collected from the six female faculty deans. These are the Faculties of Education, Humanities, Law and Business Management in three South African universities. The above-listed faculties were considered in this study because more women led in them than in the Faculty of Science.

The data collected from the respondents were grouped into themes, which are leadership characteristics, leadership styles, roles and responsibilities of deans embraced by female deans, roles and responsibilities not embraced, challenges faced by respondents, overcoming the challenges and recommendations for improving the leadership experiences of women in leadership positions. These themes were formulated in line with the research questions which the current study aimed to address at its conclusion.

5.3.1 The participants' understanding of leadership

Data shows that participants interpret the notions of leadership differently. Some believe that leadership is the ability to influence others to want to do and follow the direction given as it is

crucial for the leaders to provide clear direction that can help the team members achieve the organisational objectives.

Peace from Major University shared that to be an effective leader, there is a need to have the relevant and appropriate knowledge of the anticipated field of work. This includes a sound educational background that enables one to be a leader and serve the organisation towards reaching its organisational mandate. The success of the vision and any organisation's mission largely depends on how the leader manages the people and the tasks within the organisation. If people are not well managed, tasks will not be well-performed. The whole organisation will fail due to poor leadership.

Sikho from Freedom University said that to be a leader means being sensitive to the needs of the minority groups within the organisation one leads. Being a leader is about setting a direction and communicating that to the followers, the ability to learn from others, being competent and effective in executing tasks.

The experience I gained prior to my appointment as a faculty dean has made me a good leader, also that leadership is what I studied for, that is why I have been able to achieve set goals, motivate my team and improve the performance of my faculty.

From what the participants have shared, their understanding of leadership is commonly the achievement of goals, motivation of teams and improvement of performance in the faculties they lead and the organisation at large. To them, leadership is about caring for the people they work with and work for, as Peace puts it, good performance comes from well-managed people.

Research has given the same view that leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve and maintain certain goals or objectives (Northouse, 2013; Yurl, 2013). Therefore, this ability relates to what is considered a trait possessed by an individual, and people chose to see such ability as a natural leadership trait a person has, further advancing the strong belief that some people are born leaders. Other participants view leadership as an action taken to ensure that the work needed to achieve the vision is professionally managed through guidance, motivation, and inspiration towards achieving the goals. In literature, leadership is considered as the way a person leads others. As cited in the Definitions of leadership by scholars (2019), Napoleon Bonaparte said, "A leader is a dealer in hope". This statement shows that how a leader conducts and behaves in a leadership position will determine the extent of success

within the organisation. Two participants from Major University believe that learning and developing oneself by attending leadership seminars, workshops and further studies would develop a person to become a leader as one would have collected and gained more relevant experience. Through such various experiences and the zeal to learn, leaders are made.

5.3.2 What qualifies one to be appointed the dean of faculty

The participants expressed various views regarding what qualifies one to be appointed the dean of faculty. The participants identified two major aspects that put them at an advantage to be appointed dean of faculty, and those two aspects are explained below.

(a) Qualifications and experience

Participants unanimously agreed that, at least, a master's degree is the highest expected and considered academic qualification for a leading position like deanship. In addition, the participants identified that years of experience in serving in a particular work area facilitates growth and development, which then enhances one's competencies, therefore building up one's track record in successfully carrying out tasks of a higher level and achieving the set goals. Clearly, some referred to experience as the years one had occupied a leadership position, while others believed it is not only experience in years that is relevant for one to be appointed a faculty dean, but a proven track record in highly succeeding and achieving higher than the expected outcome.

Identifying years of experience, Sihle from Uhuru University, aged 56 and of the Black African race, shared that "to be a leader, one needs to have the necessary experience and knowledge to effectively lead a group of learned people like it is the case in the tertiary education sector. Without a solid background in the education sector, one cannot be an effective leader. Experience is therefore a key ingredient of what it takes to be a good leader in the tertiary education sector. Furthermore, Joy, aged 59, of White descent, who works at Freedom University as a faculty dean of humanities, also expressed the importance of work experience as a prerequisite even in job advertisements.

Additionally, some participants, including Peace from Major University, Sivuno from Uhuru University and Sikho from Freedom University, revealed that short courses on management, leadership, conflict resolution, and finance greatly influence one's chances of being appointed a faculty dean in the three universities. The importance of knowing how the budget

of the faculty looks like enhances well planned yearly programmes, as the faculty deans are mainly expected to defend the faculty budgetary proposals to finance research and academic activities within their faculties. Sivuno shared that her involvement in the budget planning activity has even facilitated her personal development in financial management issues, an additional benefit for her faculty, echoing a sentiment shared by Peace, who expressed the importance of self-development through short courses, believing that what she has acquired through short courses is what she has been practising throughout her work life, hence sharing that the demonstrated ability from previous positions has been instrumental to her deanship appointment. This clearly proves that experience and qualifications matter. In her own words, “A leader is made up of a number of things. One of those is that one has to demonstrate familiarity with what has to be done and expected of her and carry out the mandate entrusted upon by the organisation. In addition, one must have practised what one would want to implement as a leader at some stage in life. Be it at school, community, work or career.”

This familiarity that the participants claim as a work practice demonstrates what a person is capable of, thus gathering more experience. The best experience measurement is the demonstration of the capabilities and achieving the set objectives.

In higher education institutions, such relevant experience qualifies one to take up leadership responsibilities and enable one's discretion on which leadership style to implement to achieve the institution's goals. The demonstrated ability to facilitate staff development through motivation, mentoring and coaching, community building and positive impact in business leadership skills is what makes an outstanding leader.

The participants' views towards what it means to be a leader corroborate assertions by Giri and Santra (2010), who advances that experience fuels effective leadership. This view is also advanced by Alghofaily (2019), who identified that lack of leadership experience was the reason women are seen as ineffective in Saudi Arabia. As identified by participants in this study, experience plays a critical role in qualifying to be a leader in the South African higher education sector. This shows that experience played an important role in qualifying the Deans who took part in the study to be appointed Faculty Deans.

The data presented above shows that one has to have an experience that is relevant to a particular career for it to be considered a qualifier. According to Nelson, Schroeder and

Welpman (2014), a person's career background is important when considering him or her for a leadership position. It is that experience that enables a leader to bring along new leadership styles or change management according to the relevance of what the organisation needs at a particular time. Some of the female faculty deans alluded to the notion that for one to be a leader, he/she has to possess relevant experience. Relevant experience is important for a strategic position such as that of a dean because it provides one with the basics of starting off their career as dean (Moodly & Toni, 2015).

Experience reduces the risk of failure for the prospective dean. Deanship is a strategic position in the university set-up, to the extent that employers are not prepared to take chances with someone without demonstrable and traceable experience. Although the view that one should have relevant experience to be appointed a dean is challenged with a contradicting view that advances an opinion that deanship does not need an experience as such because one would have a support system from experienced professors from various departments within a faculty, who will help manage areas like research, curriculum and academic excellence (Ootara, 2015). The experience requirement for leadership positions has turned out to be a barrier for women who want to take up management positions in universities because women often lack the experience required by the employer. This is usually because women largely join academic labour force at a lower level than their male counterparts (Muzvidziwa, 2015). Regardless of the alternative view on the role of experience on deanship appointments, the findings of this study demonstrate that experience is important when recruiting for the position of a faculty dean. This is supported by what was shared by most participants, indicating that experience was a significant qualifier for one to be appointed a leader as they were giving self-reflections towards their leadership appointments.

The next section will share how the participants relate to knowledge and skills being another qualifier for one to be appointed a faculty dean.

(b) Knowledge and Skills

Based on their experiences as leaders in the higher education sector, participants further identified that possession of relevant skills and knowledge counts as an antecedent to what it means to be a leader. These aspects are acquired through experience and, to a larger extent, through furthering one's level of education. The female faculty deans who took part in this

study believe that their qualifications play a key role in making one a leader. This is shown in the verbal responses provided below:

Peace from Major University believed she was appointed a dean because of her leadership competencies, which include conflict resolution at the workplace, building effective teams, and her leadership style, which promotes innovation and transparency. She also developed a demonstrable formula for achieving set goals and targets within the outlined time frame.

Sivuno and Sihle from the same university, Uhuru, echoed the same understanding shown above by Peace that competencies to carry out work enables the achievement of the expected outcome. Therefore, a degree alone does not serve the purpose because knowledge has to be practically demonstrated. Even in a job advertisement, the emphasis is on the skills and competencies to do the work. In Sivuno's words, she said, "For instance, one can not lead a construction company whilst knowing nothing about construction because that is a recipe for failure. Even if one has a degree, it can be useless due to a lack of practical skills because there will be no guidance, no proper plans from such a leader".

The other participants emphasise acquiring the highest academic qualification, from a Masters degree level and beyond, so as to stand a good chance of being appointed a faculty dean, they believe that is a qualifying status. For example: Joy from Freedom University had the following to say: "Above all other qualities needed, a leader needs to have knowledge applicable for that leadership position. A minimum of a Masters degree, in my case as an educator, would be a qualifier." The same view was shared by Faith, although she expressed it differently, but conveying the same message. She believes that a leading role demands the adoption of an attitude of continuous acquiring of knowledge and experience to effectively lead the faculty.

This confirms that in their experiences as leaders, female faculty deans who took part in this study strongly believe that knowledge and skills are more important attributes that a leader should possess, as that will be the basis of growth and development for both an individual and the organisation. Education has been proven to influence leadership style in a study conducted by Bhargava, Kotur and Anbazhagan (2014). This means that a leader needs to have some form of education and additional skills. Knowledge and skills acquired through educational qualifications are life experiences that shape one into a leader (McMaster, 2018). In the South African context and beyond, the higher education sector is known for applying

so much importance to the recruitment of people with appropriate qualifications for specific positions. Employing people with appropriate qualifications for a strategic position like that of a dean is relevant because it brings integrity to the faculty being led by the person with the right qualifications. Secondly, an academic dean is supposed to spearhead research activities within a faculty; hence, it is important that the person to be appointed in deanship should have attained a qualification that entertains rigorous research. Although a dean is expected to have relevant qualifications to execute duties that include promoting research and academic excellence, Otara (2015) argues that a dean of Faculty is mainly expected to defend the faculty budgetary proposals to finance research activities and academic activities within the faculty. Women dominate entry-level qualifications; however, their number drops as we move towards postgraduate degrees. This limits their chances of being appointed in positions that require post-graduate degrees. Even so, studies have shown that women find it difficult to penetrate the leadership realm even if they have relevant qualifications. Hence deep-rooted cultural stereotypes have been blamed (Nguyen, 2013; Shevel, 2014; McNare& Vali, 2015).

In the next section, the debate focuses on some leadership traits the participants linked to deanship appointment.



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(c) Leadership traits linked to deanship appointment

This section discusses various leadership traits that linked to the deanship appointment. Faculty deans who took part in this study revealed that for one to be appointed a dean, they have to be visionary, transparent and motivational. These traits were identified according to the lived experiences shared by the six faculty deans. Visionary leadership, transparency and motivation are discussed below.

Visionary leadership

The female faculty deans also gave responses in which vision and direction were dominant themes. Some participants believed that having a vision precedes other traits, meaning that whatever other leadership qualities a person possesses, without a vision, not knowing where the institution is headed to leadership practice will fail, for there will be no direction moving forward. Having a vision influences how one conducts oneself as a leader towards achieving the set goal, thus, influencing others to follow in the same practice. Being visionary includes

being future-oriented and goal-driven, mainly expressed as the ability to take the institution to the next level. In the same breath, participants also linked visionary leadership with direction and instilling the spirit of togetherness in others. A leader who fails to share where the institution is planned to go to and how will that be achieved fails to carry the followers in the right direction but rather works alone without inspiring others and walking with them towards achieving the set goal. Lack of transparency affects togetherness. People start to feel ignored and not belonging and yet working for the same institution, but are not taken on board on issues of institutional development. To realise a vision, one has to be transparent, exemplary and inspiring, making it possible for others to be motivated and voluntarily follow the given direction. In addition, the participants posited that a leader with a vision can create a team that is capable of strategically executing the plans of both the faculty and the university at large. These are shown in the responses quoted below.

With regards to the benefit of visionary leadership, which leads to clear direction, motivated teams and achievable goals, Sikho, the dean of the Faculty of Education, from Freedom University aged 55 and of African race, alluded:

“Basically being a leader means leading the organisation towards the achievement of its vision, and communicating it to the followers at large for them to join on a long journey as you execute your leading task”.

Sivuno, the dean of the Faculty of Business Management, who seemed to share the same view as Sikho, further explained that to be a leader means “to literally carry the vision of your organisation on your shoulders and set the direction to be followed whilst instilling a sense of confidence into colleagues that you lead within the faculty so that they can believe that whatever the organisation is set to achieve is possible.”

Further explaining that the success and failures of an organisation are dependent on visionary leadership, a key ingredient for leadership. Peace from Major University and of the White race, aged 57, uttered the following:

“Being a leader is all about carrying the greater responsibility of failure or success of an organisation that one leads. Being a leader, therefore, means that you have to assemble a team that executes the plan to achieve the vision”.

In what seems to be unpacking an agenda for a successful leader, Peace further identified the importance of the visionary leader's ability to share the organisation's goals through open communication. She said:

“My ability to sell the vision and the departmental goals in a manner that everyone understands and buys in usually draws positivity as people like to see that they are involved as they belong to the institution. Seeing afar before anyone else does and taking them along in reaching that goal is being visionary.”

Two participants, in particular, Peace and Faith, expressed boldly as to what it means to be visionary. Peace was emphatic effective communication where the objective is clear for all, clarity of roles and mandate given to the faculty. Such a visionary practice will help everyone buy into the task with positivity and achieve a positive outcome as a team. A healthy working environment leads to positive results.

Faith shared more on the importance of a clear direction when she advocated that when people fumble, fear takes over, but a visionary leader creates a mind-map on everyone's mind allowing people to see the end result before walking the journey by using a visionary eye of what they want and how they will get it.

A vision is considered the corner post to which all the organisation's efforts are directed towards. Having a vision is a significant leadership attribute in the education sector (Priest & Jenkins, 2019). Although the majority of the participants have demonstrated a clear understanding of what a vision is and its purpose in any organisation, believing that to be a visionary leader is beneficial as it inspires followers to further share their expectations as they move forward, creating a stronger sense of belonging which will encourage people to achieve beyond expectations.

The literature views vision communication as highly positive leadership behaviour (Knippenberg & Stam, 2014; Shipley & Michela, 2006). Five of the six female deans gave responses indicating that a leader should be visionary and steer the organisation in the right direction. Based on the data shared by the participants, a visionary leader is someone who sees where an organisation should be in the future, has the direction of how to get there, and can influence others to work towards a shared vision.

When leaders' transparent behaviour is high, they will share relevant information to employees, openly communicate with employees and give feedback to employees, which enriches the resources for employees engagement in creative activities (Gong, Cheung, Wang & Huang, 2012). According to data collected from the faculty deans, a leader has to be transparent. The data also revealed that transparency is a key leadership attribute required for anyone holding a leadership position, as the followers would expect to know the organisation's mission and what is expected of them. Furthermore, according to submissions by the faculty deans, being transparent would help in shunning corruption, observing morals expected from a leader and sharing relevant information with workmates. This is revealed in the extracted quotes below.

Sivuno from Uhuru University gave the following response:

“There are a number of things that are expected from someone to be considered a leader. For me, being a leader is not merely about the title, but the characteristics, the qualities that one brings in that office, as well as the impact one has on the people being led.

Her response concerning why she was appointed a dean reveals the theme of transparency. She said she always kept her workmates in the clear about ongoing activities and their progress. This is shown in the response below:

“I was also appointed because of my upright standing as an employee of the university. I am one person who does not hide information from colleagues or keep them in the dark regarding important decisions taken and plans to move ahead towards achieving set goals. Believing that together we stand stronger, I openly share accordingly”.

The view that a leader has to be transparent was corroborated by Joy, aged 59, of the White race and from Freedom University, who advanced that for one to be a leader, a person should be ethical, model and morally upright. This is seen where she said:

“Leadership means being a model, being ethical and upright. This can never be achieved alone but rather in a collective”.

Sikhofrom Freedom University, aged 55, responded that transparency is an important leadership attribute. This is seen where she said:

“Being a leader means being exemplary, authentic and morally upright. In the era where corruption is so rife, especially among those in positions of influence, being transparent is very important.”

With regards to the reason why she was appointed a dean, Sikho also talked about transparency. This is seen in the response she gave as provided below:

“My level of accountability, transparency and the ability to encourage others to carry out their mandate with unwavering commitment and passion makes me a good leader. ”

Peace from Major University also gave a response which showed that there has to be transparency for one to be considered for a leadership role, like deanship. This was in agreement with what was shared by Sikho from Freedom University. This is revealed where she said:

“Accountability, team work attitude, confidence and passion in achieving set targets has shaped me into good leadership mentality. In addition, I am a person who treasures transparency, and I believe that practising transparency throughout my work has contributed to my appointment as a faculty dean.”



The data has revealed that the female deans possess some traits, including openness in sharing information and showing behavioural ethics. The deans indicated that they shun corruption, lead by example in being upright and engage in accountability activities. These traits and the activities carried out are evidence that transparency is another key leadership trait that is considered when appointing a person to the position of a faculty dean. The majority of women who participated in this study gave responses that reflected that transparency is a key leadership principle. Today’s world demands transparency due to the increase in corrupt activities. This is because, with lack of transparency, corruption flourishes and can result in the institutions experiencing challenges of mismanagement of institutional funds, poor quality of academic standard, which may negatively affect the success of the institution at large (UNIFEM, 2010). Being a transparent leader involves keeping subordinates informed about the activities going on within an organisation without necessarily oversharing information and giving them a reasonable platform for feedback (Felten & Finley, 2019). Transparency is critical because it fosters trust, which eventually leads to stronger workplace relationships. Women, because of their natural traits, are considered to be likely transparent than men. These traits include being empathetic, caring,

inclusive and nurturing, among others. However, one of the debates in feminist scholarship concerning the nature of femininity is whether feminine traits are biologically given or socially constructed and whether there are varieties of behaving and generally being in the world that is particular to women and men. When something is labelled masculine or feminine, it does not necessarily relate to the intrinsic characteristics of actual men or women; it is, however, culturally associated with the category's male and female (Fondas, 2017).

As such, cultural stereotypes have been blamed for the scarcity of women in leadership positions within the higher education sector in South Africa. The fact that visionary leadership mobilises support for a collective cause (Shiple & Michela, 2006) creates shared perceptions of follower's role in vision pursuit and motivates others to pursue the vision (Stam et al., 2014). Motivation can be defined as the "extent to which persistent effort toward a goal" (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler & Weick). Therefore, leadership is used as a means of motivating others. The faculty deans also indicated that being motivational is linked to their appointments to the deanship position. However, there is little or no evidence to show that there are significant differences between men and women in terms of providing visionary leadership. In the previous studies, it has been established that organisational visions put forward by women are inclusive and promote equality for all (Domingo & McCullough, 2016). As submitted by some of the deans, being motivational includes having the ability to constantly influence others to achieve and perform well even when the conditions are bad. This also includes radiating positive energy to workmates so that they are geared to achieve organisational goals, as some participants share below:

Sikho and Peace strongly felt that people need someone who inspires them to carry on no matter the situation and never get tired of helping others, motivating them, and creating positive energy amongst teammates.

Sikho added that "she has the drive and positive energy that spills over to workmates, which makes them want to perform more under her leadership".

This view that being motivational is necessary for one to be appointed into a leadership position is further revealed in other participants' responses below:

Sivuno shared that:

“You have to be inspirational and motivational. You have to be able to influence your team to perform even if things seem impossible. Effective communication serves well in inspiring others because words make or break.”

Similarly, Joy explained that: “to be considered a good leader, one needs to motivate team members and provide direction on what goals need to be achieved, and how we work together”.

The responses quoted above clearly indicate a strong view by the participants that leaders need to have the courage to motivate others in performing their duties in line with institutional goals and objectives. Therefore, employees need to be inspired to carry out their mission to achieve their vision even when they face the worst situations. In addition, motivation and inspiration are key characteristics of an effective leader. Leaders show the way and help employees see the way ahead. Leadership has a role in empowering others and engaging with employees through organisational guidelines and enabling them to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organisation (Gill,2012). According to Jiang, Gao and Yang (2018), motivation and inspiration help team members to accomplish tasks even during difficult times. Women face various huddles in their career path and need more inspiration and motivation to go on.

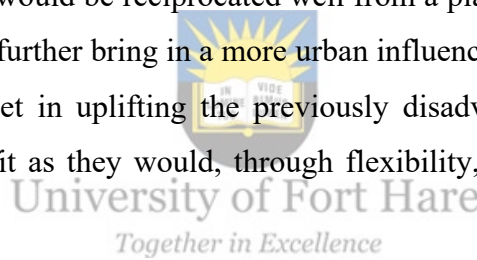

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5.3.3 Roles and responsibilities of participants

The roles and responsibilities that the faculty deans who took part in this study undertake include marketing the faculty (internally and externally), stakeholder management, oversight, setting goals and formulating faculty vision and personnel recruitment. The data also indicated the roles they did not perform and those they had to undertake, some grudgingly, whilst some undertook but did not find joy in performing. In such cases, it seemed as though the female deans' identities as mothers and wives affected them. For instance, they reported that they could not work beyond normal working hours, resulting in tension between the leaders and the dean, the females conflict with their family roles. Women also do not want to travel far away from home as that affects their personal time. The deans also identified roles they performed reluctantly, which they regarded as potentially putting their emotional and physical beings at risk.

Marketing the faculty

Marketing the faculty was one of the roles identified by the participants from Uhuru and Freedom Universities, respectively. Kohler (2016) defines marketing as the science and art of exploring, creating and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a consumer. This is one of the roles that some respondents reportedly enjoyed performing and are satisfied with their marketing duties. Marketing offers them an opportunity to interact with the outside world, forming business partners to enhance their faculties' progress and improve financial benefits for the institution. In such relations, potential employers for their students are also established, and the institution gets more stakeholders that have the best interest of the institution. These participants are both based in the Faculties of Education. Both participants were reportedly mandated to champion personal development of previously disadvantaged population groups because Uhuru university, in particular, is rural-based, and that is where development has been very slow and left behind somehow. Respondents would know and understand the environment better and, therefore, intervene in the exact areas where gaps are openly visible and improve on what they have to make the best of it. Developmental intervention and initiatives would be reciprocated well from a place of mutual understanding. Freedom University would further bring in a more urban influence with new technology ideas and cultivate a new mindset in uplifting the previously disadvantaged population groups. Youth would largely benefit as they would, through flexibility, try to catch up in acquiring new skills.



It has been mentioned that respondents reportedly market their faculties to both external and internal audiences. The targeted audience for the faculty marketing includes potential students, communities, businesses, prospective partners from the region and the international community.

The programmes offered by the faculty, the quality of teaching offered motivates and creates multi-skilled graduates to be. Marketing is done to attract partners, attract more student enrolment, and help students get employment and internship from employers.

Freedom University also offers degrees that facilitate skills suitable for today's corporate world, from well-equipped learning facilities. The calibre of teaching staff they have being diversity-oriented produces versatile graduates. Marketing is done at Freedom University to attract business partners and to raise funds for specific programmes within the faculty. This is revealed in responses provided by Sihle from Uhuru University and Sikho from Freedom University.

Sihle from Uhuru University, aged 56, said that:

“I lead the marketing campaign through various strategies that include corporate social responsibility, public relations and advertising in various channels. I also do presentations regarding our faculty on various platforms. I am proud and passionate about selling the faculty that I lead to a vast external stakeholder community like prospective students, community members, and the business world.

I market the faculty as a whole and share details about the programmes we offer in the faculty. I also market our graduates because we are confident about the quality of teaching and learning we offer, so we produce competent graduates who are ready for work and market them for internship programmes.”

Sikho from Freedom University also does marketing for the Faculty of Education, which she leads. She targets audiences like prospective students and business partners for funding in enhancing certain educational programmes offered in her faculty and employees for employment placements of their graduates. This is revealed in the response below, where she said that:

“When opportunities are present, I market the faculty to the business world and prospective students. Various aspects of the faculty are marketed and these include the quality of our degree programmes, the facilities that we have and the calibre of teaching staff we employ. In marketing the faculty, we often face a tainted image of the university resulting from strikes and violent demonstrations by students captured by media. I am very active in raising funds for the faculty.”

Although the roles and responsibilities of a dean might differ across the world, some basics are universal. The role of a dean has evolved over the years (Arntzen, 2016). Historically, the emphasis of the dean’s position was on student issues and curriculum concerns with little focus on financial oversight and staffing (Bytydzienski, Thomas, Howe & Desai, 2017). However, with the advent of the executive dean’s position, the roles of the dean have also increased. In South Africa, the new role of the dean now encompasses implementing and setting strategic goals, leading change, financial management, people management as well as stakeholder management (Seale & Cross, 2018). The data analysed above confirmed that deans market faculty products and services such as prospective students, degree programmes,

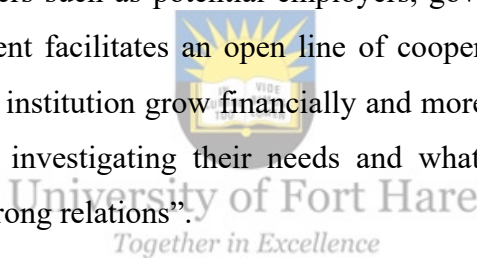
and academic excellence strategies. This is because faculties have become sub-brands that can be marketed to an external audience.

Stakeholder management

Stakeholder management is the process of maintaining good relationships with the people who have the most impact on your work. Communicating with each one in the right way, organising, monitoring, and improving the relationship can play a vital role in keeping them on board. Data collected also indicates that faculty deans have a role to play in stakeholder management. Some participants had this to say:

Sihle from Uhuru University, heading the Faculty of Education, indicated that she promotes her faculty to international and regional partnerships and engages stakeholders like potential employers, government, industry players and community. She said:

“As a dean, I am also responsible for promoting international and regional partnerships, as well as engaging stakeholders such as potential employers, government, and communities. This stakeholder management facilitates an open line of cooperation and attraction of new interests that could help the institution grow financially and more people with a high level of interest. This is done by investigating their needs and what they can offer within the institution while building strong relations”.



This shows the nature of her stakeholder management tasks, including promoting the faculty to international and regional partners as well as engaging local stakeholders such as government, industry players and society at large.

Stakeholder management is practised to ensure that the faculty maintains good relations and create new ones, further analysing their needs and expectations whilst implementing various tasks to engage with them. Sikho and Joy, both from Freedom University, indicated that they tooplay a role in stakeholder management. That includes holding meetings and interfaces with the various stakeholders to appreciate their concerns and expectations and how they can partner with the faculty and the university at large. They hold meetings with stakeholders such as community, government, businesses, and potential partners from within and outside South Africa to discuss areas in which they can cooperate and bring in business intelligence. Any other benefits that can help develop the university at large are discussed whilst maintaining relations that are formed in such meetings.

This is what Joy had to say:

“Being a dean means much of the activities of the faculty rest on my shoulders. I am at the helm of the faculty. I am the faculty’s gateway to the outside world. Most of the days, my time is spent on meetings with stakeholders such as the government, communities, industries, and businesses that would be employers to our students, potential partners from South Africa, Africa, and even overseas.”

Similarly, Faith mentioned the role of the faculty dean as the face of the faculty to external stakeholders.

“To operate smoothly, the faculty needs funding; as a result, I also play a pivotal role in sourcing funds from local and international donors. My duty is to make sure that the concerns and interests of key partners of the university are catered for and addressed. Meeting relevant people to discuss issues of development, administration and implementation of policies that relate to academic programmes, staffing, course scheduling and faculty budget is a daily task.”

The stakeholder management role involves engaging various stakeholders with vested interests in the faculty (Seale & Cross, 2018). This might include but not limited to students, communities, industry captains and partners from across the world. Data presented above shows that four of the women who took part in this study mentioned stakeholder management as part of their role as academic deans of their respective faculties. This confirms the assertion by Awang-Hashim Noman and Kaur(2017), who highlighted that the position of dean is evolving into a management role. This is a departure from the role of a dean decades ago, where a dean was more concerned with the academic affairs of the faculty (Alghofaily, 2019). It can be formidable, revealing as well as an exciting and necessary part of any university’s regular planning and improvement agenda to engage in open discussions with its key stakeholders. Faculty deans have an expansive and complex role to play in the fabric of the universities and communities served by their programmes. Nevertheless, many newly minted deans discover that the experiences they acquire while climbing the ranks of academia do not adequately prepare them for their new responsibilities. Presently, as mentioned above, concerning the role of a faculty dean, rather than managing relationships with a small group of faculty peers, they assume responsibility for cultivating relationships with internal staff and external stakeholders, including donors, alumni, the media and the business community.

Around the world, changes in university systems have often been conceptualised as managerialism. This ideology is identified as underpinning universities' structures and practices (Kinman, 2014). In a nutshell, managerialism entails managing every aspect of the academic endeavour in order to ensure better efficiencies.

Oversight

The participants also reported that they also play an oversight role. The participants who reported that they perform an oversight role are Sihle and Sivuno from Uhuru University, Sikho from Freedom University and Peace from Major University. All four participants play an oversight role, but they differ in the tasks they play. Sihle plays an oversight role on how the faculty operates, whereas Sivuno provides a budgetary oversight and further supervises the use of resources in the faculty, similar to the oversight role played by Peace in her institution. Sikho's role is also similar to Sivuno in the budgetary oversight role. However, only Sivuno performs the role on two different tasks, budget and resource utilisation.

Clearly, the oversight role shows to be an important role for a faculty dean as all the institutions have the role allocated to a faculty dean. The areas where they perform these oversight roles are key to a successful operation of any faculty, use of resources, budget management, faculty operation and supervisory management. Oversight role shows to be one of those management responsibilities they embrace. This role gives them a position of power in the areas where they execute authority as they take up their responsibility. Below is how they have expressed themselves in their oversight role:

In her own words, Sihle said:

“Lastly, I form part of the top management that provides oversight with regards to how the faculty operates.”

Sivuno was more specific with regards to the nature of the oversight role she plays. She is involved in budgetary oversight for departments that fall under the faculty which she leads. She gave the following response.

“I also provide budgetary oversight for the departments that fall under my leadership and give feedback on what needs to improve or change.”

Sikho mentioned that she has to ensure that departments stick to their budgets. This is revealed in her response below.

“My responsibilities also include formulating objectives and goals for the faculty. I am also involved in evaluating performance by departments in relation to meeting goals and achieving set targets. Overseeing departmental budget is my responsibility.”

Meanwhile, Peace talked about her role as the overall supervisor and how faculty resources are used in the various sections. In her response, she said,

“As an academic dean, my other role is to ensure that I supervise the use of resources within the faculty. These include material and financial resources. Again, the intention is to make sure that resources are used appropriately to advance the best interest of the faculty as a whole.”

These findings agree with available literature that states that the oversight role is an ongoing duty for deans in South African universities. The oversight roles include budgetary and curriculum oversight (Seale & Cross, 2018). Curriculum oversight is considered a key and traditional role of faculty deans. Burkinshaw and White(2017) advance that deans are there to ensure best academic standards are observed in the faculty, as well as promoting research in the faculty. On the other hand, Campos (2016) outlines that at inception, the deanship was to ensure academic oversight.

Recruitment of personnel

Staffing or recruitment of personnel for the faculty was reportedly a role that faculty deans perform. This means that the dean is involved or has some influence on staff recruitment in the faculty. Three of the six women who took part in this study revealed that their duties involved recruiting staff for the faculty. Sihle from Uhuru University reported that she is involved in recruiting personnel in consultation with senior university management, whilst Joy from Freedom University shared that she is responsible for ensuring that the faculty is adequately staffed. Peace from Major University shared that she participates in personnel recruitment and may recommend people for recruitment. However, Peace further expressed that she does not like this role as it involves unions and is always politicised. Although she can recommend a person to be hired, she has never recommended anyone so far. Below is how they expressed their views on the recruitment process:

Sihle from Uhuru University revealed that she is responsible for the recruitment of staff in conjunction with senior management. In her own words, she said:

“As a faculty dean, I am the captain of the ship, that is, if a faculty were a ship. I am partly responsible for the recruitment of personnel within the faculty in consultation with the university's senior management.

In the same way, Joy from Freedom University also stated that she is responsible for ensuring that the faculty is staffed by skilled people as well as promoting skills development. This is shown in the response she provided below, where she said:

“I am also involved in ensuring that the faculty is staffed by adequately skilled staff and promoting the development of skills within the departments in the faculty.”

PeacefromMajorUniversityalso said:

“My roles and responsibilities as a dean include taking part in the recruitment of personnel within the faculty, as well as recommending people for appointment as head of departments. For example, if a vacancy emerges in the faculty, I can recommend a possible candidate to fill up the position from within the faculty. The person is then appointed in the position in consultation with the university's top management. I have never recommended anyone so far, and this is one of those tasks I do not like because of the union involvement and its political nature.”

As revealed in the analysis provided above, some of the deans are involved in the recruitment of personnel to fill vacancies in their faculty. This allows women to help deserving women get employed and possibly climb to top management positions. However, extant literature shows that women having the powers to recruit may not translate to the recruitment of more women because women who are already at the top are sometimes scared of losing their positions to ambitious women (Nguyen, 2013).

Academic leadership

The participants also disclosed that they are involved in ensuring that curriculum standards are improved and maintained.

Sihle from Uhuru University leads curriculum review and ensures conformity to expected quality. She narrates the following:

“I am also responsible for leading curriculum review and ensuring that the faculty or department adheres to standard academic practices in ensuring quality. This includes ensuring that research work is up to standard, the learners are provided with adequate learning resources and the minimum accepted teaching time is achieved.”

The above paragraph is revealed, amongst others, by Sihle from Uhuru University, who reported that it is her role to lead curriculum review and ensure that high-quality standards are adhered to for quality purposes. Making a similar point, Joy from Freedom University ensures that university standards are maintained by ensuring compliance to the academic standards through liaising with accrediting bodies as well as ensuring that the faculty is adequately staffed by skilled people, promoting the development of skills within the departments in the faculty. Regarding their role with the accredited bodies, Sikho from Freedom University shared that her role is to ensure that academic programmes in the faculty meet accreditation and regulatory requirements that the accrediting and regulatory agency expects from time to time. According to Peace and Faith, both from Major University, a regulatory agency upholds the credibility of degrees and ensures that quality standards are observed. The implications from participants are that they are doing almost the same when viewing and maintaining curriculum standards because that is prescribed legislation. This is how they shared their views:

Joy from Freedom University is responsible for ensuring those standards are met through liaising with accredited bodies. This is revealed in her response below.

“Ensuring that academic standards are complied with through liaising with accrediting bodies, I am also involved in ensuring that the faculty is staffed by adequately skilled staff and promoting the development of skills within the departments in the faculty. Successes experienced regarding academic standards include recruitment of qualified staff has resulted in increased research supervisors with PhD degrees and publication of research papers. However, resources such as recent textbooks, reliable internet and ICT gadgets are still inadequate compared to the number of students we enrol in the faculty.”

“My responsibilities as dean include, in no order of importance, ensuring that academic programmes in the faculty meet accreditation and regulatory requirements that the accrediting

and regulatory agency expects from time to time. For instance, my last role was submitting all the required paperwork to an accrediting board so that a new programme we are offering in our faculty can be approved. The experience was fulfilling, and I will always look back with pride knowing that I played a role in securing accreditation of the programme during my tenure.”

Sikho from Freedom University ensures that academic programmes offered by the university meet accreditation and regulatory requirements. This is shown in her response below:

Similarly, Peacefrom Major University is responsible for upholding the credibility of the degree programmes offered by the faculty that she is leading. In her response, she said:


“Amongst other roles, I am responsible for guarding and upholding the credibility of the qualifications offered by our faculty. This is done by making sure that quality standards and practices are observed.”

Faith from Major University said:

“Specifically, my roles and responsibilities as a dean include ensuring that academic activities and programmes within the faculty are up to the required standards. This includes curriculum reviews according to the expected quality assurance”.

Since the inception of the dean position, curriculum oversight has been one of the roles that deans were expected to perform (Seale & Cross, 2018). As academic leaders, deans play a pivotal role in advancing the strategic objectives and operational requirements for success in local universities hence the active role mentioned above played by the faculty deans. In addition, the institutions of higher learning have to follow guidelines stipulated in the National Review of Professional and Academic Programmes in Education offered by higher education institutions in South Africa.

HEQC on the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has the mandate in terms of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1977) to:

- Promote equality in higher education
- Audit quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions
-  Accredite programmes of higher education

The development of standards is an important element in contributing to the successful implementation of the HEQSF, as standards provide benchmarks to guide the development, implementation and quality assurance of programmes leading to qualifications. Standards registered for higher education qualifications must have legitimacy, credibility and common, well-understood meaning. CHE will ensure that there are appropriate safeguards to ensure the integrity of standards development and quality assurance processes, respectively(HEQSF, pp. 13, 16).

5.3.4 Roles and responsibilities that participants embrace and those which they do not embrace

Findings from data collected on this reveal that the deans embrace administrative roles and management roles more than other academic roles.

It also emerged that faculty deans are reluctant to perform certain duties. This results in them spending less time with their families. Another role that they are reportedly not very content in administering is the disciplinary hearings, especially those that involve rebuking colleagues. As the higher education context seems highly politicised, participants are reportedly reluctant in dealing with politicised students.

The deans shared that they embrace administrative roles, particularly attending meetings and responding to email correspondence. For instance, Faith states the following:

“I genuinely enjoy the faculty meetings, which are meant to address challenges we face as academics. They bring a sigh of relief. In one Senex meeting (Faculty meetings that are done quarterly), while discussing processes of graduation and others issues, I found my voice. As I speak, several proposals I suggested are being implemented”.

Such administrative roles bring fulfilment and job satisfaction to the deans because they perform those from the comfort of their offices, sometimes with their office assistance. Meetings are about sharing the achieved objectives or even ironing out work challenges, where sharing and learning take place. Personal development is key, whether informal or formal, so gatherings facilitate informal coaching, enhancing one’s development in a particular learning area. The administrative role theme emerged from the responses given in relation to roles and responsibilities that women embrace more in deanship positions. Evidence from their responses shows that women were reluctant to single out the

responsibilities which they embrace more. Instead, they began by indicating that they embrace all their roles and responsibilities but went further to single out a specific role they enjoy performing.

Based on the responses given by the women in leadership positions who took part in this study, holding meetings with people of diverse backgrounds is a role they embrace more. This is revealed in the response provided by Sihle from Uhuru University, who indicated that although she cannot pinpoint a role responsibility that she embraces more, she advanced that she enjoys holding meetings with people from various professional backgrounds. In her own words, Sihle said:

“I cannot really say there are roles and responsibilities that I embrace more than others. When I applied for the job, I knew what I was getting myself into and what I was expected to do. However, I must say that there are duties that I like to perform more than others. I enjoy representing my faculty when I have meetings with interested parties from outside the institution. Meeting new people from different professional backgrounds has been the most fulfilling part of my job. I enjoy doing this because it brings a sense of fulfilment and job satisfaction to me. For instance, when my points are not given the same consideration as those of a man, especially when a man chairs the meeting.”

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Faith from Major University mentioned that although she equally embraces all her roles and responsibilities as a dean, she indicated that there were roles that she enjoys performing than others. This is revealed when she said:

“Although I equally embrace much of my responsibilities as a dean, I must admit that there are other roles I enjoy performing more than the others. Amongst the roles I embrace and enjoy more is replying to emails and meeting with stakeholders such as government, industry players, representatives from other universities, travelling to new places on duty as well as motivating my subordinates to work hard so that we achieve our goals as a faculty. Discharging these duties make me feel that I am in charge. Being in meetings where important decisions are made and being part of the process for such a big institution is amazing, and it feels good.”

Additionally, the deans revealed that they also embrace management role and responsibilities. Deans who took part in this study indicated they perform duties such as goal setting, curriculum and budgetary oversight. The deans also revealed, through their responses, that

they are willing to embrace management roles. Three out of six participants confirmed they embrace certain management roles, as shown in the responses provided below.

Joy from Freedom University mentioned that she enjoys settings goals and achieving those goals. Setting goals is encapsulated in the strategic management practice (Seale & Cross, 2018). In her own words, she said:

“I have to say that setting goals and eventually achieving those goals feel good. This is because my success as a dean is judged by the extent to which I lead the faculty into achieving those goals. All the other responsibilities are there to support the achievement of those goals.”

Sikho had this to say about roles and responsibilities:

“The responsibilities that I embrace more include marketing our faculty to the business world; this helps our graduates to get employment after graduating. I also enjoy leading marketing efforts to prospective students so that we can enrol enough students in our faculty. I also enjoy fundraising for the faculty and getting the faculty into partnerships that help our students and the faculty at large.”



Her response reveals that she embraces the role of marketing and fund-raising for the faculty.

Peace singled out curriculum and budget oversight as roles that she embraces more. This is revealed in the response she provided, as shown below:

“Ensuring that the curriculum is up to the required standards, making sure that the faculty is staffed with people who are adequately qualified, and overseeing compliance with budget allocations are some of the responsibilities I embrace more because these are the things that I feel keep the faculty at its best.”

Based on the views presented above, the management roles include setting goals, marketing the faculty and providing curriculum and budgetary oversight. These are all management roles that are performed by a dean as identified by Seale and Cross (2016) in their research paper titled “Leading and managing in complexity: The case of South African dean”.

Regarding the roles and responsibilities that the deans are not prepared to embrace, the data revealed the deans did not pinpoint the specific roles they do not embrace. However, there are certain conditions of their job which they do not find comfortable. These include working

beyond normal working hours and travelling far away from family on work duty. Views regarding roles and responsibilities which they are less prepared to embrace are captured in the responses below.

Sikho, a married woman from Freedom University, said that although she knew that her position would involve working more hours, she hopes there was less of that. This shows she is not prepared to work longer hours. In her own words, she said:

“I embrace all my roles and responsibilities; it is only that there are other things that just come when you are in a senior position like deanship. For instance, the times when I travel on duty and have meetings after normal working hours. This is something I knew would happen, but I just wish there was less of that because it conflicts with my family roles.”

Furthermore, Joy, a single mother from Freedom University, said:

“I am not keen to embrace working more hours than those that I am normally expected to work. As a single mother, I still have to attend to family responsibilities that I cannot delegate to my maid. I have teenagers, and I want to be a hands-on mum. However, by the mere fact that I am a leader, there are days I have to go home later than everyone else. Besides the fact that I need normal rest like everyone else, I have a parenting role to play. I do not want to be an absent parent because of work-related duties.”

Peace, a married woman from Major University, shared her concerns with travelling for days on work-related commitments. This is revealed in her response below:

“Honestly, I cannot say there is a role or responsibility that I can single out as one that I am not keen to embrace as a dean. However, some issues associated with being a leader in an academic institution are a bit difficult to handle, especially for women. These include working more hours than others, and sometimes staying away from home for days due to work-related commitments.”

Unlike the other women, Sivuno, a married woman from Uhuru University, indicated she was not keen to embrace the role where she has to be stern and assertive. This leadership trait is more common in male leaders and explains why a female leader is not keen to embrace it. In her own words, Joy said:

“The responsibilities that I am not so keen to embrace are those responsibilities that require me to rebuke underperforming or undisciplined members of staff. For example, I hate to recommend expulsion or suspension to a student or member of staff. Naturally, it is not something in me. However, part of responsibilities requires me to do this if the need arise.”

Faith, who is married and works as a dean at Major University, indicated she is not keen to embrace the roles that involve solving student grievances. She contended that students could be difficult to deal with, especially when they are in a combative mood to have what they want. In her own words, Faith said:

“As a dean, there are times when I have to deal with and address student’s grievances. What is more challenging is that our students are politicised to the extent that they can be difficult to deal with logically and convincingly. For instance, when students want a certain lecturer to go, they can be so persistent and forceful. This is often too difficult to deal with for me, yet that is part of my job that I am not so keen to embrace. In response to this, I usually have to ask someone senior or a respected male figure to intervene.”

Of all the participants, Sihle, who is a single mother and employed as a dean at Uhuru University, is the only one who indicated that she has no role or responsibility she was not willing to embrace because she was aware of what she was getting herself into even prior to her appointment into deanship. This is revealed in her response below:

“There are no responsibilities which I can pinpoint and say that I do not embrace these. As said earlier, I embrace all the roles and responsibilities that come with being a dean of a university faculty. I knew what I was signing up for when I was appointed.”

Data gathered from the women who took part in this study show that there is no role or responsibility that is not embraced. However, they revealed that there are other issues associated with their roles and responsibilities that they are not willing to embrace. These can be identified as working overtime, travelling and leading to family-work conflicts. Women are uncomfortable with roles that conflict with their family roles (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). Some indicated that there are issues associated with their roles and responsibilities which they are not prepared to embrace. Equally important to mention is that most faculty deans have not been adequately prepared, nor are they supported for the expectations versus the lived realities of deanship. Although deans are credible scholars, many do not have the necessary management know-how or experience, which is a key challenge today for

deanship. Neither are they prepared to deal with role ambiguity and, in some cases, alienation from the academic in their new position. Unfortunately, many South African universities have not yet adopted a strategic approach to leadership development with appropriate interventions that respond to institutional and individual needs.

These dean experiences are supported by the standpoint feminist theory, which views women and men different. There is a patriarchal system at play in institutions of higher learning, as pointed by the various narratives from the female deans. Gender neutrality is not an option in certain universities. As it stands, to achieve what the liberal feminist theory strives to achieve is still a long way to go. The liberal advocate for equal opportunities between gender. A view held by many government instruments which try to emancipate women, especially in education.

5.3.5 Challenges experienced by the faculty deans

The faculty deans also shared some challenges they have experienced in becoming leaders of their respective faculties. Challenges that women face in the workplace are well documented globally, although they may vary from sector to sector. Some of the challenges can be linked to gender (Brower, Schwartz & Bertrand, 2019; Castilla & Benard, 2010). Findings from data collected from the deans show that the selection process, work-life conflicts, discrimination, lack of support, and lack of mentors are challenges experienced by the women. All the women indicated that they had experienced one challenge or more in relation to their positions as faculty deans.

It is important to reflect on the stated challenges because they impede many females from ascending into positions of power. Whilst every participant echoed a multitude of challenges, these were more prominent in their verbatim. These challenges are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

Selection process

People believe that men deserve their elevated status and women deserve their subordinate status at work (Castilla & Benard, 2010). The participants in this study have shared a similar attitude as quoted from above, expressing that a selection process impedes their aspirations to take up leadership positions.

They commonly bemoaned the selection process as being biased against women. They believe that there is a lack of encouragement and support from their male counterparts towards female colleagues applying for top leadership positions. Because women are associated with lower status and men with higher status, women experience backlash for pursuing high-status roles (leadership) in the workplace (Rudman et al.,2012). Even institutionally, the participants shared that there is no mentoring for those who wish to take up leadership positions. In other words, the atmosphere is commonly such that men are the best for top leadership positions. This unfair practice is still the order of the day even in our era, which shows that policies to correct this are very slow or not implemented at all. When a woman has finally reached the top position, like deanship, in the case of this study, the woman will likely have a male boss to report to directly (deputy vice-chancellor) and still have another male as a vice-chancellor above, as depicted in the research sites' profiles of this study, Figure 5.1 above. Sihle and Peace did not mince words in sharing their similar experiences, as stated below.

Sihle from Uhuru University, who directly reports to a male deputy vice-chancellor, said:

“I did face challenges. I feel that since men occupy the majority of management positions in the higher education institutions, they often recruit men. The men occupying management positions seem to prefer other men in management positions because they view men as more capable than women. Therefore, it was not easy for me to get this position. I applied for the deanship position for years to no avail. I think an application by a woman made it uneasy because I had the same qualifications and experience as my male counterparts, but all the previous years, positions would be given to men. Even though it was devastating and demotivating, I never gave up on the hope of becoming a faculty dean one day. Hence, I kept on trying until I got the position”.

Similarly, Peace from Major University, who also directly reports to a male deputy vice-chancellor, lamented the selection process, citing the fact that it is dominated by men who appear to like having everything going their way.

“Males dominate the higher education sector leadership, and it seems like everything has to happen the men's way for it to be acceptable. As a result, the leaders' selection processes and expected qualities resemble a masculine figure that discriminates

against women. For example, leadership in the higher education sector is expected to be characterised by sternness and firmness traits which are not typical of a woman. This is the major challenge I experienced, and the fact that it is still practised even today when we have laws protecting women against unfair employment practices show that even a decision to implement such effectively rests in the hands of men who do not support women to hold top leadership positions”.

The results shown above concurs with available literature, which indicates that women often find themselves disadvantaged by selection processes mostly formulated by men who never put themselves in women’s shoes to come up with a selection process favouring both genders (Gandhi & Sen, 2020). In response to this, it has been recommended that the selection process be gender sensitive so that aspirants from all genders are considered through a fair process (Alsubaie&Jones, 2017).

Work-life conflicts

The participants also identified work-life conflict as a challenge that they face as leaders. Work-life conflicts, in this case, refers to competing roles of women at work and home. The participants affected in this case are Sihle from Uhuru University, reporting directly to two male leaders (DVC and VC) and Faith from Major University, and reporting directly to male DVC and a Male VC. Joy from Freedom University has not experienced work-life conflicts before but shares that she sees women struggling with work-life conflicts. Joy reports to a female DVC, who then reports to a male VC.

Sihle, aged 56, from Uhuru University, had the following to say:

“I must also add that balancing family roles and work responsibilities is a key challenge that can reduce one’s chances of being promoted to top management position. I have been having challenges balancing my motherly role with work responsibilities. Unplanned meetings jeopardise my family plans, as I have to be exemplary too, in instilling family values to my children”.

Faith from Major University, married and 60 years of age, had this to say:

“To be a leader, one needs to be always available even beyond normal working hours. This is seen as a sign of greater commitment to one’s job. As a woman, a mother and a wife, this conflicts with work responsibilities.”

Although Joy, aged 59 from Freedom University, confessed that she had not faced challenges of this nature yet, but took advantage of government policy, her qualifications and experience as her tools to guard against any discrimination or ill-treatment could come her way. She, however, indicated that she is aware that women do experience challenges relating to gender stereotypes, lack of mentors and family-work conflicts. This is how she said it:

“Without ignoring the fact that women aspirations are often dampened by challenges such as gender stereotypes, lack of mentorship and family-work conflicts, I have not faced any significant challenges in becoming a leader. On the contrary, my qualifications, experience and government policy promoting equality at the workplace has enabled me to compete for leadership positions fully.”

Work-life conflict is a common challenge faced by women in leadership. This is a conflict between work roles and responsibilities versus family roles and responsibilities, which are largely shouldered by women, especially in the African context (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). This is corroborated by responses provided by the two women who confessed to experiencing difficulties in balancing their roles as deans and their family duties. Whilst Joy had observed women struggling to strike a balance between family and work responsibilities, as a single person, she could be flexible with her time. Secondly, Joy directly reported to a female deputy vice-chancellor, while Faith and Sihle reported to a male deputy vice-chancellor, which means that Joy may have established a healthy work relationship with her female boss without any gender and power issues, contrary to what was experienced by the other two women.

Gender discrimination

Women from whom data was collected in this study confirmed that they had experienced discrimination and gender stereotypes. From the data shared by the participants, it appears that discrimination is not explicit since it is an offence to discriminate on whatever grounds or basis in South Africa.

As experienced by the research participants, discrimination can be seen in the response provided by Sihle from Uhuru University, who said that she had experienced negative perceptions about her leadership capabilities. She further mentioned that women are perceived as weak and ineffective leaders who have to work double hard to prove themselves. This is revealed in the response she gave as presented below:

“There is this perception of women viewed as weak and ineffective leaders who need to put more effort than men to be accepted as leaders. So, sometimes in meetings, my point would not be given the same consideration as those from my male counterparts.”

Similarly, Sivuno, aged 53, from Uhuru University, bemoaned experiencing gender stereotypes. She singled out instances where a woman gets discouraged from taking up a leadership position due to gender (subtle discriminatory narratives). She also added that reporting to a male boss can be problematic, as he expects things to be done according to expectations rooted in masculinity. This is revealed in the response below, where she said:

“The major challenge I faced and which is still a challenge for most women in all sectors is gender stereotypes. When you share your desire to become a leader or when you become a leader, male colleagues give you all sorts of negative feedback that is not justified by any logical facts. Reporting to a male boss then becomes a challenge, as his expectations are grounded in masculinity. The expectation is that as a woman, I must do things the way a man would usually do, instead of allowing me to be myself and use my suitable leadership style. The male boss creates an impression that women are not capable; only a man can do things right or correctly.



Sikho, aged 55, from Freedom University, mentioned that she experienced both gender discrimination and racial discrimination. This is revealed when she said:

“The challenges I experienced as a black woman in becoming a leader included racial discrimination, gender stereotypes and power relations in the workplace; this limited the support I needed for my tenure as a leader in the higher education institution. For example, male colleagues from the white race had funny jokes about some of us black women not being exemplary on time and dress code issues. This would come out during staff meetings. It sounded like an indirect suggestion that a black woman is not exemplary and so should not be the face of the faculty as the dean becomes the face of that faculty. When asked to elaborate on the matter, responses would be playful and holding no water, but I could feel the racial attack, and nothing could be done about such as we would not get anything tangible to work on.”

Peace from Major University, aged 57, also shared some of the challenges she experienced. She mentioned that her challenges were not visible for everyone to see, but only the results of the challenges were visible. However, her responses revealed that an unfavourable

environment and male dominance are impediments that she has experienced. In her own words:

“The significant challenges I faced are not challenges that you can specifically isolate. They are not some written rules or anything but about the environment itself. Males dominate the higher education sector leadership, and it seems like everything has to happen the men’s way for it to be acceptable. I really experienced some form of power abuse, a harsh environment, and a discriminatory selection process, but the confidence I had carried me through because I did not feel inferior, as I had the qualifications, skills, and experience for my position.

Similarly, from Major University, Faith, aged 60, also lamented the presence of gender-based discrimination and stereotypes by men who are dominant in leadership positions. She says that they decide what is right, acceptable, or done because of their dominance. In her own words:

“Other challenges are mainly subtle gender-based discrimination and stereotypes by our male counterparts, who are the majority in top management level and have a greater say with regards to what should be done, what is right or correct, or even acceptable.”

The majority of women who took part in this study indicated that they had been discriminated against in one way or another. The discrimination and stereotypes include women’s contributions not getting the same consideration as their male counterparts, discouragement from male colleagues and being sidelined from making important decisions. This finding supports the assertion that gender discrimination is a challenge that women from all professional backgrounds continue to grapple with (Gandhi & Sen, 2020). Discrimination against women is a result of various factors of which cultural stereotypes is the most significant cause of discrimination against women in South Africa (Kok, 2017). The lineage of these normative dogmas may be attributed to the sexual division of labour in society (Katuna, 2014). Thus, gender discrimination at the workplace can typically be traced back to the roots of certain segments of time and contexts of society. Like in its prior times, modern and industrial life have reshaped the social roles and have impacted men and women differently (Cundiff & Vescio, 2016). Hence, the subtle perpetuation of discrimination in South Africa and other parts of the world.

Lack of support

The female deans also pointed out that they have experienced a lack of support in different ways. This is revealed in the responses provided by the women as presented below.

Sivuno from Uhuru University pointed that she did not have enough support from workmates and mentors to help her realise her dreams and goals. This is seen when she said:

“The other challenges that I experienced include lack of support from workmates to achieve my goals and mentors within the institution.”

“The challenges that I experienced as a black woman in becoming a leader include racial discrimination, gender stereotypes, lack of networks and relationship in the workplace to support my ascendency to the post of a dean in the higher education institution.”

Peace from Major University also pointed out that, lack of financial resources and connections within the system was a significant challenge she experienced as a dean. This is seen in the following response where she said:

“Lack of financial resources, as well as lack of connections in the system, worked against me until I eventually broke the barriers through continuous efforts and hard work. This means that I kept on trying and proving that I am capable of being an effective leader. I felt unequally treated, but my response was to keep on trying and to amplify the voices for equality at the workplace whenever an opportunity presents itself.”

The women said that they lacked support in the form of financial resources, mentors to encourage and guide them, and networks where they can get support for their careers. Women have often cited a lack of adequate support as an impediment to achieving leadership goals (Goryunova, Scribner & Madsen, 2017). This shows that despite various efforts by the international community and local government to support women, they still face a lack of support at the workplace. Despite various opportunities and other funding resources such as the National Research Foundation Thuthuka Programme, which provides research funds for women and the previously disadvantaged, some female academics still feel restricted in voicing their concerns about the barriers they encounter in higher education (Moodly, 2015). Some note race or gender-related discrimination, while others cite jealousy from other

women. For instance, a previous study showed that the scarcity of women in leadership positions is not only a result of men but women as well. This is because some women who are already in top management positions are unwilling to mentor or support other women who aspire to be leaders because they feel threatened by them. Other challenges that have been identified as hindering the progression of women to leadership positions in the higher education sector include but are not limited to the glass-ceiling, lack of mentors, gendered organisational culture, a culture of service and caring leadership, prioritising family life, non-linear and non-chronological pathways in career-pathing, a lack of role models and lack of support by top management in a patriarchal organisational setting (Chanana, 2013; Nguyen 2013; Grimshaw & Francis, 2014).

The deans suggested several strategies for overcoming the challenges discussed above. These strategies include mentoring, networking, transformation, support, and personal development. These identified strategies concur with assertions by Moodly and Tony (2017), who cited mentoring, personal development and networking platforms as interventions that can be used to minimise the effects of the challenges experienced by women in leadership. The themes are presented and discussed below.



5.3.6 Strategies for overcoming challenges experienced by faculty deans

This section discusses strategies that can be employed to overcome challenges that women face in leadership positions. Women continue to face challenges despite the enactment of various laws and statutes. The challenges manifest through underrepresentation in positions of power and influence (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016). This suggests that legislation and statutes alone are not enough to solve the current imbalances between the number of men and women in positions of power and influence. To that end, women who took part in this study were asked to respond to the research sharing the strategies they think can overcome their challenges. The strategies that emerged from the data collected from the participants include mentoring, networking platforms, support and personal development.

Mentoring

Some of the women who took part in this study indicated that getting mentors or mentorship programmes can help to overcome the challenges that women in leadership experience. Sihle from Uhuru University said finding a mentor to encourage and support her would help her overcome the challenges she has experienced.

The same sentiments were echoed by Sihle from Uhuru University, who said: “Forme, finding mentors that encourage and support me has been helpful to overcome challenges that I face. A mentor would be someone who has experienced all the obstacles that I am fighting today and has a great deal of knowledge on how to handle certain issues that relate to leadership.”

Joy from Freedom University also mentioned that receiving advice and encouragement from those who are already leading has helped her to carry on even when she sometimes felt like quitting. This is revealed in the response she provided, where she said:

“Getting advice and encouragement from those that are already in the system has been helpful. There are times when you think maybe this is not for me as a woman, But with encouragement, you then find your feet and carry on.”

Faith from Major University revealed that although she cannot say that she managed to overcome the challenges she experienced, she pointed out that seeking advice from senior colleagues has helped her minimise the effects of the challenges she experiences. This is shown in her response where she said.

“Overcoming the challenges has not been easy. The challenges are individually experienced by most, if not all, women. Instead of saying I managed to overcome these challenges, I should say I have minimised the effects of the challenges by seeking advice from senior colleagues where necessary. In addition, I had to make use of legal provisions that favour the plight of women. Getting appropriate skills and relevant knowledge has also helped me. These allow me to be judged not based on my gender but by what I am capable of.”

Mentoring is a method that has been identified to help overcome some of the leadership challenges that women face in the higher education sector (Grant, 2012). This intervention is important because it allows upcoming leaders to receive an impartation of knowledge and skills from those that are already experienced.

Networking

Sihle from Uhuru University said she used some connections to help her overcome the challenges she encountered as a leader in the higher education sector. Networking is helpful for women to gain knowledge, influence and the social capital that enhances their chances as leaders (Cullen-lester, Woehler & Willburn, 2016). She connected with other female leaders who hold various positions in academic institutions and other sectors. In her own words:

“I also network with other leaders leading in academic institutions and even in other sectors. We share ideas and experiences on how we can improve our status as leaders in the academic fraternity. Sharing each of our challenges allows us to hear further how some of us managed situations; wisdom comes with practice”.

Personal development

Some of the women indicated that they had used personal development to overcome the challenges they experience. This is revealed in the response provided by Peace from Major University, as presented below.

“Furthering my studies and attaining new skills has enabled me to minimise the impact of the challenges that I experience as a leader. More skills and knowledge has enabled me to understand the world around me and how to deal with issues that might arise. In addition, education has given me a chance to prove that what men can do, women can also do, thus, minimising discrimination against our gender.”

Similarly, Faith from the same Major University said that she had been helped by developing new capabilities.

“Attending leadership workshops, seminars and self-study on leadership have been helpful. In addition, I have been focused on getting appropriate skills and more relevant knowledge, which has been very helpful. This created an opportunity for me to be judged based not on my gender but what I am capable of.”

Personal development involves equipping oneself with new skills and knowledge (Chisholmburns, Spivey, Hagemann & Josephson, 2017). This is confirmed by the response given by Peace from Major University, who revealed that furthering her education has been an effective tool for her to fight gender stereotypes and discrimination.

Essentially, what the data provided on interventions that can be employed to reduce challenges faced by women deans reveal that mentoring, networking, support and personal development are key strategies that can be utilised. The list is, however, not exhaustive compared to what is contained in extant literature. According to Nguyen (2013), what seems to facilitate women’s advancement are personal factors, family support and mentorship support” (Nguyen, 2013). Personal factors reflect self-motivation, independence, being a hard worker and confidence. Family support included help from extended family members and

partners and a strong father influence (Turner, 2007; Cubillo & Brown, 2003 as cited in Nguyen, 2013). Mentoring by senior leaders who support women and networking advanced career path into leadership and management. Regardless of the realisation that women can play a pivotal role in uplifting other women, there are empirical studies that have proven that women can be an obstacle to the elevation of other women. Nguyen (2013) also cites various authors highlighting lesser-known factors that have facilitated women's advancement. These include early education and career success, teacher's inspiration, administrative career advancement, accepting an interim position, as well as adopting non-traditional leadership sty

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented data that was collected from the six female participants who work as faculty deans in South African universities. The thematic data analysis approach was employed in analysing the data. The themes that came out of the data collected were discussed under the categories that included leadership experiences, the roles and responsibilities of the deans, challenges experienced, overcoming the challenges and recommendations to improve the experiences of women in leadership positions at the universities in South Africa. The study established that through their experiences regarding what one needs to be appointed a dean, female deans indicated that one needs to have relevant experience, appropriate qualifications, be visionary, transparent and motivational. Even though women may have all these qualities, they often find themselves sidelined due to cultural stereotypes and related challenges that include lack of mentors, lack of support, work-life conflicts, gender discrimination and selection process within the higher education sector. To address these challenges, women suggested mentoring, provision of financial support, networking platforms and means of personal development as possible solutions to the challenges they experience.

The study explored roles and responsibilities performed by female deans and established that they market their faculties, provide oversight, curriculum development and review, participate in staff recruitment and promote equality in higher education. Amongst their responsibilities, they revealed that they embrace all their responsibilities but are not comfortable with certain conditions that come up when they carry out their deanship responsibilities. These include working overtime and extensive travelling. As part of the university leadership, faculty deans also appear to be increasingly challenged by management

issues from the academe, as revealed in the Changing Academic Professions survey conducted in various countries in 2007 (Coates et al., 2010). In this regard, leadership development may be an enabler for improved effectiveness and performance of deans, particularly if aligned to institutional objectives, taking cognisance of the complexities of change in the South African higher education arena.



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CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This phenomenological study explored the lived leadership experiences of women who work as deans in South African universities. The experiences shared include the experiences and views of the participants' leadership, roles of female faculty deans, how the female deans respond to their roles, and how the faculty deans respond to their leadership experiences. The female deans also shared leadership challenges they face and recommendations that can be implemented to improve their leadership experiences in South African universities.

The discussion in chapter five comprised findings related to the research questions and other additional themes that surfaced from analysing the data. This chapter discusses the findings based on the themes that emerged from the participants' stories and compares the findings to the conceptual framework of this study and the literature review. Additionally, the chapter concludes with implications and recommendations for further research.

6.2 Discussion of Findings


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The literature review and research were guided by a set of objectives as presented below:

The specific objectives are:

- To analyse gender representation in leadership in the deanship position in three universities utilising feminist theories.
- To investigate how female faculty deans conceptualise leadership in their respective posts and their experiences in fulfilling their mandate.
- To establish how women leadership experiences affect the implementation of the Employment Act policy in institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, to find workable solutions to address problems faced by females in leadership positions in universities.

. The following sections provide discussions and conclusions regarding specific objectives and questions formulated at the proposal stage of the study.

6.2.1 Female faculty deans' leadership experiences

The research anticipated that respondents would share experiences that relate to their own characteristics of leadership. However, the views shared were based on the lived experiences of the faculty deans, not what they thought were the correct responses. Nevertheless, various themes emerged from the data that was presented in chapter five.

The research established that experience is considered a key attribute that qualifies one a leader. This is seen when the faculty deans were asked to share what it meant to be a leader and respond to why they were appointed as deans. From the responses provided by the deans, the researcher concluded that experience is a crucial characteristic of leadership in South African universities. For instance, Sihle mentioned that “a leader needs to have the necessary experience and knowledge,” she also mentioned that the history she had in the educational sector and the competencies demonstrated in her faculty are among the reasons she was appointed a faculty dean.

Sivuno shared that she “had learnt what works and what does not work”, whilst Joy intimated that “you have to have practised what you would want to implement as a leader at some stage in life, be it at school, community, work or in career.” Sikho indicated that she was appointed dean because of her “proven record of competences and performance in achieving the organisation's set goals in various levels, that had a bearing on the decision to appoint her a leader of the faculty.”

Drawing from the evidence shared above, it is evident that most female deans who took part in this study believe that experience is an essential attribute of leadership as revealed by the deans themselves. These findings align with Giri and Santra (2010) findings that experience fuels effective leadership. The participants mentioned their background in the education sector and leadership experiences as factors that enabled them to climb to their current leadership positions. According to Nelson, Schroeder and Welpman (2014), a person's career background is important when considering him or her for a leadership position. It is that experience that enables a leader to bring along new leadership styles or change management according to the relevance of what the organisation needs at a particular time. Since five out of six female deans alluded to the notion that for one to be a leader, one has to possess relevant experience, it can be concluded that experience matters when it comes to leadership appointments.

The research also established that qualifications, knowledge, and skills are important factors for becoming a leader in South African universities. This assertion is drawn from data presented in the previous chapter in which the importance of qualifications, knowledge and skills are revealed to be an important attribute of leaders according to the experiences of female deans who took part in this study. The findings show that respondents believe that qualifications play an important role in qualifying them to be leaders holding the offices they hold today.

This is seen where Sihle mentioned that “qualifications are non-negotiable”, Sivuno pointed out that to be a leader, a person should “beskilled”. Sivuno also added that she was appointed a dean because she had “acquired several qualifications that suit the deanship position in the faculty.” Additionally, she showed a great belief that she would have never been appointed a dean without having “suitable qualifications.” Joy indicated that she was appointed a faculty dean because she possessed “relevant knowledge and qualifications applicable for that leadership position”. Peace highlighted “sound educational background” as a factor that contributed to her appointment as the faculty dean. Faith underscored the need to “be skilled” and identified her “abilities to provide leadership” as one of the reasons she was appointed a dean in her faculty.

Drawing from the fact that the majority of the participants indicated that based on their leadership experiences, qualifications, knowledge and skills are important components needed for one to be a leader, it is safe to conclude that qualifications, knowledge and skills are essential considerations for one to become a leader in South African universities. These findings are in line with literature that outlines that for one to hold a dean's position in South Africa, one has to have specific qualifications, and the lowest level of the qualification should be at least a master's degree level. This is supported by the fact that all the participants who took part in this study were either holders of a Master's or PhD degree. In addition, five out of the six female deans who were interviewed for this study highlighted qualifications, knowledge and skills as characteristics of leadership. Education has been proven to influence leadership style in a study conducted by Bhargava, Kotur and Anbazhagan (2014). This means that a leader has to have some form of education and or skills. Furthermore, knowledge and skills acquired through educational qualifications are lived experiences that shape one into a leader (McMaster, 2018). The findings above confirm that in their

experiences as leaders, the women who took part in this study have realised that knowledge, skills and qualifications are important attributes that a leader should possess.

Furthermore, based on the experiences of the female deans who were considered for this research, having a vision emerged as one of the characteristics that a leader should have. This was engraved in various responses shared by the participants as presented in chapter five. The responses shared by female faculty deans showed that vision and direction were important attributes of leadership.

For instance, Sikho mentioned that “being a leader means leading the organisation towards the achievement of its vision,” whilst Sivuno explained that to be a good leader, one needs to “carry the vision of the organisation”. Although Peace mentioned the need to carry more enormous responsibilities as a leader, she also identified vision as an important part of leadership by stating that “onehastoassembleateamthatexecutesthevision.” She also added that she was appointed a dean because she can “sellavision”to subordinates and colleagues. In the same way, Joy and Faith indicated that they believe that a leader has to “set” and “showdirection”.

As a result of the evidence above, it can be concluded that having a vision is considered a leadership characteristic by most female faculty deans who took part in this study. Leadership literature attaches great importance to the presence of vision to a person holding a leadership position, without which, the leader is bound to fail. A vision is the corner post to which all the efforts of an organisation are directed towards. The findings of this study concur with the assertions made by Priest and Jenkins (2019), who advance that having a vision is a significant attribute of leadership in the education sector. There is overwhelming evidence that the majority of women who took part in this study believe that to be a leader, one has to have a vision which is necessary for leadership because it is the factor that inspires followers of a leader to lift their expectations beyond the current situation. Vision is associated with transformational leadership (Bell & Harrison, 2018). Transformational leadership is concerned with meeting the current goals and targets, improving the stake, and aiming higher. Five of the six female deans highlighted that a leader should have a vision and steer the team/organisation in the right direction.

The research also established that transparency, inspiration and motivation are key characteristics that a leader should possess. The female deans who took part in this study

learnt through their experiences that a leader has to be transparent, inspirational and motivational. A majority of the female faculty deans gave responses that revealed that they believe leaders should be transparent, motivational and inspirational.

For instance, Sivuno shared that a leader has to “be inspirational and motivational” and “able to influence” team members and subordinates. Furthermore, she revealed that she was appointed a dean because she is “a good communicator and has the ability to inspire others”. Joy added that a leader “needs to motivate subordinates and provide direction.” Peace indicated that she was appointed a faculty dean due to the “drive and positive energy that spills over to subordinates, which make them want to perform more under her leadership”. In addition, she indicated that as a leader, she treasures transparency.

Basically, what the women were saying is that through their leadership experiences, they have learned that there is a need to be motivational, inspirational, and transparent to be an effective leader. Generally, transparency, motivation and inspiration are considered key elements for leadership. The three characteristics positively contribute to the leadership role that a person is assigned to. In addition, women in leadership have been found to be more transparent than their male counterparts. More than ever before, today’s world demands transparency due to the increase in corrupt activities. Therefore, it is not surprising that the faculty deans who took part in this study noted that being transparent was key in how one handles the given leadership responsibilities.

In addition, subordinates and followers need to be inspired and motivated to carry the vision forward even when they face the worst situations. University faculties have a vision that faculty deans should seek buy-in from team members, mostly through motivation and transparency. Being a transparent leader involves keeping subordinates informed about issues within an organisation without unnecessarily oversharing information and giving them a platform for feedback (Felten & Finley, 2019). The present study's findings corroborate the previous studies in concluding that motivating and inspiring others is also a very important characteristic of leadership (Boykins, Campbell, Moore & Nayyar, 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; Northouse & Lee, 2016).

Although these studies were not specific to the tertiary education sector, their findings can be inferred to the general management discipline. With increasing corruption in developing countries, the need for a transparent and accountable leadership practice has gained

momentum. It was expected that the female deans' leadership experience shows the need for transparency in their leadership encounters. Transparency is critical because it fosters trust, which eventually leads to healthy workplace relationships. In addition, motivation and inspiration are key characteristics of an effective leader. Motivation and inspiration help team members to accomplish tasks even during difficult times (Jiang, Gao & Yang, 2018). Additionally, women face various hurdles in their career path and need more inspiration and motivation to go on. The majority of the faculty deans identified motivation, transparency, and inspiration as characteristics that one should possess to be appointed a leader.

In summary, based on the faculty dean's experiences regarding leadership characteristics expected of a leader in a tertiary institution, experience, vision, qualifications, knowledge skills, transparency and motivation turned out to be the common leadership attributes.

6.2.2 Faculty deans' experiences with leadership styles

The research also anticipated that participants would share experiences on the leadership styles in executing their leadership duties. Therefore, the interviews were structured in a way that would gather information on these experiences. Several leadership styles can be followed in executing leadership, including autocratic, charismatic, transformational, democratic, and authentic leadership styles.

However, based on the experiences shared by the female faculty deans, the democratic leadership style and authentic leadership styles were the most common.

There were female faculty deans whose leadership styles fit the democratic leadership style. The democratic leadership style represents a sharp departure from the autocratic leadership style. The democratic leadership style stresses the importance of involving team members and subordinates in decision-making and valuing their input so that they own the decision taken too (Winn, Hall & Erskine, 2017).

Sihle intimated that she believes a leader should listen “to subordinates, involve them in decision-making as well as accept responsibility when things go wrong as a result of a leader's misjudgment, that makes one a good leader”. Involving subordinates in decision making is synonymous with a democratic leadership style. Sivuno shared that she gives her subordinates a chance to share their views regarding how the faculty should run and what needs improvement. Joy shared

that she tries to be “accommodative to views from her subordinates”. There are also indications that leaders can use more than one leadership style as they dispense their duties. For instance, Sivuno mentioned that her style in leading the faculty is a mixture of firmness and democracy”. This indicates that she combines two leadership styles, meaning that leaders can subscribe to one or more leadership styles.

Democratic leadership style is evidently a phenomenon that some of the faculty deans have experienced. In line with the standpoint theory that informed this study, it is important in the ever-changing human society to promote active and equal participation of the team in decision-making (Konsell, 2005). Additionally, feminist standpoint theorists believe that the participation of women in decision-making must be done to achieve redistribution of power and bring gender balance in all spheres of life through a woman’s perspective. This view can be interpreted to influence the inclination towards the democratic leadership style by women who are still fighting for equality.

The finding that female deans who follow the democratic leadership style is supported by a previous study that established that women have a penchant for listening to various ideas and are less likely to be autocratic than their male counterparts. Tremblay (2017) advances that women are more peaceful and accommodative compared to men.

This perhaps explains why women follow a democratic leadership style. Leaders who follow this leadership style believe that making decisions does not solely rest with the leader alone. In fact, democratic leaders emphasise gathering views and opinions from the subordinates and making decisions that have the team's backing (Fiaz & Saquib, 2017).

Authentic leadership is also common among the university female faculty deans, based on the information shared. Authentic leadership is a leadership style in which the leaders strive to lead by example. Key features of this type of leadership include being transparent, morally upright and authentic in delivering leadership responsibilities. Authentic leadership came into being as a response to corruption by people in senior leadership positions.

Hinting on authentic leadership, Sihle shared that the leadership style is about “leading by example”. This is typical of authentic leaders because they tend to ascribe importance to leading by example. Faith also highlighted the need to lead in a way that

“promotes equality and persuades people from engaging in corrupt activities”, thus indicating that she is a disciple of authentic leadership.

Drawing from the above, we can conclude that some female faculty deans follow the authentic leadership style. Leaders who follow this leadership style continuously self-regulate and practice self-awareness while simultaneously exerting a positive influence on their subordinates and the organisation at large (Liu et al., 2018).

The majority (4) of the female deans were pro-democratic leadership, while only two were for authentic leadership. There is also evidence that a combination of leadership styles in discharging leadership duties has been utilised. The research anticipated that the deans would indicate that they follow transformational leadership style; however, findings proved otherwise. The South African society is going through a transformation to create an environment where there is equality for all, focusing on women as a historically disadvantaged group. As such, it was expected that women would be at the forefront in implementing transformational leadership.

6.2.4 Roles and responsibilities of the faculty deans

The research also focused on understanding the faculty dean's views towards their roles and responsibilities. Marketing the faculty internally and externally emerged as one of the faculty deans' roles. Sihle highlighted that one of her responsibilities is “marketing the faculty,” whilst Sikho correspondingly indicated that she “markets the faculty to the business world and prospective students.” Drawing from this evidence, it is conclusive to assert that the faculty deans perform marketing duties as part of their leadership roles within their respective faculties. Traditionally, the deanship position was mainly concerned with dealing with student issues and curriculum concerns and with little focus on financial oversight and staffing issues (Bytydzienski, Thomas, Howe & Desai, 2017). However, this study discovered that the faculty deans in South African universities also market their respective faculties. This finding aligns with that of a study by Seale and Cross (2018), who discovered that the present-day new role of the faculty dean in South Africa encompasses implementing and setting strategic goals, leading change, financial management, people management, and marketing as stakeholder management. Although the roles and responsibilities of a dean might differ across the world, some basics are universal.

The role of a dean has evolved over the years (Arntzen, 2016). However, with the advent of the executive dean's position, the roles of the dean have also increased.

The research also concludes that female faculty deans also practice stakeholder management as part of their roles and responsibility. The stakeholders that need to be catered for include international and regional partners, employers, students, management, government and the local community. A dean said that, "As a dean, I am also responsible for promoting international and regional partnerships, as well as engaging stakeholders such as potential employers, government and community", thus revealing the role and the type of stakeholders that require management. Joy indicated that more time is "spent on meetings with stakeholders such as government, community industry, businesses which would be employers to their students, potential partners from South Africa, Africa and even overseas." Similarly, Sikho meets with "people from different sectors" who are interested in the faculty's activities and makes sure that the "concerns and interests of key partners of the university are catered for and addressed". Management of stakeholders encompasses meeting with them to discuss issues such as development, administration and implementation of policies that relate to academic programmes, staffing, course scheduling and faculty budget which is a daily task (Seale & Cross, 2018).

This might include but not limited to students, communities, industry captains and partners from across the world (Seale & Cross, 2018).

The research also concludes that female faculty deans play an oversight role within the faculty they lead. The oversight is usually budgetary, financial, curriculum and the overall performance of the faculty against its set goals and those of the institution at large. Additionally, by virtue of being deans, the deans form part of the senior management within a university hence they also play an oversight role on activities at the institution. This is supported by submissions presented in chapter five as gathered by the researcher.

For instance, Sihle shared that she "provides oversight with regards to how the faculty operates." Likewise, Sivuno indicated that she "provides budgetary oversight for the departments that fall under her leadership and give feedback on what needs to improve or change." On the other hand, Sikho shared that part of her responsibilities is to "help ensure that departments stick to their budgets." Similarly, Peace shared that she has "to make sure that resources are used appropriately to advance the best interest of the faculty." These

findings corroborate the findings of a study by Seale and Cross (2018), who found that among other roles, deans are also responsible for providing oversight in relation to budgets, curriculum and overall performance of the departments at large.

Furthermore, the research concludes that the deans are also responsible for staffing for the faculty and department in consultation with other senior managers. Staffing or recruitment of personnel for the faculty is an old age role of the dean as recorded by Shah, Memon and Gopang (2018). Sihle indicated that she is “responsible for recruiting personnel within the faculty in consultation with senior management of the university.” Whilst Joy shared that it is part of her responsibilities to ensure “faculty is staffed by adequately skilled staff and promoting the development of skills within the departments in the faculty.” Peace highlighted that she takes part in the “recruitment of personnel within the faculty, as well as recommending people for the appointment as head of departments.”

Hence, drawing from the above, it is evident that the female faculty deans participate in the staffing of their respective faculties either by direct employment, approving filling of vacancies, or recommending people for employment to the higher authorities or senior management. These findings are in congruence with those of a study carried out by Lavigne (2019), which revealed that faculty deans are also responsible for recruiting and staffing personnel with relevant skills for their faculties.

This means that the dean is involved or has some influence in recruiting staff to work in the faculty. From the data presented in chapter five, it seems that the staffing role of the deans is a popular responsibility since half of the deans who took part in this study revealed that their duties involve recruiting staff for the faculty.

Based on the findings presented in chapter five concerning the deans' roles, this research concludes that faculty deans are also responsible for curriculum standards. This role includes supervising curriculum development, ensuring that curriculum standards are up-to-date and in compliance with the expected national standards. This can be seen where Sihle shared that she plays a leading role in the “curriculum review” process and making sure that departments “adhere to standard academic practices”. Similarly, Faith said she is involved in curriculum review. The deans also ensure the quality of the curriculum by liaising with relevant accreditation boards. In her own words, Joy said she ensures

that “academic standards are complied with through liaising with accrediting bodies.” Sikho shared that she makes sure that “faculty meets accreditation and regulatory requirements that the accrediting and regulatory agency expects from time to time.” Peace also indicated that part of her responsibility is “upholding the credibility of the qualifications” offered by the faculty that she leads.

Drawing from the evidence above, it can be summed up that based on their experiences, faculty deans who took part in the study are responsible for maintaining curriculum standards in various ways, like meeting accreditation requirements and reviewing the curriculum to adjust to meet the needs of the prevailing job market. This was a commonly shared view amongst the female deans since most (five) of them who took part in this study indicated that they were responsible for maintaining curriculum standards. The findings of this study in this regard are in agreement with observations made by Shah, Memon and Gopang (2018), who concluded that it is the role of the faculty deans to ensure that curriculum in various departments within a faculty are up-to-date and in sync with the changing economic demands.

The research also asserts that faculty deans are responsible for setting faculty goals and providing a vision for the faculty within the institution’s vision and goals. According to Lavigne (2019), the role of the deans has been expanding and now incorporates some elements of strategic management. As a result, the present-day faculty dean performs some strategic management roles, such as setting goals aligned with the vision.

Evidence that the female faculty deans interviewed in this study practice goal setting and vision formulation for their respective faculties is seen in responses such as one provided by Sihle, in which she hinted that one of her responsibilities is to make sure “that the faculty is aligned to the mission and the vision of the university.” Sivuno added that it is her primary duty to set faculty goals and making sure those are met in the prescribed time. Moreover, Joy shared that she leads the process of “setting goals and objectives” in line with the university’s mission. Finally, Peace stated that her role is to “help further the mission and the faculty’s vision”.

Therefore, faculty deans are responsible for goals and vision formulation. In addition, they ensure that activities and personnel are in sync with the goals that need to be achieved and the mission that needs to be accomplished within the faculty. Findings regarding this aspect are

in line with those of a study carried out by Bell and Harrison (2018) who found that it is widely accepted and expected that a leader should have goals and objectives at any level. It is thus conclusive to assert that the deans who took part in this study play a vital role in setting goals that talk to the institution's vision.

6.2.5 Female faculty deans' responses to their roles

The fourth objective of the research focused on exploring how the women who are working as faculty deans respond to their various roles and responsibilities. Questions under this objective were formulated in a way that gathers information on the roles they embrace and those they do not embrace. In providing a summary of the findings regarding how the deans respond to their roles, conclusions are divided into two sections. The first sub-section discusses roles to which the female deans respond positively. Therefore, those are the roles and responsibilities which they embrace. While the second section discusses the roles and responsibilities that female deans are not willing to embrace.

6.2.5.1 Roles embraced by female faculty deans

Drawing from the data presented in chapter five on this aspect, the study concludes that female deans embrace administrative roles. These administrative roles include responding to external inquiries and correspondence, holding meetings with people of diverse backgrounds and replying to emails. It should be noted that the deans were largely reluctant to disclose the roles and responsibilities that they embrace more than the others. Perhaps this was because they felt that they would not be seen fit to perform all leadership roles if they pinpoint a certain preferred role. For instance, Sihle shared that she does not have a role or responsibility that she embraces more than the other; however, she indicated that she “enjoys representing the faculty in meetings with interested parties from outside the institution”. Meeting people from different professional backgrounds has been the most fulfilling part of the job, and she embraces that role more. Faith asserted that she was more fascinated by “replying to emails and meeting with stakeholders although she equally embraces all her roles and responsibilities. These stakeholders include government representatives, industry players and representatives from other universities.”

Although the study concludes that there are female faculty deans who embrace administrative roles, there are differences in the type of administrative roles they embrace. Some like meeting people, whilst others like responding to email correspondence. These findings

corroborate the results that were provided in a study conducted by Miller (2017), where it was concluded that women are keen to embrace administrative roles than management roles. The finding that the deans enjoyed meeting stakeholders was not expected in this study because previous studies have established that women are not comfortable with roles such as meetings as they usually run beyond regular working hours, taking over one's family time.

The research also concluded that female faculty deans embrace management roles more than the other roles. As espoused by Seale and Cross (2018), the new position of a faculty dean in South African university has expanded to include management roles. In some South African universities, the position of a dean has been branded as executive dean. An example of the management role embraced by the deans is setting goals. Supporting evidence to this conclusion is seen in the statement shared by Sivuno, who indicated that "setting goals and eventually achieving those goals feels good". This is so because the female deans feel that their success is hinged on how they set achievable goals and lead the faculty to accomplish those objectives.

The research also concluded that deans embrace the role of marketing their faculty to the external world. Women are naturally gifted with the ability to market products. Mosley, Boscardini and Wells (2014) finding shows that female deans embraced the role of marketing their faculties as was anticipated in this study. Evidence that led to this conclusion was revealed by Sikho, who noted that the responsibilities that she embraces more include marketing the faculty that she leads to the business world because it helps graduates from her faculty get employment and improve the faculty's enrolment.

The other role that is embraced more by female faculty deans is the oversight role. They provide oversight on budgetary and curriculum issues. This includes ensuring that the curriculum is up-to-date and in compliance with the requirements set out by accrediting bodies. Additionally, the curriculum needs to be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is responsive to the market needs, which have become dynamic over the past years. Additionally, their oversight role includes ensuring that financial resources are used for budgeting for and not mismanaged by the allocated departments. More revealing to this aspect is a statement shared by Peace, who hinted that she enjoys ensuring that the curriculum is up to the required standards and overseeing compliance with budget allocations.

In summary, the female faculty deans embrace management roles that are embraced more by the faculty, marketing the faculty, and providing curriculum and budgetary oversight. These are all management roles that are performed by a dean as identified by Seale and Cross (2016) in their research paper titled “Leading and managing in complexity: The case of South African Deans”.

6.2.5.2 Responsibilities and roles not embraced by the female faculty deans

The research anticipated that women working as faculty deans would identify responsibilities and roles they are unwilling to embrace as expected. However, drawing from the data presented in chapter five, it is concluded that the female faculty deans do not have responsibilities and roles that they are not willing to embrace, but they have certain issues associated with their responsibilities which they are concerned about. These issues largely make it difficult for them to balance work life and responsibilities at home. This is seen when Sivuno shares that she needs to balance work and family duties; hence she cannot work after hours and is not prepared to embrace roles that demand attention after hours. She adds that there are times she has to “sacrifice her time just to get things done”. However, she also indicated that, as a married woman with kids, it is challenging to balance duty time and family time as roles overlap due to time factors.

Some of the faculty deans were fully aware that the responsibilities that they were taking up might involve working more hours; however, they hoped that the working hours could be lessened. Working outside regular working hours is the primary concern that they are not eager to embrace, irrespective of whether they are willing to do all their responsibilities. Sivuno indicated that there are times when she travels on duty and has meetings after regular working hours. Sikho shared that she is “not keen to embrace working extra hours”. It is also concluded that some of the female faculty deans accept the fact that as leaders, they are expected to be the last to go home. However, this can conflict with their motherly duties. These findings share a resemblance with extant empirical literature, which shows that if women are made to choose between their family and work, they are largely inclined to choose their families. Likewise, the female faculty deans who took part in this study are not keen to embrace responsibilities that deprive them of family time.

The research established that female deans are not prepared to embrace assertiveness and take a strong stand on issues that demand the use of position and power because such traits are common in men and are a symbol of masculinity. Women want to provide leadership in a

way that is compatible and in sync with their abilities. A faculty dean named Joy, for the purpose of this study, shared that she is not comfortable with responsibilities that require her to rebuke underperforming or undisciplined members of staff or recommend expulsion or suspension to a student or even a staff member.

It is also concluded that as faculty deans, some of the women who took part in the study are not keen to be involved in a politicised environment due to much freedom that students have of expressing themselves, in some cases, using vulgar and abusive language. In most instances, masculinity and patriarchal tendencies are leveraged to find solutions that female deans lack. Faith shared that as a dean, she had to deal with student's grievances. However, what she finds more challenging is that university students are politicised to a large extent, so they can be difficult to deal with logically and convincingly. Hence she is not willing to embrace responsibilities related to that.

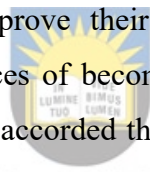
Therefore, the responsibilities that female faculty deans are not keen to accept are those that demand extra working hours, depriving them of their family time, roles where the position of power is used to solve issues, as well as dealing with politicised students. These findings agree with those of Finstad-Million and Naschberger (2014) who found that women are less likely to embrace roles that involve working overtime, travelling, and family-work conflict. Women are generally uncomfortable with roles that conflict with their family roles (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016).

6.2.6 Challenges faced by women leaders in South African universities

The study's fourth objective focused on obstacles experienced by women in their endeavours to be leaders within South African universities. Drawing from the data presented in chapter five, the selection process hinders the progression of women to the management level in South African universities. The female deans who took part in this study outlined that since men largely manage top management in South African universities, the selection criteria are crafted to fit male candidates. A dean named "Peace" shared that the 'selection processes and expected qualities of the leaders resemble a masculine figure, something that she does not have as a woman. She added that it was one major challenge she experienced and still exist even today though she has already been appointed as a faculty dean.

The study also concludes that work-life conflicts hinder women's progression into top management positions within South African universities. Due to top management positions' demands, women often choose only the roles that enable them to balance work and family responsibilities. One faculty dean shared that “balancing family roles and work responsibilities is a key challenge that can reduce one’s chances of being promoted to top management position”. Faith indicated that she experienced challenges relating to work-life balance because she has been required to work beyond normal hours to prove how committed she is to the job. However, this often conflicts with being a wife and a mother who subscribes to a woman's cultural role at home.

Furthermore, the research concludes that discrimination has been hindering the progression of women to top management positions in South African universities. A majority (five) of the six faculty deans who were interviewed regarding this issue have experienced discrimination at one point in their efforts and endeavours to be in management positions. The discrimination included being seen as weak and ineffective just because of one’s gender. This results in women being required to prove their abilities twice more than their male counterparts, thus, lessening their chances of becoming leaders. Sihle shared that there are instances where a woman’s point is not accorded the same consideration as that of her male counterpart



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It was also noted that women experience discouragement to the extent that they end up feeling reluctant to take leadership positions just because of their gender. Sihle added that there were times she was discouraged by family, colleagues, and friends from taking up the position of deanship. The research also concludes that reporting to a male boss can be problematic as it becomes a fertile ground for discrimination. This is because their male bosses expect female subordinates to do things in ways rooted in masculinity.

The research concludes that women fail to progress to top positions because of racial discrimination. This is regardless of the fact that racial discrimination is outlawed in South Africa, racial challenge continues its existence in subtle ways. Sikho shared that she had experienced “racial discrimination and gender discrimination”, which slowed down her advancement into dean's position. Peace and faith shared the same view and shared that because of the large male number at the top, they have the power to influence what is seen as wrong or right, which largely disadvantages women with leadership aspirations. The result is

usually a scarcity of women in top management positions, as is the case in most tertiary institutions in South Africa.

The research further concludes that lack of support poses challenges to women's efforts to take leadership positions in South African universities. According to the shared experiences of the female faculty deans harnessed by this study, the lack of support from colleagues and mentors in preparing women for leadership roles is significant. Again, the lack of good working relations and networks to support women ascendancy to higher positions, like deanship, in higher education institutions is still a setback. The female deans felt that, although their colleagues were not the appointing authority, their support is invaluable in seeking promotion.

Lack of financial support and connections within the system is also a setback that results in women being reluctant to take up leadership positions in universities. Men are usually well resourced and have connections within the university leadership system, making their chances of taking up leadership roles higher than women. Sivuno indicated that she experienced a disadvantage due to a “lack of financial resources and network connections in the system”, as that worked against her until she eventually broke the barriers through continuous efforts and hard work. This suggests that there is a lack of support, persistence, and hard work in overcoming the challenge.

In summary, women fail to take up leadership positions because of a lack of emotional support, financial resources, mentors for guidance and encouragement as well as career networks within the institutions of higher learning. This finding indicating that lack of support for women hinders their ascendancy into top leadership positions corroborates findings of a study by Goryunova, Scribner and Madsen (2017), who concluded that lack of adequate support impedes achieving leadership goals.

This concurs with the available literature, which indicates that women often find themselves disadvantaged by selection processes mostly formulated by men, who never put themselves in women's shoes and come up with a selection process favouring both genders (Gandhi & Sen, 2020).

Furthermore, the finding that work-life-conflict is a common challenge faced by women in leadership agrees with a current study that revealed a conflict between work roles and

responsibilities versus family roles and responsibilities shouldered mainly by women, especially in the African context, is a hindrance to leadership ambitions (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016).

The conclusion that women are discouraged from taking up leadership positions due to gender-based discrimination, and to some extent, racial discrimination, corroborates findings of research conducted by Gandhi and Sen (2020) where they concluded that gender discrimination is a challenge that women from all professional backgrounds continue to grapple with.

Challenges that women face in the workplace are well-documented globally, although they may vary from sector to sector. Some of the challenges can be linked to gender (Brower, Schwartz & Bertrand, 2019), which shows that despite various efforts by the international community and local government to support women, they still face a lack of support at the workplace.

6.2.7 Overcoming experienced challenges by the female deans

The fifth objective of the study focused on exploring ways through which challenges faced by women in their efforts to become leaders in South African universities can be overcome. Drawing from the data presented in chapter five, the research concludes that mentoring female leadership aspirants may be useful in overcoming the challenges faced by women. The women in the study suggested that if women are mentored, challenges posed by a lack of mentors would be non-existent. This conclusion was reached based on the indication by other female deans like Sihle, who shared that “finding mentors that encouraged and supported her helped overcome the challenges she faced”. Joy also highlighted the usefulness of mentorship when she shared that “getting encouragement and advice from those already in the system has been helpful”. Faith revealed that, although she cannot say she managed to overcome the challenges she experienced, she pointed out that seeking advice from senior colleagues has helped her minimise the effects of the challenges experienced.

Additionally, the research concludes that networking is another useful strategy for overcoming challenges faced by women in leadership. Sharing her experiences, Sihle indicated that the use of networks to overcome the challenges she encounters as a leader in the higher education sector is very encouraging and life-long learning, as she networks with other female leaders holding various positions in academic institutions or other sectors

sharing ideas and experiences of how best the plight of leaders in the academic fraternity can be improved.

The research also concludes that to overcome challenges that result in the scarcity of women in top management, there is a need to accelerate transformation in tertiary institutions. Some faculty deans argue that transformation will enable the creation of a conducive environment where women can flourish in their careers.

The research also concludes that providing all forms of relevant support is vital in overcoming the challenges experienced by female leadership aspirants in the university setting. For example, support from family and other professionals helped two of the female deans to be where they are today. Joy disclosed that family support helped her overcome conflicts between work and family life, whilst Sivuno hinted that support from other women helped her deal with the challenges she experiences in her daily leadership journey.

There was, however, an appreciation that a lot needs to be done to increase the level of support, including financial support.

The research indicates that personal development will help minimise the challenges encountered by women who want to take up leadership roles. Two of the female deans who took part in this study intimated that personal development has helped them overcome some of their challenges. Peace shared that furthering her studies and attaining new skills assisted her in minimising the impact of challenges that she experienced as a leader. Additionally, Faith shared that “attending leadership workshops, seminars and reading books about leadership has been helpful.”

In summary, strategies that can be used to overcome challenges that prevent or discourage women from taking up leadership positions in South African universities include mentoring, personal development, networking and support. These findings concur with the assertion by Moodly and Tony (2017), who cited mentoring, personal development and networking platforms as interventions that can be used to minimise the effects of the challenges experienced by women in leadership.

The findings that mentoring can help overcome the challenges faced by aspiring female leaders are in line with findings of a study carried out by (Grant, 2012) who concluded that mentoring is a useful method that can be used to overcome some of the leadership challenges

that women face in the higher education sector. This intervention is necessary because it allows upcoming leaders to receive an impartation of knowledge and skills from those that are already experienced.

In addition, personal development to minimise hurdles faced by women in leadership, equipping oneself with new skills and knowledge, confirms the conclusions from a similar study carried out by Chisholm-burns, Spivey Hagemann and Josephson (2017) investigating a similar phenomenon.



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CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

The research aimed to explore the experiences of female leaders in a university setting. As such, six female faculty deans were considered for this research. The findings from the present study have several implications, including theoretical, practical, and policy implications. The overall findings of the study demonstrated that women face a wide range of issues in their efforts to become good leaders. Regardless of these challenges, there is a strong belief that their experiences as leaders can be improved if certain measures are put in place to ensure that the challenges they face are minimised or eradicated. Despite the advances women have made in many areas of public life in the past two decades, in the area of leadership in higher education, they are still a long way from participating on the same footing as men (Lumby & Coleman 2007). This is not only a feature of the higher education system reported in much of the literature on women and educational leadership in developed countries but also in developing countries such as South Africa. The context of this research was significantly different with regards to culture, in terms of Western culture, where the majority of studies on women's leadership experiences are concentrated. However, the female deans shared the same leadership characteristics, which are similar to those that are already contained in extant literature.

Findings in this study added to the existing literature concerning the challenges faced by women in leadership within the tertiary education sector. The findings illustrated that women face a range of barriers in their context that impact their leadership experiences. Although the women used similar words to label these barriers, the descriptions and associated meanings were highly contextual, located in broader political discourses with differences within the context and even within individual responses. The challenges identified include lack of support, poor networks, discrimination, a skewed selection process, and gender stereotypes. From a policy point of view, there is a need to formulate tailored policies to address such challenges. Although there are policies already in place to promote equality at the workplace, the findings indicate that women still experience challenges within the higher education sector. That should attract interest from policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness of the current policies.

Furthermore, there is also a need to consider the practicability of being both a leader and a woman at the same time, given the current conditions that favour men and conflict with the role of women at home. The findings of this study illustrated that women are not prepared to take up leadership roles that result in conflict between family and work time. Women end up being forced to choose their families instead of taking up leadership positions. They clearly show that there is a need to holistically transform South African tertiary education so that it becomes a conducive environment for all, irrespective of gender. It should be noted with the understanding that there are roles and responsibilities that women are not keen to embrace. That would help to further develop targeted policies and strategies to enhance the experiences of women in university leadership structures.

7.2 Recommendations

The research focused on understanding how female deans experience leadership. To achieve this, data were collected on their understanding of leadership and the reasons why they were appointed deans. It emerged that leadership characteristics like having experience, having a vision, being inspirational and motivating, having skills, knowledge, and qualifications were important leadership attributes that could strengthen one's appointment into a leadership position in tertiary education. Based on these findings, the study suggests that there should be widespread educational characteristics expected in a leader at a young age among women, so that more women are prepared to take on leadership positions in tertiary institutions. These qualities can be instilled in young girls as early as primary school.

The research also aimed to understand the roles of deans as experienced by the female deans who were interviewed for this study. Findings from the study illustrated that the roles of a dean, as shared by the participants, are marketing the faculty, stakeholder management, responding to correspondence from the faculty, playing an oversight role, and ensuring that curriculum standards are maintained. This research recommends that executing these duties and responsibilities should not be viewed only from a man's perspective. It was noted that leadership in tertiary education is largely expected to be masculine, which might end up discouraging women from stepping up to take the roles. Therefore, it is recommended that the delivery of these roles be tailored to make them gender sensitive. This will enable more women to fit into various leadership roles within tertiary institutions.

The research also sought to explore how the female faculty deans respond to their roles. The study's findings in that regard led to the conclusion that the deans have particular roles and responsibilities that they are keen to embrace and others that they are not so keen to embrace. For example, the female faculty deans are more inclined to embrace responsibilities such as marketing their faculties, responding to correspondence, and meeting various stakeholders interested in their respective faculties. On the other hand, the study illustrated that other responsibilities are not embraced because they lead to life and work conflicts; others deal with politicised students. Based on these findings, the study suggests that a thorough investigation into the reasons why faculty deans respond positively to some responsibilities more than others be conducted. Means should also be devised to encourage female deans to embrace all roles and responsibilities as expected by the institutions of higher learning.

The study also explored the challenges that female deans face in their leadership roles. The findings of this study illustrated that reporting to a male figure has been a problem because male bosses expect things to be done their way. Failure to do so results in female subordinates being regarded as inefficient. Based on this, the research recommends a leadership structure in the university setting to educate people about the importance of being sensitive to different leadership styles. The study also recommends that there should be continuous formulation, review, and evaluation of policies that will help minimise other challenges highlighted in the study, such as lack of support, financial constraints, work-life conflicts, the selection process, and discrimination.

Furthermore, the research aimed to discover how the female faculty deans deal with their leadership experiences. The participants shared how they deal with challenges they face as leaders in South African universities. As illustrated by the findings of this study, female faculty deans deal with the challenges by seeking mentors, joining leadership networks, getting further qualifications and other personal development activities. Based on all these, research recommends that there should be improved access to mentors and mentorship programmes for female leaders in universities. Government should make it a policy to promote mentoring of women in leadership. In addition, grants and resources should be availed to support personal development and further studies.

7.3 Recommendations for improvement of female leadership experiences in the higher education sector

The research also focused on exploring the recommendations for the lived leadership experiences of females in the higher education sector, specifically the universities in South Africa. With the existence of challenges and other setbacks encountered by women who are in leadership or aspire to be future leaders in tertiary education, there is a need to improve the education sector as the workplace to flourish as their male counterparts.

Drawing from the findings presented in chapter five, this research concludes that women believe that carrying out research will help unearth some underlying and hidden factors leading to the unpleasant experiences by women in leadership positions within the tertiary education sector. Sihle advanced that, if the government of South Africa can institute research or an enquiry into the reasons behind the impediments currently experienced by women in leadership, “women in leadership at higher education institutions would experience a more positive environment and less of the challenges related to their gender”. The other female dean, Peace, suggested that there should be ongoing research on issues that affect women in leadership and those who aspire to take leadership positions in the tertiary and higher education sector. This is because research identified challenges and recommended solutions that could improve the environment for female leaders.

The finding that research can unearth underlying issues is in agreement with assertions made by Diehl and Dzubinski (2016), who advances that research can be useful in gaining more insight into issues that are usually hidden from the public eye. Research is a suitable strategy to deal with the current women leadership experiences because some of their challenges are invisible and not a result of any written rule. There is, therefore, a need to get a deeper insight into issues surrounding the scarcity of women in top management positions in South African universities.

The research also concludes that to solve the challenges resulting from the lack of resources for women in leadership, women should be given financial support. According to some of the female deans, financial support would help solve all challenges caused by financial constraints. For example, Sihle shared that some of the problems they face at the workplace are due to lack of financial assistance, which hinders them from being influential compared to

their male counterparts in the same position. Hence financial assistance will level the playing field to the benefit of disadvantaged women. The female deans also recommend that women should be given financial support because women are a “previously disadvantaged population group”. Faith recommended that women be supported financially to fund their personal development studies and create platforms where they can learn and share ideas.

According to Robinson, Shakeshaft, Grogan & Newcomb (2017), women are mostly found wanting when it comes to financial resources. Bussin & Brigman (2019) state that women continue to earn less than their male counterparts, hence jeopardising their financial position. As a previously disadvantaged population group, economically, women still struggle to match their male counterparts in terms of financial resources. Providing them with financial support would positively lift their financial plight.

The research concludes that there is a need to devise mechanisms to eliminate gender discrimination in its direct or indirect form, invisible or visible forms. Female deans who took part in this study recommended that the government put in place mechanisms that will end discrimination and stereotypes against women. Sikho shared that “it is important that the government put in place effective mechanisms to ensure that the laws that prevent discrimination and promote equality in the workplace are implemented”. In addition to that, an education centre aimed at promoting equality and an end to old-age gender stereotypes should be established until a conducive work environment prevails. Faith suggested a need to uproot the patriarchal system that undermines women because it is the main source of gender discrimination against females.

The South African constitution guarantees equality at the workplace; however, this has not been effectively practised in the higher education sector because the ground is tilted against females. Therefore, the recommendations suggested by the female deans should be considered as they will be helpful towards the improvement of leadership experiences for women within South African universities. Several studies, such as Schuh et al. (2014) and Seo and Huang (2017), have recommended the need to continuously transform the education sector into a conducive environment for women to flourish at all levels. The findings highlighted in this section agree with those of a study by Torrance et al. (2017), who recommended that to improve the opportunities and experiences of female leaders at work,

the system should get rid of discrimination and those found to be perpetrators be dealt with effectively.

7.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This research explored the leadership experiences of a specific cohort of women in the higher education sector in South Africa. The research was confined to only working with the female faculty deans in universities located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Based on this, it is recommended that future research should duplicate this study with a comparable sample population in other provinces. Replicating this study in other provinces of South Africa would enable researchers to locate differences and similarities.

Further qualitative research should be conducted with male participants using the same selection criteria. Research with male leaders as participants would provide a basis for comparing the leadership experiences of males and females, thus, discovering the factors that influence their experiences. A comparative study may reveal similarities and differences in the challenges faced by males and females and how they respond to their responsibilities. The recommendation to conduct a similar study with male participants is from an understanding that everyone experiences bias or stereotyping throughout their career regardless of gender.

This study was limited to a population of women who were already successful in their leadership careers and having more than three years of experience in the deanship position. Therefore, it is recommended that a similar study uses a mixed methodology to gather detailed demographic data and changed selection criteria, including women who are just starting their careers and aspiring to become leaders in institutions of higher learning. In addition, a study of a younger population may yield further findings on the reasons for the lack of women in leadership roles.

7.5 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter provided conclusions and recommendations of the study in line with objectives and research questions formulated at the beginning of the study. The major aim of this research was to explore the experiences through a phenomenological design that allows participants to answer questions based on their lived experiences. Findings discussed in this chapter answered questions regarding how female faculty deans experience leadership, their

roles and responsibilities, how they respond to the roles and responsibilities, the challenges they face and strategies that can be implemented to improve their experiences as leaders in the South African higher education sector. The chapter essentially summarised the findings of the study and inferred conclusions. Implications and recommendations were provided in the chapter.



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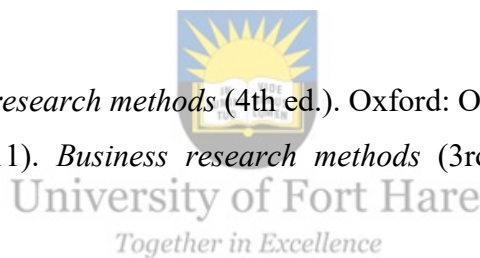
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APPENDICES



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ETHICS CLEARANCE **REC-270710-028-RA Level 01**

Project Number:	DUK041SMAN01
Project title:	Leadership experiences of six female faculty deans in South African Universities.
Qualification:	PhD in Education
Principal Researcher:	Mandisa Mankayi
Supervisor:	Prof N. Duku
Co-supervisor:	N/A

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby grant ethics approval for DUK041SMAN01. This approval is valid for 12 months from the date of approval. Renewal of approval must be applied for BEFORE termination of this approval period. Renewal is subject to receipt of a satisfactory progress report. The approval covers the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). The research may commence as from the 13/11/19, using the reference number indicated above.

Note that should any other instruments be required or amendments become necessary, these require separate authorisation.
Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material changes in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document;

- Any material changes in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document;
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research.

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this approval if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected;
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented;
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require;
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to.
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.

Your compliance with DoH 2015 guidelines and other regulatory instruments and with UREC ethics requirements as contained in the UREC terms of reference and standard operating procedures, is implied.

The UREC wishes you well in your research.

Yours sincerely



Professor Renuka Vithal
UREC-Chairperson
13 November 2019



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Ethics Research Confidentiality and Informed Consent Form

Please note:

This form is to be completed by the researcher(s) as well as by the interviewee before the commencement of the research. Copies of the signed form must be filed and kept on record

(To be adapted for individual circumstances/needs)

I, Mandisa Mankayi, Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, is asking female faculty deans to share their leadership experiences in the position they are at currently.

Mandisa Mankayi of Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, is conducting research on leadership experiences of female faculty deans in the selected Universities in Eastern Cape Province .

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice **whether to participate or not** is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will **NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.**

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the interview schedule and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. **Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs"** from the answers you give.

The administration of the interview questions will last for 3 weeks I beseech you to be open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I plead with you to think deeply before answering the questions.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding Leadership experiences of female faculty deans..... I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue **and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.**

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.



.....

Signature of participant

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Date:.....

23 Elfin Glen Road, Nahoon Valley Heights, East London, 5200



To whom it may concern:

This document certifies that the dissertation/article whose title appears below has been edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style by Rose Masha, a member of the Professional Editors' Group whose qualifications are listed in the footer of this certificate.

Title:

**LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES OF SIX FEMALE DEANS IN SOUTH AFRICAN
UNIVERSITIES**

Author:

By Mandisa Mankayi

Date Edited:

18/02/2023

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rose Masha".

Rose Khanyisile Masha

065 812 7704

Bachelor of Library and Information Science, Hons (English Language Teaching),
HDE, MA (Hypermedia in Lang. Learning), PhD (Education)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. **Objective 1: Aim:** To investigate how the female faculty deans view their leadership experiences.
2. **Objective 2: Aim:** To establish how the female deans view their roles and responsibilities.
3. **Objective 3: Aim:** To discover how the female faculty deans respond to their leadership experiences.

Objective 1: Aim: To investigate how the female faculty deans view their leadership experiences.

What are your **personal leadership experiences towards your position as a Dean?**



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- In your view, is leadership a role you consider important; if so, why is it that leadership is important?
- Can you share some moments when you demonstrated leadership skills which assisted you in executing your duties as a female faculty dean?
- In your view, which leadership style has been of immense help to you as a female faculty dean in terms of your leadership role and responsibility?
- How have you experienced the use of leadership to keep your team motivated?
- How have you experienced collaboration with others as a leadership responsibility?

Objective 2: Aim: To establish how female deans view their roles.

- What have you experienced in terms of the strengths that you bring to this particular position as a female dean?
- Do you view your role as: Administrative, management, motivational, team-player, conflict-resolver, decision-maker or transformative?
- What changes would you seek to make if you would be asked to bring about employment opportunities in senior management positions?

Objective 3: Aim: To discover how female faculty deans respond to their leadership experiences

- Which leadership style(s) do you to execute in your duties as a female faculty dean?
- How do you ensure that your faculty performs optimally in spite of the prevalent gender stereotyping?
- How do you experience the following?
 - ✓ Delegation;
 - ✓ performance management; and
 - ✓ career advancement.



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