LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR

DOSUNMU AKINOLA GEORGE

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Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector

by

DOSUNMU AKINOLA GEORGE

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Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

Supervisor

Prof Venitha Pillay

Pretoria

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DECLARATION

I Dosunmu Akinola George, declare that this thesis titled *Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector* which I hereby submit for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor in Education Management and Policy Studies, is my own work and had not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Dosunmu Akinola George

07 April 2015

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD thesis to my late father

Samson Olabowale Dosunmu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUMMARY

Rationale

To date the research on lifelong learning has focused primarily on improving the levels of adult literacy in developing countries. This focus has, in turn, taken on a 'women's empowerment' perspective in view of the prevalence of adult illiteracy among women in the developing countries (UNESCO, 2014). Accordingly, there has been limited research conducted on lifelong learning beyond the boundaries of improved literacy. Indeed, the most recent study (2014) conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning focuses exclusively on the importance of improved literacy for women as the central goal of lifelong learning.

However, this study focuses on women who are literate and in fact many of the women are in possession of at least a bachelor's degree. The intention of this study was to use a broader conception of lifelong learning – one beyond the limitations of literacy. The aim of the study was to investigate how lifelong learning may facilitate the career advancement of women already on a career track.

The study focused specifically on investigating how women working in the telecommunications environment in Nigeria and South Africa may advance to the pinnacle of their careers through lifelong learning. In their study on the career development of women in executive level positions in the information technology industry, Wentling and Thomas (2007) revealed that ongoing lifelong learning and continuously striving for more training and education were major factors in the career development of women in corporate organisations.

This study was premised on the widespread general knowledge that there are few women in senior management positions across sectors. The most recent data (2014) on women in senior management shows that, globally, 24% only of senior management positions are held by women (Grant Thornton International Business Report, 2014). The report also shows that South Africa has made significant strides in this direction, with 29% of all senior management positions being occupied by women; in Nigeria on the other hand less than 15% of all senior management positions in the ICT sector were occupied by women. This study therefore seeks to understand how lifelong learning may have influence the career advancement of professional women.

Main research questions

The main research question underpinning the study is the following:

- How can lifelong learning determine the career opportunities of women in the telecommunication industry?

In order to respond to this main research question the following sub-questions were identified.

- What are the factors that encourage women professionals to choose a career in MTN in South Africa and Nigeria?
- What factors enable women to experience job satisfaction and career progress in the telecommunication industry?
- How can education and lifelong learning shape the progress of women in the telecommunication industry?

Chapter 1 provides the rationale and background to the study. Here I offer some statistical insight into the positions women occupy in the corporate sector and show that across the world the number of men in senior management positions outstrips that of women.

In **Chapter 2** I discuss the two key concepts that underpin the study, namely, lifelong learning and human capital development (HCD). Lifelong learning may be defined as learning which empowers the single person to "widen his or her insight, aptitudes and disposition and to adjust to a changing, perplexing and related world" (Delores, 1996). Using a less individualised approach, Preece (2006) suggests that lifelong learning that is both formal and nonformal broadens education for all concerned in society. In other words, education is used to promote economic growth and social development in society. Using a similar logic, Adayana (2009) perceives HCD as the "active balancing of short and long-term business requirements with the career and professional development needs of people". In other words HCD is about the development of the individual, the organisation and society. Given their conceptual similarities I use both concepts to analyse the data in the final chapter.

In **Chapter 3** I review the relevant literature. The purpose of this chapter was to review the relevant literature pertaining to lifelong learning and the career advancement of women in the corporate sector. The focus of the review falls on the following three themes: determinants of

career choice, the job satisfaction and career progress of women, and education and lifelong learning. The review shows that while there are many studies about the challenges that women in the corporate sector face, there are few studies that link the concept of lifelong learning to career advancement for women.

Chapter 4 provides detail of the methodology used for this study. In choosing a mixed methods design, I sought to obtain expansive data though the questionnaire and more focused in-depth data through the interviews.

Chapter 5. This chapter presents the quantitative analysis of the data collected in Nigeria. The data is organised into the following sections: socio-demographic data pertaining to the respondents, factors influencing career choice, determinants of female job satisfaction, factors determining the placement of women in corporate organisations, barriers to the careers of women, continuous learning and the career progress of women and strategies to promote the careers of women in corporate organisations. This structure reflects the structure of the questionnaire

Chapter 6. This chapter discusses the interviews which were conducted with women managers. Three senior Nigerian women managers with more than 10 years' experience apiece were interviewed. The analysis of the interviews indicated three broad themes, namely, career choice, continuous learning and job satisfaction

Chapter 7. This chapter presents the quantitative analysis of the data gathered in South Africa. The information gathered is divided into the following sections: socio-demographic information of the respondents, components affecting vocation decision, determinants of the employment fulfilment of women, variables playing a role in the positions occupied by in corporate organisations, boundaries to the professional achievements of women, continuous learning and the career advancement of women and ways in which to upgrade the careers of women in corporate organisations

Chapter 8. This chapter discusses the interviews which were conducted with three senior women managers at MTN in South Africa. Each of these senior managers had over 10 years' experience. Three broad themes emerged from an analysis of the interviews, namely, career choice, continuous learning and job satisfaction.

In the final chapter, **Chapter 9**, I synthesise the findings from Chapters 5 to 8. I identify three core ideas that emerged from the data. These include the ambitions of the participants; continuous learning and training as a critical factor for women's career development; and job satisfaction. In the final analysis I show that human capital development is not a 'top down' action undertaken by heads of organisations. Indeed the women in this study actively sought their 'down' development through on-the-job training, studying further and building networks that were valuable to them. They created opportunities or themselves and seized opportunities when they arose. The study also shows that HCD can be initiated and continued through individuals who may benefit from it. In this instance, HCD served the ambitions and aspirations of women who, historically, have had little presence as senior managers in the corporate world. What is required is a work environment that is open to HCD and making lifelong learning a core principle of an organisation's policy may set women on the path to building their careers.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the way in which lifelong learning influences the career progression of women in the corporate sector.

The two key concepts that underpin this study are lifelong learning and human capital development (HCD). These concepts were used to understand women's career choices and professional advancement with the goal of enhancing learning for the benefit of the individual, the organisation and society. This approach is thus premised on an understanding that access to learning is critical to HCD, which is a key factor if an organisation is to improve its performance.

This comparative study used a mixed method research design. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with senior women managers and questionnaires were administered to junior workers at a mobile telecommunications network in Nigeria and South Africa. Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the findings. Firstly, with respect to career choice, the findings revealed that the decisions women make when choosing a career are influenced by support from families and friends. It was also found that the communication sector supported their aspirations for career development. Secondly, the findings revealed that internal motivation in terms of a desire for rapid promotion, a large income and the flexibility and opportunities to change jobs if the women wished to do so help to determine their job satisfaction. Thirdly, the findings point to the importance of lifelong learning for women as it assists in bridging gaps in income, entering a strong organisational culture, accessing senior management positions and, thus, achieving their goals as women. It is also possible that continuous learning in the form of opportunities to improve qualifications and skills may offer a buffer against gender discrimination and may create pathways for women to build their careers. In sum, access to promotion, a supportive environment and good remuneration were key factors for job satisfaction.

Perhaps the most abiding idea that emerges from the data is that the women in this study have a strong sense of ambition. Contrary to popular belief that women are not ambitious, the women in this study show that they have strong career aspirations. They did not perceive the fact of being a woman to be a determinant in their ambitions. In addition to this, the study makes a strong case for the value of lifelong learning, whether formal or informal, as a mechanism for women in the corporate sector to build their career opportunities.

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List of abbreviations

CEO	Chief executive officer
CRF	Corporate research foundation
EOC	Equal opportunities commission
EOWA	Equal opportunity for women in the work place agency
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information technology
QLS	Quarterly Labour Survey
MTN	Mobile Telecommunication Network
OECD	Organisation of Economic Countries and Development
SSA	Statistics South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Research has shown that continuous on-the-job learning is a prerequisite for the professional worker in the workforce if the worker is to make career advancements. This is particularly true in the case of women who face gender stereotyping and imbalances in the contemporary corporate world (Wentling & Thomas, 2007). According to Adamson, Doherty and Viney (1998), it is advisable that even those individuals who are not part of the permanent organisational core focus on continuous learning if they wish to remain employable. It is, thus, feasible that lifelong learning may be a valuable road to career success for many women in the current work environment. This statement prompted my interest in both the study of career opportunities for women and also the way in which lifelong learning and education may determine the upward mobility of their professional careers. There is much evidence that shows that, although there are increasing numbers of women in the corporate workforce, they remain at the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy (Vikas Vij, 2011). Accordingly, this research study aims to examine the feasibility of lifelong learning as a means of enhancing the career possibilities of women.

Table 1.1:   Percentage of management positions occupied by women in different countries

Country	Percentage of women in management positions
Russia	43
Latvia	41
Indonesia	41
Philippines	40
Lithuania	39
China	38
Thailand	38
Estonia	37
Armenia	35
Georgia	35
United States	22
Spain	22
United Kingdom	20
Denmark	14
Germany	14
UAE	14
India	14
Switzerland	13
Netherlands	10
Japan	9
South Africa (2013)	29

Source: Grant Thornton IBR 2014a

For the purposes of this study the term "senior managers" is taken to refer to a group of high level executives who actively participate in the daily supervision, planning and administrative processes required by a business to help meet the objectives of such a business. The senior management of a company is often appointed by the corporation's board of directors and approved by the stockholders (Business Dictionary available at

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/senior-management.html).

1.2   Rationale behind the study

To date the research on lifelong learning has focused primarily on improving the levels of adult literacy in developing countries. This focus has, in turn, taken on a 'women's empowerment' perspective in view of the prevalence of adult illiteracy among women in the developing countries (UNESCO, 2014). Accordingly, there has been limited research conducted on lifelong learning beyond the boundaries of improved literacy. Indeed, the most recent study (2014) conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning focuses exclusively on the importance of improved literacy for women as the central goal of lifelong learning.

However, this study focuses on women who are literate and, in fact, many of the women are in possession of at least a bachelor's degree. The intention of this study was to use a broader conception of lifelong learning – one beyond the limitations of literacy. The aim of the study was to investigate how lifelong learning may facilitate the career advancements of women already on a career track. The data below provides an overview of the number of women studying at a higher education level in four countries in Africa. In view of the fact that there is relatively little relevant data available (SARUA, 2012), enrolment or graduation figures are provided, depending on the availability of data. The statistics reveal that there is an increasing number of African women in the higher education system. They will, in turn, become job seekers and will probably aspire to build their careers.

South Africa

In South Africa in 2012, six out of every ten first degree and honours graduates were women while, between 2001 and 2009, four out of every ten masters and PhD students were women. In 2005, 44% of PhD graduates in all disciplines in South Africa were women.

In 2012 there were 534 female professors out of a total of 2 174 professors in South Africa (Department of Higher Education, 2012).

Nigeria

In Nigeria, in 2001/2002, 6.9% of a total of 2 442 professors were women while, in 2000, 28% of all the graduates from Nigerian universities were women (Ilusanya & Oyebade, 2008).

Ghana

Of the 96 094 students enrolled for a first degree in Ghana public universities between 2012 and 2013, 31 192 were women, while 2 919 out of a total of 9 372 masters students were women and 213 out of a total of 855 PhD students were women (Tertiary Education Statistics, 2012).

Kenya

The Kenyan Economic Survey 2013 noted that, in 2012, there were 105 115 female students in the country – an increase from the 80 560 in 2011 (Nganga, 2013).

Thus, the data reveals is that increasing numbers of women in Africa are accessing higher education. This study aims to ascertain how women, in most cases women in possession of some form of higher education qualification, namely, senior managers and women aspiring to become senior managers, may advance in their careers through lifelong learning.

The study will focus specifically on investigating how women working in the telecommunications environment may advance to the pinnacle of their careers through lifelong learning. In their study on the career development of women in executive level positions in the information technology industry, Wentling and Thomas (2007) revealed that ongoing lifelong learning and continuously striving for more training and education were major factors in the career development of women in corporate organisations. However, while lifelong learning and striving for success were seen as important factors in the careers of these women they, nevertheless, encountered challenges that presented unforeseen barriers/obstacles to their career paths. For example, the feeling of exclusion (being an outsider) was perceived as impacting negatively on their career development, while they also

encountered obstacles such as work/life balance, unsympathetic company politics and unsupportive bosses.

It is for this reason that the career advancement of women in the corporate world may be seen as meriting further research, while the contextual issues affecting their advancement have generated numerous debates among scholars. Hansen (2007) emphasises that education in particular may serve as the most powerful strategy of all for women wishing to advance in their careers; Hansen (2007) further argues that lifelong learning may take the form of formal education, training and development, work experience, career breakthrough opportunities, hours spent at work and on-the-job training. Accordingly, developing women career may be seen as a measure of lifelong learning, while education, on-the-job training and the type of occupation have been found to be positively related to the enhancement of the career advancement of women in corporate organisations. This study aims to understand how women in the two countries selected engaged with the work-based challenges they encountered, as well as the opportunities presented to them for career advancement. While the study does not intend to compare the two countries selected in a linear fashion, it does seek to identify possible similar trends and dissimilarities. The two countries were selected specifically on the basis of the dominant roles both countries play in the African economy and also because of the strong presence of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector in both countries (IMF, 2012).

This study was premised on the widespread general knowledge that there are few women in senior management positions across sectors. The most recent data (2014) on women in senior management shows that, globally, 24% only of senior management positions are held by women (Grant Thornton International Business Report, 2014). Figure 1.1 depicts the progress made as regards the proportion of women in senior management positions in the previous ten years.

Figure 1.1:   Proportion of women in senior management globally
Source: Grant Thornton International Business Report (2014b:10)

The same report reveals that Russia has the highest number of women in senior management positions (43%) in the world. The report also shows that South Africa has made significant strides in this direction, with 29% of all senior management positions being occupied by women. It is surprising that the Thorton Report (2014) points to the fact the there has been little movement in the United States with respect to the percentage of women in senior management positions in the previous ten years, with 23% only of all senior managers being women in 2014 (Grant Thornton International Business Report, 2014: 11). The report goes on to highlight that, on the whole, the developed countries

> *… tend to have lower proportions of women in senior management … [and that] the development of the "nuclear family" without the childcare infrastructure … lower career aspirations in the West compared to emerging economies that are experiencing significant growth and cultural shifts that have spurred female ambition (2014:10).*

In other words, the report suggests that, as compared to the developed countries, the stronger family support in the developing countries, coupled with the increasingly less restrictive cultural environments for women in such countries, enable the women in these countries to aspire to greater career heights than would otherwise have been the case.

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The graph in Figure 1.2 below illustrates that, in keeping with the common perception, the majority of women in senior management positions globally are in the education sector, followed by the other service type industries.

Figure 1.2:   Proportion of women in senior roles by industry

Unfortunately there is limited current data on the number of women in senior management positions in the African countries (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). Tables 1.2 to 1.4 offer some insights into the number of women in senior positions in three sectors, namely, education, banking and ICT, in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. The educational sector was included because of the historically larger numbers of women in this sector as compared to other sectors while the banking sector was included because of the growing number of women employed in this sector (Akanbi, 2010). Although Kenya was not included in this study, data from Kenya was included for the purpose of providing a more general overview.

Table 1.2: Percentage of women in senior management – Nigeria

Sector	Year to which the data applies	Percentage of women in senior management	Data source	Notes
Education	2010	12.4	Odhiambo, G. 2011. Women and higher education leadership in Kenya: A critical analysis. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.*	
ICT	2013	15	Olufunke, A.C. & Adeola, A.O. 2014. *Promoting ICT opportunities for women empowerment in Nigeria: Issues and strategies*. Ekiti State University, Nigeria	
Banking	2001	12	Oladejo, K.S., Samuel, O.O. & Dorcas, A. 2012. Gender gap and its implication for management practice: A lesson from the Nigerian banking sector. Kuwait Chapter of *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, *1*(10), June.	Includes banking and financial services. The researchers note that, in 2012, the percentage had increased but do not specify by how much.
Total	2007	20.1	British Council. 2012. *Gender in Nigeria Report: Improving the lives of girls and women in Nigeria.*	The total number of women in senior management positions within the country regardless of the sector

Table 1.2 reveals that in Nigeria, less than 15% of all senior management positions in the ICT sector were occupied by women. Although internal comparisons within the same country and between sectors were not possible because the data pertained to different years, it is nevertheless evident that a small fraction of the women in these sectors are employed as senior managers.

Table 1.3: Percentage of women in senior management – South Africa

Sector	Year to which the data applies	Percentage of women in senior management	Data source	Notes
Education	2002	21.6	MacEwen, M., Louw, A. & Dupper, O. n.d. *Employment equity in the higher education sector: A study of transformation of the Western Cape.*	The recent International Business Report (2014) notes that the percentage of women holding senior management positions in the education and social services sector combined is 51%. Hern, J. (2014).
ICT	2006	10	ICT South Africa, James, T., Smith, R., Roodt, J., Primo, N., & Evans, N. 2006. *Women in the information and technology sector in South Africa.*	
Banking	2007	23.3	Research Focus. 2009. *Women in management in the Financial Services Sector in South Africa: A review of the literature.* Report prepared for Fasset.	The financial services sector is defined as banking and insurance
Total	2013	28	*Women in senior management: Setting the stage for growth.* Grant Thornton International Business Report 2013	This is the total number of women in senior management positions within the country, regardless of the sector

Table 1.4: Percentage of women in senior management – Kenya

Sector	Year to which the data applies	Percentage of women in senior management	Data source	Notes
Education	2010	33.3	Amondi, O.B. 2011. Representation of women in top educational management and leadership positions in Kenya. *Advancing Women in Leadership, 31*, 57–68.	
ICT	2012	15	Jackson, T. 2012. *Women wanted for Kenya's ICT sector.*	
Banking	2001	24	Marstan, A. 2014. *Women, business and human rights: A background paper for the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice.* Integrated Strategy Sustainable Solutions Women's Leadership.	
Total	2011	< 30	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development. 2011. *2nd bi-annual report of 38% affirmative action in employment and recruitment of women in the public service.*	This is the total number of women in senior management positions within the country regardless of the sector

It is not possible to compare the total number of women in all sectors in the three countries given the disparity of dates when the data was collected. However, it is possible to conclude that the percentage of women in senior management positions in these countries, across sectors, is likely to be low.

A 2010 study conducted in South Africa by Booysen and Nkomo offers valuable insights into the perceptions of employees with respect to the feasibility of men and women as managers. As the point of departure for their study, Booysen and Nkomo used Shein's (1973) "think manager, think male" maxim, which showed that both men and women "perceived successful middle managers as possessing characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general" (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010:287). Within the South African context they found that both black men and white men reinforced the "men as managers" stereotype, with this perception being stronger among black men than white men. However, their study also indicated that black women demonstrated a strong correlation between the characteristics of women in general and women as managers. In other words, black South African women showed commitment to undoing the "men as managers" stereotype. In addition, the study demonstrated a further positive change as regards the findings of previous studies conducted elsewhere and by other researchers in that the study revealed that South African white women had equal confidence in men and women as managers (2010:293–296). Thus, although the confidence in women as managers is slowly increasing, the proverbial glass ceiling remains. While contextual, cultural and economic factors may explain this state of affairs, the aim of this study is to investigate how this may be changed. The point of departure in the study is the assertion that education, in the form of lifelong learning, may create opportunities to enable women to advance up the career ladder.

The data discussed reveals categorically that there are few women in senior management positions across sectors and throughout the world. The literature on lifelong learning has historically shown that lifelong learning is a valuable tool for improving the lives of women throughout the world. However, as stated above, the focus of such studies on lifelong learning has thus far been primarily on improving literacy, thereby setting a low baseline for lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2014). Accordingly, the aim of this study is to investigate how, if at all, lifelong learning may be a tool for well-educated women to take advantage of their career opportunities.

1.3   The selection of the specific corporate sector

I selected MTN (Mobile Telecommunication Network) from among other mobile telecommunication sectors for the purposes of this study. An important factor in this choice was that MTN has a stated commitment to the training and development of its employees (MTN Group Annual Report, 2005). In addition, MTN works with its employees to identify career development opportunities and conducts quarterly succession planning reviews. The training offered by the group includes management and business development, telecommunications technical skills training, information technology development and support, project management and customer care (MTN Group Annual Report, 2005). In addition, MTN brands itself as a company that offers an array of training opportunities to its workers. MTN Nigeria is the leading communication network provider in the country and is also, arguably, among the biggest providers of communications technology in South Africa.

Significantly, MTN has employed large numbers of women. For example, in 2008, women constituted 48% of all MTN employees in South Africa and 68% of senior management (MTN Group Annual Report, 2008). In addition, MTN offers attractive and highly competitive remuneration benefits as well as certain other benefits to its employees. Of particular value to this study is the six months paid maternity leave, paternity leave of five days, leave of adoption of three months and study leave of ten days per annum.

MTN offers a well-organised career initiatives development programme to its employees, including staff rotations across regions in order to encourage the sharing of knowledge among staff. This makes it possible for staff members to align themselves to the culture of MTN while promoting an across the group customer experience (MTN Group Annual Report, 2008:4). Finally, despite the international economic downturn of 2008, MTN has experienced growth and has remained a stable company (MTN Group-Annual Report, 2005).

1.4   Hypothesis

The following hypothesis underpins the study, namely, education and commitment to lifelong learning is a tool for career advancement for women. Although it is not the aim of the study to test the hypothesis, it is suggested that the findings of the study, as well as the analysis of such findings, will throw some light on the validity of this notion. The purpose of this hypothesis, therefore, is to propose a tentative assumption and also give direction to the

study. Based on the above hypothesis, the main research question underpinning the study may be formulated as follows:

How can lifelong learning determine the career opportunities of women in the telecommunication industry?

In order to respond to this main research question the following sub-questions have been identified.

- What are the factors that encourage women professionals to choose a career in MTN in South Africa and Nigeria?
- What factors enable women to experience job satisfaction and career progress in the telecommunication industry?
- How can education and lifelong learning shape the progress of women in the telecommunication industry?

1.5   Background to the study

1.5.1   Women in workforce in Nigeria

The number of women in the corporate sector in Nigeria is still extremely low as compared to their male counterparts (Adeyemi, Ojo, Aina, & Olanipekun, 2006).

A study conducted by Koffi Dodzy (2011) on women in information technology in Nigeria revealed that:

> *There is an overall lack of participation in Information Technology related careers in Nigeria as a result of existing complex peculiarities in which women are the most disadvantaged.*

Dodzy (2011) showed that women constituted slightly more than 50% of the total population of Nigeria and argues that it would be seriously detrimental to the country if it continued to perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in the scientific and technological careers that are traditionally perceived as male-dominant fields. Dodzy (2011) also makes the point that women often lack mentors to encourage them to go into male-dominated fields and that socio-cultural stereotyping further disadvantages them. It is, thus, arguable that a significant

amount of conscious effort would be required for women to become key players and managers in the IT sector.

The underrepresentation of women in senior and management positions is also evident in various sectors other than the IT sector. For example, in the educational sector there are more women than men but, nevertheless, women remain in the lower echelons of management in education institutions.

Achunine (2004) notes that, despite the fact that women constituted up to 60% of the teaching force in tertiary institutions in Imo state, Nigeria, there was not a single female vice chancellor, rector or provost, while there was a mere a token presence, if any, of women at the lower level of management from deputy vice chancellor to dean.

Since the establishment of tertiary education in Nigeria over six decades ago, women have been underrepresented as staff members in the system, with men making up the majority of both the academic and technical staff complements and women occupying most of the administrative staff positions (Okebukola, 2002).

Nowadays men establish patterns of control in the maintenance of power in universities while they also establish powerful, male network protégé systems. It is highly likely that the cultural patterns in this context serve as a major determining factor in the underrepresentation of women in the educational sector. This, in turn, implies that the cultures of universities are contrary to the needs of women. Mathipa and Tsoka (2001), affirm that universities are characterised by a "masculine ethic of rationality" which elevates the attitude that is assumed to belong to men as regards the effective management of such organisations. The concentration of female staff at the lower levels of universities is compounded by issues related to their gender and biological life circle such as menstruation, pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, menopause, infertility and general gynaecological conditions. In addition, the critical stages of career development and motherhood and family building coincide, thus often forcing women to compromise their careers. Women with childcare responsibilities are not able to extend their work hours in a flexible way as compared to their male counterparts (Olubor 2006). In addition, the study uncovered issues of gender imbalance in Nigerian universities.

In 2008/2009, compared to men, there were lower numbers of women as members of the senate in the Imo State University of Nigeria with 17 (15%) women and 96 (85%) men out of a total number of 113 senate members. In other words, as compared to 13 years previously, the representation of women in the university senate had increased by 3% only.

In short, it would appear that appointing women in senior management positions remains a challenge. Although it is feasible that this challenge is pervasive across numerous work sectors and in many countries, this study will focus on the ICT sector only and, specifically, on a single company, namely, MTN and in two countries, Nigeria and South Africa.

1.5.2   Women in the information communication technology workforce

The purpose of this section is to discuss the representation of women in top management positions in the ICT industry in South Africa. In other words, the issues to be discussed will focus specifically on the representation of women in the ICT workforce.

South Africa

It is important to take into account the representation of women in the South African workforce. For example, there is a smaller proportion of women employed in the workplace as compared to men while, as compared to men, there is a larger population of women not economically active in South Africa (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2011:26). Similarly, at management level in the private sector, the South African Labour Force Survey 2011 revealed that, compared to men, women were not being accorded equal treatment in terms of conditions of service in respect of their participation levels in management. Despite the fact that the proportion of women employed in the workforce increased by 5,6% in the ten years from 2001 to 2011, the primary sectors such as education showed an increase of 9,2% for men in the workforce in South Africa as compared to 4% only for women (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2011:34). This ratio of men to women is inadequate and is a source of concern for both society as a whole and for business. This trend together with the inequality in earnings in terms of which women are disadvantaged as a result of employment policy and/or certain organisational norms that do not favour women (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2011:40). This is particularly true in any environment or organisation dominated by men (Smith, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to note that, in the ICT industry approximately 56% of all global ICT professional jobs are held by women although, in South Africa, 20% only of the professional jobs in the ICT industry are held by women (Institute of Information

Technology Professional of South Africa IITPSA, 2014). Thus, although from a global point of view it would appear as if women are succeeding in the ICT industry, the situation is very different in South Africa.

Women are clearly not well represented in leadership and management positions in virtually all sectors in South Africa. This is evidence from the fact that the corporate work environment is seen as being male dominated, in particular the ICT industry (Smith 2003).

1.5.3   Comparing women in the workforce in Nigeria and in South Africa.

There is little empirical data on MTN Nigeria compared to MTN South Africa and great disparity between MTN Nigeria and MTN South Africa. Nevertheless, the little available data for MTN Nigeria will be discussed, along with the vast data for MTN South Africa, in order to illustrate the disparity between the two countries.

There are marked disparities as well as similarities between women in the workforce in South Africa and in Nigeria. As regard the disparities there more women are employed in the ICT sector in South Africa as compared to Nigeria. In South Africa, the participation of women in the workforce may be described in terms of both gender and race while, in Nigeria, it is characterised by gender. The reason for the gender and race differences in the two countries is as a result of the fact that the Nigerian population is primarily racially homogenous, although with different cultural groups and backgrounds, while the South African population is made up of different racial groups, namely, white, coloured, Indian and African. The issue of racial and gender disparity in South Africa was acknowledged in the report prepared for Fasset (2009) and entitled Women in Management in the Financial Services Sector in South Africa: A Review of the Literature. The report revealed that:

> *The need to correct racial and gender disparity and to increase the labour-market participation of all population groups in the economy in South Africa is widely established, and measures to attain these objectives are entrenched in a suite of legislation and policies. In particular, this legislation proposes procedures to deal with past discrimination against certain 'designated groups' – black people, women and people with disabilities.*

Women from certain population groups in South Africa have, in the past, been discriminated upon on the basis of gender and race in the corporate workforce. However, in recent times,

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the participation of women in the labour force has risen steadily in most corporate organisations in the country.

In terms of similarities between the countries, in general women are usually underrepresented in management and corporate leadership positions despite their increased participation in all sectors of both the Nigerian and the South African economy. This similarity, in turn, emphasises the fact that women from diverse countries are underrepresented in top management positions in spite of the fact that they are continuing to penetrate the world's workforce in greater numbers than was previously the case.

Lyness (2002:245) and Powell (1999:12) both corroborated this assertion when they noted that:

> *Despite women's progress at moving into managerial positions in recent years, only a small percentage of senior management positions are held by women, signifying that there is still what some have phrased a "glass ceiling" that limits women's advancement in large private sector organizations.*

There is little empirical data for women in Nigeria as compared to South Africa. However, the existing literature was reviewed empirically in order both to corroborate gender similarities and dissimilarities between the two countries as regards the representation of women in the workforce in the South African context and to explain further the position of this research study on the position of women in the labour force.

Kabeer and Magnus (2004:3) state that:

> *International statistics show that women's labor force participation has improved and changed considerably around the world in the past decades. Women in numerous countries now comprise half or more of the workforce and they can be found in all occupation. However, more comprehensive analyses show that the labor market remains segregated approximately everywhere. Women's participation is likely to be highly concerted in quite a narrow range of occupations. Women are also grouped in the lower echelons of professional hierarchies while elite positions are by and large the set aside for men.*

In a similar vein, Flaugher (2008:1) submits that:

> *In today's business world, women are a rising part of the domestic and global workforce. It is predictable that worldwide about 70% of all working-age women now work outside of the home. In spite of this, discrimination in the workforce continues to be a problem for women worldwide. Discrimination takes the form of job segregation, lack of training, lack of advancement, uneven pay, lack of advancement, and exclusion from certain fields that are considered "masculine." Working mothers are particularly disadvantaged since, due to the lack of child care facilities, they are often forced to put their careers on hold or accept lower paying jobs.*

Clearly, discrimination in the workforce continues to be a problem for women worldwide, with gender discrimination in the labour force in both South Africa and Nigeria affecting the participation of women in the workforce of these countries.

1.5.4 MTN Nigeria and MTN South Africa: an overview

MTN Group Limited is regarded as one the biggest network providers among the communication organisations in Africa. It provides both cellular and business solutions services and is also one of the leading communication services. In 1994, MTN was listed in the telecommunication industrial sector on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in South Africa. In that same year, namely, 1994, MTN group operations expanded to 21 different countries in Africa and the Middle East,n December 2006, more than 40 million subscribers were recorded as part of MTN operations.

MTN group operations are to be found in the following countries in the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe: Afghanistan, Cyprus, Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Central Africa, Zambia, Rwanda, Iran, Yemen, Guinea, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Congo, Botswana, Swaziland, Sudan, Ghana, Uganda, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Guinea Republic and Syria.

1.5.5 MTN Nigeria

MTN Nigeria operates one of four Global Systems of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) licences in Nigeria and has been in commercial operation since 2001. MTN Nigeria focused aggressively on subscriber growth which was supported by a rapid network rollout amid keen

competition in the market. As a result of this aggressive campaign, the company increased its subscriber base significantly from 5,6 million to 8,4 million. Coming off a low base, mobile penetration increased significantly to 13% during the period, reflecting continued demand and intense activity on the part of mobile operators.

Employees

MTN Nigeria employs 1 836 nationals and 50 expatriate (MTN Group Annual Report, 2005). The company has implemented more than 100 training programmes and invested R29,5 million in training in 2005, representing 7 666 training interventions or an average of five hours per employee. In line with the MTN Group policy for skilled employee retention, a phantom share option scheme has been implemented for senior staff. The company has in place policies governing all the regulatory requirements for health and safety in workplace.

1.5.6   MTN South Africa

MTN South Africa is a subsidiary of the multinational telecommunications company, MTN Group, which recently reached the 100 million subscriber mark in its drive to become the leading telecommunications provider in emerging markets (MTN Group Annual Report, 2008). The MTN Group, which was launched in 1994, operates three business divisions, namely, MTN South Africa, MTN International, and Strategic Investments. The MTN Group is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange under the telecommunications service sector. According to its latest annual report, the company enjoyed a solid performance in the previous financial year despite the global economic slowdown, with subscribers up 48%, revenue up 40% and earnings before interest, tax depreciation and amortisation rising by 36% to R43,2 billion as compared to the preceding year.

It is clear from the MTN Group Annual Report, 2013, that the MTN brand is one of the most recognisable and trusted brands in South Africa. The brand has received a number of accolades over the years, including the Markinor Top Brands Survey and the Ask Africa Orange Index Survey, which named MTN South Africa as the leading customer service provider in the telecommunications industry. MTN has a strong focus on the African continent and believes that economic empowerment is achieved through access to communication. Locally the company operates in a highly competitive and rapidly changing environment.

Talent management and development

MTN's human resources priority is leadership development, which is aimed at sufficiently resourcing its rapidly expanding footprint (MTN Annual Group Report 2008). According to the Mobile Africa Report (2011), the company opened 400 new outlets in order to service its 249 million subscribers. "Our challenge is to develop leaders who are able to head up these new operations both locally and internationally," reports Themba Nyathi, Executive of Human Resource Management (2012). "We recognize that our success is due to the depth and quality of our people. As such, initiatives like the strategic talent investment board is aimed at addressing the leadership capability and capacity needs of the organization" (MTN Group Annual Report 2009).

MTN's rapid growth has resulted in excellent career opportunities within the organisation while staff members are encouraged to move between the company's various operations. This strategy, in turn, facilitates increased learning throughout the business and also provides staff with attractive and meaningful opportunities for growth (MTN South Africa Report, 2009).

Employees

MTN South Africa employs a total of 4 134 full-time staff, with black employees constituting 78% of the workforce and women constituting 48%. In addition, 60% of executive senior management is black while women constitute 68% of the senior executive management. MTN stands out as an employer because of the attractive and highly competitive remuneration benefits it offers; a strong brand which tends to attract people; and an informal and people-oriented company culture that appreciates innovation and risk taking.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the two key concepts that underpin the study, namely, lifelong learning (as indicated in the title of the study) and human capital development (HCD). I take the position that the two concepts are closely related. Both have the goal of enhancing learning for the benefit of the individual, an organisation and of society. Therefore HCD and lifelong learning form the conceptual framework for this study. The two concepts are used to understand women's career choice and their professional advancement. This approach is premised on the understanding that access to learning is critical to human capital development.

2.1   Lifelong learning: A conceptual clarification

It is difficult to pin down exactly what constitutes lifelong learning. While, historically, 'lifelong learning' is a concept which transcends organised, formal education, its application to the career opportunities of women has not been adequately addressed in the relevant academic literature (Hornick-Lockard, 2008). Gilfus, (2010:1) has provided accounts, as well as examples, of women and physically challenged individuals in Europe who were marginalised in terms of their limited opportunities to access education and development training. Access to education and development is critical to the growth of women and has undermined the goal of human development capital in numerous countries and in African countries in particular (UNDP, 2014). A broad definition of lifelong learning or the general assumption that lifelong learning includes each every one may have limited relevance for this study. Therefore the concept of lifelong learning is discussed in the context of the career development and aspirations of professional women.

In the 1800s, the concept of lifelong learning was defined in terms of the purpose of human development, namely, teaching both the youth and adults in the conventional, traditional ways (Gilfus, 2010) and with no particular reference to gender. Similarly, in the mid-nineteenth century educational opportunities in Europe and the United States were presented through a postal framework business – a concept to measure improvements in national business environments which was based on the notion of helping individuals who were intrigued by learning. It is, however, not clear how many women benefited in the process.

Basic social structures tend to determine the social positions that people occupy and which impact on their opportunities and life chances (Young, 2001). In the context of this study, lifelong learning is defined as the opportunity for continuous education that is both inclusive and promotes the value and rights of individual in the society concerned. When the concept of lifelong learning encompasses these elements it should ensure social justice and the development of all.

Lifelong learning may be defined as learning which empowers the single person to 'widen his or her insight, aptitudes and disposition and to adjust to a changing, perplexing and related world' (Delores, 1996:14). Delores (1996:14) explains lifelong learning as follows:

> *Development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments*

Tapsoba (2002) rightly argues that it is not possible to discuss lifelong learning in a vacuum, noting that lifelong learning needs to be coordinated with societal qualities. Tapsoba (2002) adds that 'we have to improve and consider also the proximity and access to valuable instructional materials for learners'. In other words, it is vital that the essential, basic resources for the proper implementation of lifelong learning education are provided. When accessibility to resources is ensured, individuals are able to participate in lifelong learning as a result of their ability to access, on a continuous basis, knowledge, the technology, information and other innovations that enable them fit into society (Tapsoba, 2002). This, in turn, explains the necessity for individual self motivation in order to realise and foster the importance of self-training. As a push factor, lifelong learning encompasses the ability of an individual to recognise a need and to act in order to meet that need. Such needs may include the need for promotion within an organisation or the aspiration to attain a certain level in society. In such cases, learning becomes both enjoyable and goal-driven for the adult concerned when the need to study arises from within the adult him/herself rather than the attraction of technology and/or learning resources or the needs of society.

The concept of lifelong learning was popularised in the early 1970s by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2006) as a way of linking

different levels of formal education with non-formal and formal learning. UNESCO's notion of lifelong learning is informed by its mission and focus on individual achievement and growth. It is debatable whether this definition of lifelong learning includes or addresses some of the problems facing developing countries in Africa in particular. On the other hand, Preece (2006) addressed the issue of 'inclusivity' in her definition of lifelong learning as formal and non-formal learning that fosters and broadens education for all concerned in the society in question. In other words, education is used to promote economic growth and social development in society. Similarly, the OECD's (2006) mission aims at achieving economic growth in Europe through the medium of skilled workers In Europe, lifelong learning was conceptualised as an invaluable means with which to skill European workers, build business and grow the economy of the region (Delor, 1996). Although one would hope that skilled female workers in Europe are relatively equal to their male counterparts, it is widely acknowledged that across the world women occupy less skilled jobs. Admittedly this condition is uneven and women in developing countries are far worse off.

In the late 1990s vocational schools in Europe moved aggressively into the adult learning market with the goal of skilling workers in the production, building and services related industries. In addition, the introduction of new technologies via the internet made it easier for adult learners to learn through electronic means, thus extending the scope of the courses and training available to adult learners. Distance learning and continuing education organisations have adopted advanced technologies to ensure that learning is flexible and accommodates the busy adult learner.

Universities in society today have changed their traditional systems and expanded the degrees they offer by including different types of executive education, continuing education and adult education, and offering non-credit bearing programmes. Thus, the need for lifelong learning for the purposes of both economic and personal growth has led to a shift in educational institutions, with such institutions moving towards more flexible models of access and learning so as to enable learners of all ages and stages in their careers to continue to access learning (O'Lawrence, 2005). These developments are especially important in a constantly changing economic environment in which workers require consistent training and retraining in order to build the competencies that will enable them to remain both employable and competitive in the labour market.

In the African context lifelong learning, as in other parts of the world, has traditionally been linked to social and economic development. Aitcheson (2003:165) highlights the value of lifelong learning as regards building social structures and citizenship.

> *A key purpose of lifelong learning is democratic citizenship, connecting individuals and groups to the structures of social, political and economic activity in both local and global contexts (Aitcheson, 2003:165).*

There is no one universally accepted definition of the term 'lifelong learning' in the literature (Jannette, 2008). In its simplest form, lifelong learning is considered as the learning that begins in the early stages of a childhood and continues into adulthood and it involves how to learn as well as acquiring and applying knowledge and skills throughout life. In other words, it is about working out how to keep up with trends, stay up to date and acquire cutting-edge abilities, while maintaining a high quality of life, as well as being dynamic and mindful citizens. Lifelong learning may be self supported or it may rely on various forms of external training and institutions. Although it is not necessarily aimed at improving employment opportunities, it is commonly associated with the goal of building up economic potential.

In view of the fact that the concepts of time and life have been included in the understandings of lifelong learning, the concept includes both prevocational and post-vocational activities as well as other non-economic life roles (Smith 2002). According to the United States Department of Education (2000), a lifelong learner is usually characterised as any grown-up who is included in a learning movement other than obligatory training. This incorporates those included in deliberate learning exercises and also exercises that are required for legitimate, proficient or different reasons.

In short, lifelong learning may be both informal and structured. In the informal context it is aimed primarily at changing and improving personal and social ways of living while, as a structured tool, it is generally used in work contexts as a means of building up a professional profile and enhancing career and economic opportunities (Margaret, 2008). However, whether the lifelong learning informal or structured its aim is to equip an individual with improved skills to enable the individual concerned to function effectively in a particular role – *investing in human and society development simultaneously.* In developing countries lifelong learning has often been equated with adult literacy programmes. In contexts where basic education has historically not been available to all, improving the consequent low levels

of adult literacy was a key goal of lifelong learning. Its application to professional women seeking higher levels of development is limited, especially in the African context.

The two concepts 'lifelong learning' and 'lifelong education' need to be clarified by means of definitions. These concepts have different histories and a complex relationship which have to be acknowledged.

'Lifelong learning' focuses more on the individual learning that takes place throughout the life course, whereas 'lifelong education' focuses on the systemic provision of education to meet educational needs through the life course, for example early childhood education, schooling, vocational education, higher education, adult education and so forth (see Duke & Hinzen, 2012).

Similarly, other key concepts such as 'life-wide' and 'life-deep' learning are defined. These notions indicate that learning happens not only throughout life but also in all aspects of life and at various levels of experience (see, for example, Gustavsson, 1997; Crowther, 2004; Field, 2005).

2.2   Human Capital Development

The notion of human capital development (HCD) may be traced back at least as far as the work of the 18th century Scottish economist, Adam Smith. However, it was only in the late 1950s and the 1960s that human capital development came to be understood as an economic concept which is central to the economic progress of both a country and an individual (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007).

There is no one universally accepted definition for the term 'human capital development' and its meaning is often discipline related. For example, economists view the notion of HCD in purely economic terms while social scientists suggest that it has broader human development as its goal, and not just economic development. According to Martinez (2013), the concept of human capital development is one in terms of which, fundamentally, a person is regarded as a resource or an asset that is critical to the functioning and wellbeing of an organisation. Indeed, he argues that human capital development implies that an individual in an organisation should be seen as a ''treasure'' and, thus, human capital development represents the value that each employee brings to the organisation.

However, Martinez (2013) also points out that, as people move from one organisation to another, new skills often need to be learnt, while, although the previous skills may be transferred to the new job, such skills may still be lost if the opportunity to use them is not available. In practice this means that people often do not change a job to pursue higher salaries but for improved work circumstances that enable them to develop further than would otherwise have been the case. In other words, the desire for HCD, and lifelong learning and fulfilment may be a strong motivating factor when individuals make decisions about their work lives. Accordingly, the main value of a company does not lie in its systems, controls, or machinery and equipment, but in the value provided by its human capital (Martinez, 2013). HCD is thus a key factor if an organisation is to improve its performance.

In line with the above explanation of human capital development and lifelong learning, Stockley (2011) emphasises that the key assets to consider are the people who work for an organisation and/or in business because they have the potential to contribute to the growth and development of the physical and other resources of the organisation. The collective attitudes, skills and abilities of the people working for an organisation contribute to organisational performance and productivity and, therefore, any expenditure on training, development, health and support represents not merely an expense but an investment in people (Stockley, 2011).

Sullivan and Sheffrin (2003:194) maintain that a narrow definition of lifelong learning focuses only on an account of an individual's competencies, knowledge and personality that enable the individual to carry out certain tasks for the purpose of economic gain. Although such a definition is narrow it is not too far removed from the meaning which other researchers attribute to the concept of lifelong learning. One important component of this definition is the need to invest in human capital development. However, it is debatable whether an individual, organisation or society benefits the most after the skills have been acquired. The literature is not very explicit on this aspect.

Adayana (2009:2) perceives human capital development as follows:

> *Active balancing of short and long-term business requirements with the career and professional development needs of people.*

In other words, Adayana is making the point that the alignment of the individual and the organisation's development is an important factor for the development of both. In terms of

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this definition of Adayana, it would appear that both the individual and organisation must experience development as a result of the new skills acquired. There is, thus, a need to ensure that neither party suffers and also that the interests of one of the parties do not override the interests of the other party. In other words, the development of both the organisation and the individual is essential otherwise it may be that the skills acquired are either underutilised or they are not appreciated. Thus, lifelong learning may be seen as an individual's aspiration, investment in and the assets of an organisation (Kefela 2007). HCD aims to understand how institutions may invest in people and how both parties (people and institutions) may benefit from such investment.

A study conducted by Almeida and Carneiro (2008) emphasised certain significant points with respect to the value of HCD. The study was conducted using a number of firms in Portugal over a four-year period (1995–1999). The study revealed that ''[i]ndividuals invest in human capital development over the whole life-cycle, and more than one half of life-time HCD is accumulated through post-school investments by the firm''. This 'happens either through learning by doing or through on-the-job-training' (Almeida & Carneiro, 2008:2). The study also found that ''an increase in training per employee of 10 hours per year leads to an increase in current productivity of 0.6%'' (Almeida & Carneiro, 2008:4). The study concluded that such high returns suggest that on-the-job-training is a sound investment which may yield comparable returns to a similar investment in physical capital (Almeida & Carneiro, 2008:5). Thus, the study emphasises the importance of HCD through on-the-job training and that this is likely to benefit both the individual and the company concerned.

Significance of human capital development in Africa

The value of HCD in Africa is of particular significance in view of the poverty and poor economic growth on the continent.

Kefela and Rena (2007:51) emphasise that national, organisational and individual development is intimately linked and that it is not possible for one to happen without the other.

> No country has achieved sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital: The question then becomes imperative of what significance is human capital development in Africa?

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Indeed, Kefela and Rena (2007) highlight the value of this human capital approach as regards the development goals in Africa.

It is not possible to overemphasise the significance of human capital development in Africa. In their paper entitled 'Human capital theory: Implications for educational development', Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008:161) make the following point:

> *Many of the developing nations have, thus, realized that the principal mechanism for developing human knowledge is the education system. Thus, they invest huge sum of money in education, not only as an attempt to impart knowledge and skills to individuals, but also to impart values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations which may be in the nation's best developmental interest.*

The central role of education and learning as an invaluable tool for HCD becomes obvious. Indeed, Omojimite (2011:183) suggests there is a strong link between HCD and economic development.

The following two main notions emerge from the research linking HCD to economic growth. On one hand, human capital development through education/training contributes to economic development by imparting general attitudes and specific skills, reducing fertility and improving living standards. Secondlly, learning helps people to improve the quality of their lives though skills development and giving them access to information that may help them make informed choices. Lucas (1988), Romar (1990) and Barro and Lee (1993) used endogenous growth models to reveal that investment in human capital leads to a growth in physical capital and this, in turn, leads to economic growth. In the same vein, Adebiyi and Oladele (2005) reveal that human capital development ensures that the workforce adapts to new innovations and challenges in its total environment.

This view is also supported by the Khartoum Declaration of 1988 which is quoted as follows by Adebiyi and Oladele (2005:2):

> *No Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) or economic recovery programme should be formulated or can be implemented without having as its heart detailed social and human priorities.*

In a similar vein, Ali (2002) quotes a merchant banker from the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC) as having asked the following question and then answered it: ''what is rich? Rich is education, expertise and technology, we have money, yes! But we are not rich, without knowledge, we are nothing.'' In Nigeria, as in many of the other less developed countries with a colonial heritage, the departure of the colonialists created a vacuum which required educated people to take over the functions of government. Thus, education became crucial in the development of these countries, with educated people gaining access to clerical, administrative and teaching jobs and rising to high levels in society. Several studies have investigated the relationship between the levels of education and economic growth (Bratti et al, 2004), education and inequality (Rehme, 2007) and technical education and economic growth (Mustafa, Abbas & Saeed, 2005). These studies all found a positive relationship between investment in education and economic growth.

On the other hand, there is the body of literature which has found that, despite the rather impressive expansion in educational facilities, especially in the less developed countries, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of such countries is not demonstrating a rising and stable trend. In a cross country study, Pritchett (1999a) revealed that the elasticity of output with respect to human capital per worker was negative, thus implying that the growth in per worker human capital was having no effect on output. Also, in a study on the relationship between investment in human capital and development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Pritchett (1999b), found the coefficient of human capital to be negative.

The human capital development mechanism is extremely important in determining employee performance. There is a large and growing body of literature that shows a positive link between human capital development and performance.

Solkhe and Chaudhary (2011:3) state the following:

> Human resource being the most vital factor of production and labour productivity, a positive, forward looking, human resource development is a sine-qua-non for the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector employees.

In short, it is argued that people perform better in the workplace when the organisation in question makes an investment in the development and the wellbeing of its employees. Appah, Tebepah and Soreh (2011) reveal that organisations throughout the world invest several millions in recruitment, selection, training and development, promotions, transfers and

compensation of human resources in the interests of the performance of their respective organisations. At the core of the HCD concept is the belief that it is not just the recruitment of individuals that is significant but also the investment in their learning and training. Nwachukwu (2007) notes that HCD, referred to here as human resource development, is at the heart of employee acquisition, utilisation, productivity, commitment, motivation and growth. Thus, HCD may be regarded as the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who possess the education, skills and experience which are critical for economic and social development (Sharma, 2004). Solomon (2009) suggests that HCD includes investment by society in education, investment by employees in training and investment by individuals in time and money for their own development. Nwuche and Awa (2009) argue that human resource development improves both the skills and the knowledge base of organisational members and that this is a precursor of organisational development.

Saraswathi (2010:247) further explains that, in the organisational context, HCD is a process in terms of which the employees of an organisation are helped in a continuous, planned way to acquire or sharpen the capabilities required to perform

> *... various functions associated with their present or expected future roles, develop their general capabilities as individuals and discover and exploit their own inner potentials for their own and/or organizational development processes and to develop an organizational culture in which supervisor-subordinate relationships, team work and collaboration among sub units are strong and contribute to the professional well-being, motivation and the pride of employees.*

In addition, investment in human capital enables a country to exploit the benefits of technical and technological advancement effectively, as well as maintain that advancement. Although opinions differ regarding the most appropriate ways of maximising the benefits of HCD, it is generally agreed that basic education and an investment in health are essential, first-level requisites.

Mechanisms for human capital development

Several human capital development mechanisms are available to develop the competencies of employees and improve the overall organisational climate (Rao, 2011:1).

The major mechanisms are discussed below:

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Training

According to Thaker (2008), 'training is an organized procedure by which people learn knowledge and skills for a definite purpose'. Tim and Brinkerhoff (2008:49) insist that human capital development represents the planned opportunity that is provided for training, education directed and planned experiences, and guided growth. Zigon (2002) defines training as the overall process in terms of which an individual's behaviour is modified to conform to a predefined and specific pattern. Training may also be regarded as a process or procedure through which the skills, talents and knowledge of employees are enhanced (Industrial Training Fund, 2006:49).

Training is considered to be fundamentally important to human capital development. In fact, training may be described as the vehicle that takes organisations to their destination within a stipulated time frame. It is not possible to overemphasise the importance of human capital development to the survival of modern organisations. If an organisation is to survive in the modern, competitive business world that is constantly changing and setting new ways of engagement, it is vital that the organisation train and retrain its human resources to be flexible and adaptive to change (Ebiringa & Okorafor, 2010:51).

Training is one of the most important functions that contribute directly to the development of human resources. Training within the organisational context may be defined as a set of planned activities on the part of an organisation to increase the job knowledge and skills or to modify the attitudes and social behaviour of its members in ways which are consistent with the goals of the organisation and the requirements of the job (Schmidt, 2007). According to Nwachukwu (2004), the objectives of training employees include increasing productivity, lowering turnover, building morale and promoting 'goal congruency' ('the individual and the organization having similar goals'). Bartlett (2001) found a positive relationship between training and organisational commitment and recommended that 'human resource development professionals adapt new research methods to demonstrate to organizational decision makers' that training and development contributes to the desired workplace attitudes which may, in turn, influence behaviours such as absenteeism and turnover.

Arago'n-Sa'nchez et al. (2003) and Lee and Bruvold (2003) state that comprehensive training activities are positively associated with productivity, reduced staff intention to leave and improved organisational effectiveness. Rowden and Conine (2003) found that a large

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proportion of the sense of job satisfaction on the part of workers may be attributed to workplace learning opportunities. There are several different methods of training which may be used in the workplace. Goal-setting (Holton & Baldwin, 2000) and self-management strategies (Batool & Batool, 2012) are commonly adopted methods as these approaches combine and build the compatibility of institutional and individual goals.

Rautalinko and Lipser (2004) claim that certain training programmes are

> *… designed to trigger specific responses while others apply to general strengths and weaknesses of employees before training. Successful and effective job training largely impact the productivity of employees in their incumbent position. If an employee feels well-trained, they often commit to the organisation (Appah et al, 2012:247).*

Training employees results in increased productivity in any organisation. In addition, training helps employees to attain their personal goals as they work to achieve organisational goals. It is also pertinent to note that the technological growth of any nation depends on the extent of the trained human resources available.

Training techniques may be defined as the means by which information, ideas, skills, attitudes and feelings are communicated to the learners (Gary, 2001). These training techniques are crucial elements of the success of any training process. Such techniques are often categorised according to whether they are employed for either on-the-job or off-the-job training. On-the-job training is ideal for training unskilled and semi-skilled employees as it gives the trainees ample opportunity for learning on the actual equipment and in the environment of the job concerned. This training technique gained acceptance during the Second World War when millions of unskilled men from Africa were trained to do thousands of different jobs in various war plants (Oforegbunam, Ebiringa & Okorafor, 2010:52). On the other hand, off-the-job training refers to the training that is primarily conducted at educational institutions and in terms of which information, lectures, conferences, panel discussions and computer-assisted instructions are used to impart knowledge and skills to the trainees. As compared to off-the-job training on-the-job training tends to be more focused and aimed at a specific job, whereas as off-the-job training tends to have a wider scope and aims to prepare the individual for a number of closely allied work opportunities.

In the context of this study, *formal learning* for women means structured and organised training accompanied by individual aspirations and the objectives that the skills acquired will be useful for the participants and the sponsored organisation (Beckett & Hager, 2000). Because such learning is structured or organised, corporate organisations expect a return for investing in participants and for allowing them to take leave for a certain period. Thus, such training should be mutually beneficial. Certificates would generally be expected as evidence for promotion to higher positions should the opportunity becomes available. Therefore, formal learning is a traditional route to career development, including for women, because it is evidence based and objective driven.

Unlike formal learning, *informal learning,* is never organised or structured and has no objectives attached (Livingstone, 2001). It is usually an internal arrangement made by the employer to provide updates or orientation on policy or certain job awareness for the staff. Therefore, it is not directed to an outcome, may not lead to certification and could not be used as evidence for promotion, because of the informal nature of such training and learning. In the context of this study, women who aspire to grow in their careers seek such growth through formal training, although informal learning may also supplement their career development. In other words, *non-formal learning* in this study is refers to all organized educational program that take place in the work environment which is usually not formal in nature but are short term and voluntary (see Schugurensky, 2000).

Management development

According to Thaker (2008), management development is a form of leadership training, involving the training in management techniques and the development of managerial abilities of a group of middle and top-level employees. In the main, the lecture method is used in this type of training. This is an important aspect of the management training programme for employee and must be widely practised if the general efficiency of organisations is to be improved by a more competent management than would otherwise have been the case. In cases in which several trainees are involved in learning one skill together at one place, the emphasis is not on production, but on learning. The management training technique is an attempt to duplicate, as closely as possible, the actual conditions found in a real work place (Ebiringa & Okorafor, 2010:52).

Performance and potential appraisal

Performance appraisal consists of a framework of planned goals, standards and competence requirements and plays an important role in integrating the individual's needs with the needs of the organisation (Saraswathi, 2010). According to Ali and Akter (2011), employee performance appraisal is the subject of much interest in the majority of organisations as a result of the effects of performance appraisal decisions and their consequences for worker compensation and recognition.

Brown and Heywood (2005) note a positive association between performance appraisal systems and the improved productivity of organisations. This finding is reinforced by Lee (2007).

In this context the term 'potential' refers to either the abilities which an employee possesses but which are not currently being put to use or the ability to assume responsibility in future assignments. The 'term performance refers to one's skills and abilities in meeting the requirements of the job which one is holding currently' (Rao, 2011). Potential appraisal differs from performance appraisal which focuses on an employee's current performance in his/her existing role. If an employee is required to play a completely different set of roles at higher levels than is currently the case, then it is essential that potential appraisal are carried out at regular intervals. Such an appraisal is carried out on the basis of the following; firstly, supervisor's observations, secondly, performance adaptation relating to various previous roles played by the employee and, thirdly, performance in roles in simulated settings relating to a new position. An effective potential appraisal system helps management to select a suitable candidate for a given job and to offer additional training if necessary (Rao, 2011).

In organisations that subscribe to human resource development, the potential of every employee should be assessed periodically (Mohanty, Santosh & Sahoo, 2012:4). Such assessments may be used for developmental planning as well as for placements (Appah et al., 2012:248). Saraswathi (2010) reveals that, in most organisations in India, the common practice is to promote people on the basis of past performance. She argues that the majority of young executives coming into organisations are career minded, ambitious and seeking fast growth. Potential appraisal on a regular basis would be of significant value to such up and coming young executives.

Career planning

A career may be regarded as a sequence of positions held by a person in the course of a lifetime. On the other hand, career planning is a process of integrating the employee's needs and aspirations with organisational needs. Career programmes and human resource (HR) programmes are linked to the degree that they help each individual while meeting organisational requirements (Rao, 2011).

In the human resource development (HRD) system, the long-term growth plans of a company should not be discussed at all levels in order to promote understanding and commitment on the part of the employees. The immediate concern of employees 'would be to find out where they stand in such a road map' (Kumar, 2008) and whether they have any opportunity to grow while building the organisation brick by brick. In view of the fact managers usually have information about the growth plans of the company, it is essential that they transmit their information to their subordinates while the subordinates should be assisted in planning their careers within the company. It is, however, not necessary that each employee scale new heights every year but they must, at least, be aware of the opportunities available and prepare ready for greater challenges ahead. Career planning does necessarily not guarantee success but, without it, employees are rarely prepared to access the opportunities that come their way (Rao, 2011:1).

Reward and employee welfare

Rewarding employee performance and behaviour is an important component of HRD. In the main, organisations with sound learning, training and development systems, reward and recognition systems and information systems promote human resource development (Appah et al., 2012:248). According to Mercer (2003), employees will stay with an organisation if they are better rewarded than elsewhere. Employees are usually rewarded based on quality performance. However, a sense of accomplishment is recognised as a motivator. Armstrong (2001) linked reward and employee welfare to the achievement of previously set targets which are designed to motivate people to be more productive in order to achieve a high level of organisational performance. Ian et al. (2004) assert that rewards should be incorporated into organisational strategies as this may be used a technique which an organisation may use in order to achieve higher productivity in accordance with organisational goals. Research conducted by Mohamad et al. (2009) found that incentives are positively related to

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organisational performance but that incentives did not moderate the relationship between human resource development and organisational performance. It is clear that the human capital development in most organisations is usually linked to the effective implementation of organisational policy in terms of how employees are well trained and rewarded in order to be useful to the organisation. One important aspect of this study is its focus on the lifelong learning and advancement of career opportunities of women.

2.3   Women and higher education

The term 'higher education' refers to degree-giving education that takes place at universities or similar accredited institutions of higher learning (Tjomsland, 2009:413). Despite the impressive quantitative educational achievements of the 1960s and 1970s, African education systems have been characterised by a high degree of structural inequality with regard to region, rural or urban residence, religion, ethnicity, social class and gender. However, of all these factors, gender has been the most widespread and persistent basis for inequality in opportunity as regards access to schooling as well as educational output and outcome (e.g. socioeconomic and socio-political attainment). The overwhelming majority of African countries are characterised by an underrepresentation of the female population in their respective education systems (Lumumba, 2006). This low participation of women in higher education means that their potential for HCD is underutilised. In other words, if Africa is to achieve its fullest possible growth potential, it is essential that women are seen as a critical resource on the continent, not simply as nurturers but as people who are active in the formal economy with the potential to become leaders in the economic terrain.

2.3.1   Access, equity and opportunities of women in the workplace

Booysen (2007a) reveals that the advancement of women to executive positions in South Africa may no longer be seen as an option but as a requirement. The South African Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 redressed the scales in favour of previously disadvantaged individuals in respect of access to opportunities in the workplace, while companies also came under pressure to meet employment equity quotas.

Employment equity legislation is a key instrument for addressing the legacy of inequality, disadvantage and segregation of particular groups in the labour market (Allen, 2001:19). It is evident that the fact that certain groups are or have been disadvantaged has a broad economic impact on society. Individuals who are disadvantaged frequently never reach their full

potential, neither do they realise their potential earning power and they may even have to rely on assistance. In other words, if companies are to become both effective and efficient, it is imperative that they their internal organisation is such that their corporate structures provide for ways in which to build the strengths of undervalued people, often women (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2002:5).

Ziehl (2000:3) observes that equal employment opportunity has been the focus of debates by scholars and academics as regards the creation of a non-sexist and non-racist environment. The reason for an equal opportunity policy is to identify and abolish discrimination in the society.

The literature review suggested that the employment equity is generally viewed as an organisational change strategy which is designed to prevent discrimination against the disadvantaged by identifying and removing barriers in employment policies and practices. As such, it is aimed at improving the representation and occupational distribution of designated groups. However, the emphasis is not only on improving numerical representation but also on providing equality of opportunity through fair procedures and a supportive organisational culture. In the majority of countries the employment equity legislation relates to discrimination with regard to gender and race, while in some countries it includes people with disabilities. In certain countries, affirmative action in terms of race applies to the majority of the population, for example Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, and South Africa (Portnoi, 2003:81).

Women who enter the workplace are confronted by a number of disadvantages, both structural and social. Unexamined sexism and gender stereotypes often lead to discrimination against women within the workplace. The University of the Witwatersrand Employment Equity Policy (WITS EEP, 2003) reports that women's gendered role as primary care-givers and child minders affects the degree to which they are able to participate in the workplace. In addition, black women enter the workplace with the additional burden of historical disadvantages such as poor education and a low socioeconomic status.

Women and other equal employment opportunity group members require protection and not organisations in which racism, sexism and other forms of intolerance of people who are different prevail. Allen (2001:18) suggests that the employment rights of women should be protected as well as their right to equitable access to jobs. This includes promotions,

developmental opportunities, participation in employment equity opportunity-related decision-making and their experiences taken into account when organisational reality is conveyed and formalised in annual reports, mission statements and forward planning documents. Women are internal stakeholders and as groups whose rights have been given protection under several laws. They are, indeed, the internal customers of equal employment opportunity programmes.

Jordaan and Jordaan (2000:706) argue that the Employment Equity Act will change the face of the workplace, particularly at senior levels, and will require that past policies and practices are reviewed and addressed. In addition, it will be necessary to ensure that no unfair discrimination exists and that those individuals/groups who were previously excluded from normal business are given every opportunity to develop and advance to their highest potential. Numerical target setting and related strategies of affirmative action will have to be implemented and the organisational environments of companies prepared for such planning.

Makgoba (2005:21) argues that the purpose of the employment equity legislation is to bring about equity, redress past injustices and lay the foundation for a future, non-racial, non-sexist and equitable South African society. Makgoba (2005) further argues that experience in other countries, such as the United States, has shown that employment equity legislation may be both positive and negative. It may be positive in the sense of advancing opportunities and equity but it could negative in terms of creating a culture of entitlement.

In addition, designated groups may feel stigmatised as being given a job or promoted on the basis of their group status only. They may not be able to cope or perform if qualifications requirements are bypassed, with failure reinforcing stereotypes. There may also be criticism if more qualified groups are bypassed in favour of less qualified designated groups. Clashes may occur over other principles of fairness, such as seniority, if employment equity takes precedence over such rules (Gunderson, 2002). Nevertheless, it is clear that, when employment equity is implemented for the correct reasons, monitored and well-supported, it provides individuals and society with opportunities to bring out the best in people and advance the people and systems in any society (Makgoba, 2005:21).

Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003:367) reveal that, in the past few years in South Africa, employment equity legislation has forced organisations to create and implement practices focused on the opportunities and challenges of diversity and equity targets. However,

effective diversity programmes extend well beyond merely hiring a diverse workforce. They also include creating family-friendly workforces, providing diversity training and developing mentoring programmes. With the face of the workplace changing as a result of programmes of affirmative action and equal opportunity, organisations have made efforts to include in their management structures people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds and who were previously denied such access. Nevertheless, Kramers and Pillay (2003:112) point out that while some progress has been made in this area, management structures remain the domain of white males.

Portnoi (2003:83) revealed that both effective promotion and retention policies aimed at attracting qualified staff and the need to assist staff with the heavy teaching loads that limit research and promotion opportunities are some of the challenges facing higher education in Africa. Portnoi further explains that there is a need to address the professional development of women in both the academic and the administrative fields, including the development of institutional gender policies on sexual harassment and rape, recruitment and promotion, and the inclusion of women in non-traditional fields such as science and technology.

Skilbeck and Connell (2000:99) note that gender imbalances in the staff of universities staff have been a major concern in South Africa society. They further explain that the issues of occupational segregation, the relationship between gender and ethnicity, and the role of senior members of the academic profession in judging the careers of women in particular. Women academics have an important role to play in developing the ideas of identity and independence in women. This will not, however, be easy because of the generally low status of women who are also in low paid, temporary or part-time jobs as employees.

The discussion above on the position of women in higher education serves to reinforce that HCD must be actively planned and should, ideally, be aimed at creating opportunities for people, often women, who have potential but, for historical and social reasons, often do not have the opportunity to develop their careers. In addition, it is also possible that, eventually, when women succeed to senior positions, there is a risk that they will find themselves in stereotyped career paths. Thus, one of the core purposes of HCD is to break down the boundaries to such career paths and open up opportunities for women to explore their fullest potential in all sectors.

In this study I wanted to find out about the career experiences of women and how lifelong learning influences their career paths in the corporate world and I adopted an interpretive paradigm. In other words, I entered the research scene with my own interpretive frame of reference and my own belief system. This paradigmatic perspective played an important role in guiding my research. My philosophy of reality (ontology) and how we come to know that reality (epistemology) was an important factor in guiding the way in which I went about finding out what I believe can be known (methodology). The epistemological view is that knowledge is the creation of ideas which bring about interaction between the researched and the researcher. Ontologically, I believe that there are multiple realities which make each individual's perception of reality a valid one. I therefore attempted to create a picture of the realities of the women from whom I had collected data through my own lens.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has offered insights into the concept of lifelong learning and HCD. The chapter has highlighted that HCD is at the core of career advancement and lifelong learning while, for women, it is an especially important mechanism as regards opening up new career paths and offering opportunities to advance to senior management positions. In sum this chapter shows that HCD and lifelong learning may be considered to be two sides of the same coin. I also argue here that HCD and lifelong learning are critical tools if affirmative action policies are to achieve their goals to create opportunities for women to become leaders in the workplace and in society. I use the concept of lifelong learning and HCD as the analytic lens to understand and analyse the data collected in this study.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant literature pertaining to lifelong learning and the career advancement of women in the corporate sector. The focus of the review falls on the following three themes: determinants of career choice, the job satisfaction and career progress of women, and education and lifelong learning. In addition, the review will focus on the sub-themes of the location of women in the hierarchy of organisations, factors affecting the career advancement of women, and the role of lifelong learning as a means to enhance opportunities for women in the corporate world.

3.2   Early determinants of careers

Ahuja (2002) provides an initial framework for classifying certain early determinants of careers into social and structural factors. These include gender stereotypes, family and media culture, counsellors/teachers, school, and personal technology resources. However, while both social and structural factors may influence decisions about career choice, the early perceptions of children are mainly influenced by social factors such as parents, peers and role models. In addition, adolescents are not exposed to structural factors to the same extent as women and men in professional settings (Adya & Kaiser, 2005).

3.2.1   Social and family factors

Social influences result in biases that influence both internal and external gender perceptions. Gender stereotyping, role models, peers, media and parents are all examples of such social influences. One of the most influential contexts of socialisation in both childhood and adolescence is the family (Dryler, 1998), and family members may motivate career choices both directly and, equally persuasively, indirectly. For example, although a parent may not be an information technology (IT) professional they may encourage girls to pursue or compete actively in such careers which are perceived to be "masculine". In other words, these parents may act as role models in terms of perseverance and achievement without their being IT professionals themselves.

Furthermore, Smith (2000) suggests that women who enter male-dominated fields such as science often come from families in which the mothers work, both parents are highly educated, and success is considered critical. In addition, mothers with four-year degrees are more likely to influence career choices than mothers without such qualifications.

The influence that a university education among some parents has on the career decisions of their children is also taken up by Gates (2002) and Turner, Brent, and Pecora (2002). These authors assert that parents with university qualifications have a strong influence on the career decisions of their children and influence the non-traditional career decisions of their daughters.

Domenico and Jones (2006) maintain that the occupational status and educational level of the parents of females have a significant impact on the career aspirations and career options of these girls. Likewise, Wahl and Blackhurst (2000) indicate that children's career aspirations are closely associated with parental occupations.

Similarly, a study conducted by Signer and Saldana (2001) found that the social status of the mother's occupation, in contrast to that of the father's, was more closely linked to the career aspirations of female students. The researchers ascribed this finding to the fact that mothers are generally more present in many homes. This research also showed that, with regard to parental influence, women's ambitions to reach the top in their professional careers are often supported by both their parents.

One participant discussed in Trauth (2002:106) reflects on the impact her father had on her:

> *If I didn't have my father who sat down, and you know, helped me choose the subjects, then I might have chosen the wrong subjects. I might have chosen the ones that I could get good grades in or that wouldn't have led to anything.*

Other factors that appear to influence career choice are birth order (Leong, Hartung, Goh, & Gaylor, 2001), parents' educational attainment and parents' occupational status (Kerka, 2000).

In a study conducted by Espero (2009:62), on the correlates of career decisions among children of Filipino workers working overseas, factors such as family and friends were found

to be a determinant of their choice of career in life; subsequently Filipino workers believed these two factors to have an influence on their career decision.

3.2.2 Role models and the peer group

The academic literature reveals that the career choices of women are considered to be influenced by role models (Fayolle, Gailly & Lassas-Clerc, 2006). Role models have been found to be a significant factor in the career decisions of young teenagers, promoting certain lifestyles, social images and behaviours, while at the same time influencing individuals' career choices (Van Auken, Fry & Stephens, 2006), In this study, I look at the role models who influence academic and career choices directly.

An empirical study conducted by Quimby and Desantis (2006) on the influence of role models on the career choices of women revealed the following:

> *Role model influence as predictors is a determinant of women career choice. Their findings showed that levels of self-efficacy and role model influence accounted for significant variance in the career choices of women.*

In support of the above finding, other research has also revealed a link between role model influence and a variety of career-related outcomes, including career choice (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002), However, few studies have examined the role of self-efficacy or role models as predictors of career choice in other academic and career domains (Gore & Leuwerke, 2000). Some of these studies shed light on the efficacy of variables such as support and the influence of role models on the career choices of women in professional jobs (DeSantis & Quimby, 2004; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000; Lent, Brown, Nota & Soresi, 2003; Lent, Brown & Schmidt, 2003; Quimby & O'Brien, 2004). It may thus be concluded that role models help to determine the career choices of women venturing into the professional workforce.

3.2.3 Individual differences

Individual differences in the context of the study are perceived as the different traits individuals possess in terms of their behaviour, which may be a determining factor for women in particular in choosing a career in the workforce. Some of these individual differences could be attributed to personality preferences and socioeconomic position, which are factors that can influence women to make certain decisions regarding what career to

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pursue. However, of immediate interest to this study are two aspects of this construct, namely, personality differences and perceptions of general self-efficacy.

In a study conducted by Trauth (2002), titled "Old girl out: An individual differences perspective on women in the information technology profession", it was found that women in the IT profession are influenced by socio-cultural factors. This study also revealed that individual women respond in a variety of specific ways to the interplay between individual characteristics and environmental influences. The findings show that most professional women working in the IT sectors of the workforce have been influenced by either societal or cultural factors, which, in turn, determine their attitudes towards choosing a specific profession in the labour market (Trauth, 2002).

3.3 Women in the workforce, job satisfaction and career progression in corporate organisations

For the majority of women, the most important aspect of a career is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction may be defined as the "positive emotional state resulting from evaluating one's job experiences" (Mathis & Jackson, 2006:571). This implies that women are more likely than men to leave a job if they are not experiencing job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction within an organisation is likely to increase when there is gender equity in the workforce (Lee, 2000). Many researchers describe job satisfaction as a state of mind and provide different interpretations of the concept. For example, Gregson (1987) defines job satisfaction as the positive emotional state resulting from the individual appraisal of one's job or experience, while Chay and Bruvold (2003) define job satisfaction as an individual's affective response to specific aspects of the job. On the other hand, Noe (1996) defines job satisfaction as the pleasurable feeling that results from the perception that one's job fulfils one or allows for the fulfilment of one's important job values (Appelbaum, Ayre & Shapiro 2002). Accordingly, job satisfaction has been defined in various ways.

In the context of this study, job satisfaction is perceived as an attitudinal variable which is based on how an individual feels about her job and which measures the degree to which an individual likes or is averse to her job:

> *Job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs (Spector, 1997:42).*

An alternative approach to the concept of job satisfaction is that proposed by Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000). This approach is based on the assumption that there are basic and universal human needs, and that if an individual's needs are fulfilled in his/her current situation, then that individual will be happy. This framework postulates that job satisfaction depends on the balance between work-role inputs, including education, working time and effort, and work-role outputs, including wages, fringe benefits, status, working conditions and other intrinsic aspects of the job. Thus, if work-role outputs ("pleasures") increase relative to work-role inputs ("pains"), then job satisfaction will increase (Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000).

Other theorists (e.g. Rose, 2001) have viewed job satisfaction as a bi-dimensional concept comprising both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction dimensions. Intrinsic sources of satisfaction depend on the individual characteristics of the person, such as the ability to use initiative, relations with supervisors, or the work that the person actually performs. These, in turn, are symbolic or qualitative facets of the job. On the other hand, extrinsic sources of satisfaction are situational and depend on the environment, such as pay, promotion or job security. Thus, these are the financial and other material rewards or advantages of a job. Both extrinsic and intrinsic job facets should be represented, as equally as possible, in a composite measure of overall job satisfaction.

Chen, Chang and Yeh (2004) surveyed the capability of career development programmes to respond to career needs at different career stages and their influence on job satisfaction, professional development and productivity among research and development personnel. One of the major findings of the research was that career development programmes influence job satisfaction, professional development and productivity positively. With these findings one would expect that the output of the organisation will improve in terms of turnover (sales) and profit if they can invest in training the employee and motivating them on the job. Achieving this aim means spending more money and is accompanied by expectation, as these employees are expected to perform in order to justify the need for such monetary investment in their professional development. The key factor in this discussion is that it is debatable whether some employees can actually experience job satisfaction when they come back from the

training. The contextual factors that would allow the employee to perform are different and whether they would experience satisfaction on the job would depend on what motivates them to perform – this varies from person to person and organisation to organisation.

Focusing on the satisfaction of women with regard to their career progress, Richardse and Mikkelsen (1999), in their survey of 191 professional and managerial women in Norway, investigated the relationships between organisational supports (e.g. support and encouragement, training and development), work pressures (e.g. hours worked, work-family conflict) and work outcomes such as career and job satisfaction. The results indicated that work pressures are significantly related to job satisfaction but not to perceived opportunities for career progress. On the other hand, the organisational supports were positively correlated with all the work outcomes, indicating that women were more satisfied with both career and job when organisational supports were present. When combined with individual characteristics and work pressures in regression analyses, organisational supports still contributed positively to satisfaction at work.

Fels (2004:5) found that women do not often admit to having ambition as, in their eyes, it would appear that ambition in women implies "egotism, selfishness, and manipulative use of others". By contrast, men readily admit to being ambitious. Hewlett and Luce (2005) found that almost a half of the 643 men they surveyed considered themselves to be ambitious, while only one-third of the 2 443 women felt the same. However, it is essential to master a skill and gain recognition in order to see an ambition through to fruition and herein lies the difference between men and women as, for women, actively seeking recognition is a problem (Fels, 2004:7–15). Researchers believe that women do not need to seek recognition because they have more empathy than men and empathy may cause women to experience more pain when they do not fulfil the wishes of others, essentially the wishes of men. In addition, women are more likely to reduce their effort, thus lowering their chance of recognition, when competing against men (Fels, 2004:40). According to Hall, and reflected in Farmer (as cited in White, 1995), with mastery and higher goals individuals develop a sub-identity and, with a sub-identity, Farmer believes that individuals develop a greater "career centrality". This, in turn, leads to a continued investment in a career.

However, Fels (2004) discounts this fact in the belief that women defer to men. It would appear that women perceive careers as "personal growth and self-fulfilment", while men perceive careers as leading them upward and to a reward (Fels, 2004:39–46). Thus, women

are oriented to self-fulfilment, and reaching a career milestone of higher responsibility and prestige is not necessarily the pinnacle of a woman's career. For her, the pinnacle often comprises doing a job that has meaning and is significant. Hewlett and Luce (2005) discovered that 15% only of the 2 443 women surveyed desired to attain a "powerful position". In fact, higher on the desired list of these women was associating with people they respect, the freedom to be themselves at work, and the ability to be flexible in their schedules. In addition, over 50% of these women felt that giving back to society was an important aspect of their careers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). It is clear from this survey that women's efforts in their jobs are what determine their pursuit of a career.

3.4 Education, lifelong learning and women's career progression in corporate organisations

Women's access to education and training, as well as to measures supporting labour market insertion, may be key factors in enhancing the role that women play in the socioeconomic growth and development of any society. This is a role that is widely recognised in Europe where increasing numbers of economists argue that the rising rates of female employment represent a major driving force in the growth experienced over the past two decades. Even outside the European Union, research has shown that women may be key players in economic development, particularly if their economic involvement is combined with increased access to education and training (Murthy, Sagayam, Rengalakshmi & Sudha 2008:113).

However, women have, traditionally, not had access to the same opportunities for education and employment as men, although it would be too simplistic to depict women as the victims of history (Hornick-Lockard, 2008:15). Access to educational institutions is widely available and accessible. A paper presented in November 1999 to female Asian leaders in Malaysia highlighted education as one of the primary strategies that women should employ to assist them in progressing to senior management positions (Singh, 1999:30).

From the literature reviewed it appears that higher education is a prerequisite for professional women to gain access to top positions. However, given the small number of women with higher levels of education, enrolment in tertiary education has grown faster in sub-Saharan Africa than any other region over the last four decades. While there were fewer than 200 000 tertiary students enrolled in the region in 1970, this number soared to over 4.5 million in 2008 – a more than 20-fold increase (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2010:18). Women are still underrepresented; contrary to global trends women remain disadvantaged in terms of access

to tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa. The tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in sub-Saharan Africa for women is 4.8%, compared to 7.3% for men, despite the significant efforts that have been made to achieve gender parity since the 1990s (UNESCO, 2010:68). It is no surprise then that very few women have access to senior management positions. Moreover, it is to be noted that although higher education is necessary, it is often not sufficient. Indeed, the pathway to senior executive positions is complex, as this study shows further (UNESCO Institute of statistics, 2010).

It is in this context that those women who have had access to education and continuous learning while working stand a better chance of overcoming some of the challenges of career advancement in corporate organisations. However, adult learning and organisational learning on the part of women are just some of the determining factors enabling women in the corporate workforce to overcome the challenges of the "sticky wall" or "glass ceiling" and gender stereotypes and, thus, to climb the ladder to middle and senior management positions. Accordingly, I contend that there is a need for continuous learning on the job as one possible mechanism for career progression.

On the other hand, the increase in women accessing education has not really translated into proportional representation in the workforce or access to decision-making and leadership positions (OECD, 2010; UNDP, 2009:71). Despite the fact that women have opportunities to access learning programmes such as formal education, women still find it difficult to reach the highest levels in the workplace. Some challenges in this regard are considered to be structural issues and are manifest in the gender gaps in tertiary education that still exist in many parts of the world. For instance, in Nigeria the data show that only 34% of women enrol at tertiary institutions, while in South Africa the figure stands at 35% (UIS, 2010), thus demonstrating a higher percentage of women in higher learning, however not enough to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda for women in Africa, which might likely affect their chances in the workforce. Ibeh and Debrah (2011:10) point out that the lack of women in the workplace in senior posts is recognised as a problem:

> *[Some of] the great paradoxes of Africa's persisting development crisis are the continuing under-engagement of millions of potentially transformational female talent in managerial roles, and the systematic relegation of their educational and capacity development needs based on misguided traditional values and gender based prejudice.*

However, this issue may be resolved in many parts of the world in the next decade as more women enter the workforce with the same qualifications as their male counterparts, thus presenting possibilities for them to vie for managerial positions in the workforce.

3.5 Women's placement and location in the hierarchical order of corporate organisations

Research has also highlighted a tendency in organisations to block women from moving into senior positions (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). However, in situations where women do rise to the top they are often assigned roles that are particularly challenging and which carry with them a significant risk of failure, thus effectively positioning such women on what has been termed a "glass cliff" (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007). For example, Vinnicombe and Bank (2003) note the way in which organisations may encourage women to take up positions in personnel and human resources – positions that typically may have less authority and lower status as compared to general managerial positions.

There is very little current data available on women managers at all levels in African countries. A United Nations study published in 2000 reported that women's participation in management and administrative jobs in 26 African countries averaged 15% (United Nations, 2000) while, according to the most recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2008) gender empowerment statistics, the average percentage of women legislators, senior officials and managers, as opposed to their male counterparts, averaged 28.7% in six sub-Saharan African countries. The 2009 Annual Census conducted by the Business Women's Association of South Africa reported that, despite the increase in the number of women in senior positions, women still lag far behind their male counterparts in terms of representation in executive management and CEO positions. Gender stereotyping of the managerial position has been offered as one possible explanation for the proverbial glass ceiling that women encounter in their managerial career mobility (Schein, 2001, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003), with the proponents of this explanation arguing that the extent to which the managerial position is viewed as "male" in gender type may be associated with the fact that the characteristics required for success are perceived as being more common to men than to women (Schein, 2001, 2007). Schein labelled this gender stereotyping as the "think manager, think male maxim". This gender role stereotyping is a well-researched phenomenon, although there is little research that specifically examines the combined effects of race and gender on

this phenomenon. In addition, there is very little published research on women in managerial positions and the gender stereotype in African countries (Booysen & Nkomo, 2006).

However, reports in the World Bank (2015) database show that there has been a slight increase in the number of women in the South African workforce, from 45% in 2010 to 47% in 2012 (World Bank Group, 2015). Despite the increase at the board executive level, men still dominate while women are struggling to equal their male counterparts in management.

African feminists have also underscored the need to understand both the complex role of culture, race and gender in understanding the work experiences and leadership status of women in corporate organisations in Africa (Steady, 2007; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Steady (2007) calls for the recognition of culture as a paradigmatic framework for interrogating the positive and negative influences of culture when defining the societal roles of women in Africa, thus challenging the role that culture plays in determining women's gender roles in society.

Although a race and gender-based intersectional approach is missing in the study of gender-based managerial stereotypes in African countries, several scholars have examined the significance of race and gender in organisations (Acker, 2006; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Bell, Meyerson, Nkomo, & Scully, 2003; Hite, 2004). For example, Bell and Nkomo (2001), in their research on the effects of race and gender on the careers and life journeys of black and white women managers, found that black women and white women had significantly different organisational experiences and perceptions of the barriers to their advancement. Black women perceived both racism and sexism as negatively affecting their organisational experiences. White women, on the other hand, had achieved greater career mobility compared to the black women in the study, although they still reported significant barriers to success embedded in gender. Bell and Nkomo (2001) concluded that white professional women in South Africa are privileged because of their race yet subordinated because of their gender, while black women faced both racism and sexism in their daily organisational experiences. Hence, it is reasonable to expect that an individual's race and gender and not gender alone will affect the perceptions of managerial stereotypes.

3.6 Barriers and impediments to women's career progression in corporate organisations

An analysis of the barriers to women's entry to senior management positions classifies the reasons for this phenomenon into three interacting categories, namely, individual, organisational and wider social or external factors (Chan, 2010; Strachan, French & Burgess, 2010).

3.6.1 Personal factors

3.6.1.1 *Lack of career aspiration*

In their study entitled "The relationship between gender and career aspirations to senior management", Litzky, Barrie, Greenhaus and Jeffrey (2007) found that women were less likely than men to desire promotion to senior management positions. They further pointed out that women's lower desire for promotion to senior management was due, in part, to the smaller degree of congruence that women perceive between personal characteristics and senior management positions and, in part, to the less favourable prospects for career advancement that women perceive relative to men.

Coffey and Delamont (2000) contend that women's underrepresentation in leadership positions may also be ascribed to women's particular decisions not to request advancement in education for a variety of reasons; for example, a lack of necessary aspirations, a lack of awareness of the promotion system and a lack of confidence, a gender-based socialisation fear of failure, and a lack of competitiveness.

3.6.1.2 *Poor self-esteem/women's own belief*

Self-esteem refers to the basic appraisal of oneself as it concerns the overall value that one places on oneself as a person (Bellou, Chitiris & Bellou, 2005:34-48). Creed, Bloxsome, and Johnston (2001:3) argue that belief in one's capacity to change one's own situation is a major determining factor in the level of self-esteem one possesses. The basic underlying theoretical tenet is that individuals will develop attitudes and behave in ways that will maintain their level of self-esteem. Moreover, self-esteem may be defined as "a construct expressing the global relations toward the self "(Classen, Sherrilene, Velozo & Mann, 2007:34-50).

This view is reinforced by Garrun (2004:136), who suggests that individual inadequacy, poor self-esteem, fear of rejection and reticence are all factors that contribute to women not achieving to their full career potential.

Closely related to the above are women's own beliefs. Women's beliefs about what is anticipated from them may constitute a barrier. In her study of Korean women in the financial sector, Kim (2004) confirmed that women have a tendency to concentrate on both their work and family, which means that they can balance their work life and their personal family issues in such a way that one does not affect the other. Even in the presence of such dual roles they still make decisions that do not affect their jobs and family.

Granlese (2004:136) established that, in contrast to men, female managers in the UK financial sector encounter greater occupational pressures. Women in top management positions have a tendency to have fewer children and are more likely to be married than men. Those women who are married have concerns about earning more than their spouse. These findings indicate that women who feel pressurised by a gendered role are often conflicted about home and work responsibilities (Granlese, 2004:136).

3.6.2   Organisational factors

3.6.2.1 *Corporate culture*

The literature on organisational culture found similar results regarding barriers to career advancement. According to the International Labor Organization (2004), corporate culture is a fundamental reason for the absence of women from management and leadership positions. Whiting and Wright (2001) are of the opinion that "attitudes", that is, discrimination and "bias" on the part of the dominant group (white males), are the cause of the differential treatment of individuals in terms of access to workplace positions and rewards, and, in fact, women do report more discrimination in male-dominated firms than in female-dominated firms (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999).

Hewlett (2002) conducted a nationwide survey in the United States, which was targeted at the top 10% of women measured in terms of earning power. She summarised her findings in two points: (i) even in organisations whose policies support women, prevailing attitudes and unrelenting job pressures undermine them; and (ii) women's lives have been expanded but the grudging attitudes of most corporate cultures weigh down and constrain what individual

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women feel is possible. These findings are supported by Cooper Jackson (2001), who suggests that traditional and historical beliefs and attitudes held by organisational members mean that women are not viewed as leaders. They also suggest that structural issues, which include internal business, societal, governmental and organisational factors impede the career progress of women.

In addition, as Woods (2006) discovered, the coaching relationship can be seen not only as a vehicle for career development but also as a method for learning about leadership. In an interview conducted by Woods (2006) with Thompson (2006), a black nurse who was promoted from certified nursing assistant to chief executive officer of an access community health network, Thompson discussed the value of mentoring for her career progression. Based on her experience, she observed that it was necessary to obtain mentors who can assist nurses develop their competencies rather than turning to other nurses for mentoring relationships. She revealed that she advises nurses today that when undergoing orientation they should endeavour to look for the highest ranking nurses in the organisation and seek inspiration from them (Thompson, in Woods, 2006:3).

More recently Motta, Flesher Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011:2) stated:

> *… the transparent social, hierarchical, and attitudinal impediment that maintains horizontal sex isolation in associations … [Which] offer certain structural features across social and institutional context, for example, the concentration of authority and power among male elites, concepts of merit, achievements and career focused around male experience and life trajectories, and social and institutional practices that reproduce socially predominant types of patriarchy. Women [therefore] look up the occupational ladder and get a clear vision of the top rungs but they cannot clearly see where they will experience invisible impediments.*

Melymuka (2002) further states that the roots of gender discrimination are built into a plethora of work practices, cultural norms and images that appear unbiased, including definitions of competence, commitment and leadership. People do not even notice this discrimination, let alone question it even though it creates a subtle pattern of disadvantage that blocks all women (Melymuka, 2002:53).

Likewise, Tapia and Kvasny (2004) found that, within the traditionally male-dominated IT culture, high value is placed on individualism and this impedes the creation of mentoring networks and a supportive environment for female IT employees. In addition, Tapia and Kvasny (2004) state that white males have traditionally held the highest ranking and the most privileged positions in IT and that these white males find it difficult to relate to their female employees.

3.6.2.2 *Discrimination*

In placing the issue of discrimination against women in context, Ouston (1993:5) maintains that "men are still the prime barrier to women in management. Despite some progress, old fashioned sexist attitudes are still common and represent a real, not imagined, barrier to the progress of women". However, discrimination that is based on any assumed differences between men and women is both ill grounded and immoral, since human beings, by their very nature, are capable of learning. In other words, women, as members of the human species, are also endowed with the potential to learn, for it is through learning that humans are able to adapt to new situations

Tsoka (1999:35) likewise indicates that women are oppressed in that "employers moreover see women as provisional occupation holders, as opposed to career orientated employees" and they do not afford them the necessary training, status and position of responsibility, or promotional prospects.

Yukongdi (2005) maintains that certain organisational practices discriminated against women in Thailand where employers preferred hiring single women, and reserved specific jobs with higher pay for men, whom they claimed were more mobile and actually suited to the job. Moreover, women were the first to be laid off during hard times as employers contended that men were the breadwinners. In addition, the perception of women managers by male colleagues and subordinates as homemakers and mothers meant that these male colleagues and subordinates did not accept women managers as supervisors (Kang & Rowley, 2005). As a result of these organisational practices, women were deprived and they had fewer opportunities to advance to managerial positions. In addition, even those women who did succeed in gaining management positions still encountered a number of organisational barriers which influenced their daily working lives. For example, firstly, organisations provide little in the way of childcare or family-friendly policies that would help resolve the

dilemma between women's domestic and work responsibilities. Secondly, women managers often feel isolated in an organisation with little support or networks. Thirdly, many women are denied promotion within management ranks because of the perception of their male superiors that men are more capable than women and, fourthly, women often experience unequal treatment, including being assigned less challenging work or fewer mainstream jobs than their male counterparts (Benson &Yukongdi, 2005).

3.6.2.3 *Lack of mentoring*

Studies regarding a lack of mentoring as a barrier to the career progress of women provide conflicting results with some research showing that mentoring has contributed more to the success of men than women (Lortie-Lussier & Rinfret, 2005). This may be because women receive a less proactive type of mentoring than men and from less senior/influential mentors (Ibara, Carter & Silva, 2010).

Nevertheless, a mentoring relationship is crucial to a woman's career advancement and is considered to be more helpful to women than to men (Noe, Greenberger & Wang 2002). Ragins (1999) and Wallace (2001) share the view that the significance of the mentoring relationship for women is particularly important in terms of the career blocks which women are likely to encounter when seeking advancement. In other words, mentoring is more essential for women than men in the workplace, because women are likely to face the challenges of gender discrimination as one of the factors affecting their career advancement in the workforce. Thus, mentorship may assist their career progress.

Tharenou (2005) is of the opinion that mentors are extremely important to senior women in the public sector, suggesting that women executives with female mentors appear to achieve greater success than those without female mentors. She also concludes that women benefit from a mentoring relationship when pursuing career advancement and that such a relationship is more helpful to women than to men.

Clutterbuck and Ragins (2002) maintain that organisations have established some mentoring programmes specifically to help women and other individuals underrepresented in management to advance, acknowledging that women may encounter more family, organisational and interpersonal barriers to their hierarchical advancement than do men.

Noe et al. (2002) affirm that mentors are considered to be essential to the career advancement of women and they may enhance the career outcomes of their women protégés more than in the case of men. In their article entitled "Pathways for women to obtain positions of organizational leadership: The significance of mentoring and networking", Schiapani, Dworkin, Folland and Maurer (2009) maintain that having an effective mentor is one way in which women may overcome the barriers which they encounter on the path to top leadership and that the lack of mentoring may contribute to the disproportionate underrepresentation of women in top positions in business.

In their article "The effects of several mentors on protégé attitudes towards the work setting", Baugh and Scandura (1999:44) support the notion that mentoring contributes significantly to career outcomes. They expanded on the benefits of mentoring to organisations, to mentors and to mentees, while pointing out that the benefits of a good mentor to a mentee are well known and include higher incomes, greater job satisfaction and promotions.

Moran, Duffield, Beutel, Bunt, Thorton and Willis (2002) conducted a study into mentoring in relation to leadership and career progression with nurse managers in Australia. In this quantitative study, 205 nurse managers completed a self-administered questionnaire. The findings pointed to the critical role of mentors in career advancement. In addition, the study findings showed that managers develop leadership skills randomly and, consequently, there is a need for organisations to implement structured leadership development.

3.6.2.4   *Sexual harassment*

Sexual harassment and discrimination are still present in many workplaces. Just over half (53%) of the female senior managers surveyed in an Australian study had experienced gender discrimination, including exclusion, being talked about and sexual harassment (Rindfleish, 2002). Similarly, 58% of women employed in the United States maintain they have been sexually harassed in the workplace, while there is evidence in the United States of gender discrimination as regards both pay and promotions (Eagli & Carli, 2007). In New Zealand, sex and sexual harassment comprised 31.5% of employment-related discrimination complaints to the Human Rights Commission in 2009/2010 (Human Right Commission, 2010).

A study conducted by Johnson in 2010, entitled "Sexual harassment in the workplace: A case study of Nigeria", revealed in a sample survey of 34 women in certain selected organisations

that women are still being harassed sexually in most organisations, with his studies revealing that approximately 75% of the women interviewed agreed that sexual harassment still prevails in the workplace in Nigeria. In addition, some of the respondents interviewed confirmed that sexual harassment is a major constraint for them in the workplace and that it is becoming a common phenomenon in most Nigerian organisations – thus, Johnson's findings reveal a high rate of sexual harassment against women in the Nigerian workforce

3.6.3   Social factors

3.6.3.1   *Household and family responsibilities*

In a study entitled "Moving forward 2001: The experiences and attitudes of executive women in Canada", the Women Executive Network (2001) found that, of 1 200 executives, 350 women executives (47%) had considered leaving their jobs in order to find a better balance between paid work and family. The survey showed that, when considering taking up a new job, 63% of female executives with children either admitted that the more important consideration was the impact the job would have on their personal and family lives (45%) or they weighed this factor equally with the career opportunity itself (18%). Nevertheless, 45% of the women without children held the same views (34% and 11% respectively). This would suggest that employers setting up work–life balance policies should also take into consideration the needs of women without children. In addition, the survey showed that both men and women executives who assign similar importance to work and to personal and family lives felt more successful and less stressed.

In an informal survey of women executives in Latin America, Braine (2002) found that, when women started having children, many of them began negotiating time off and flexible work schedules instead of wage increases and promotions and, in fact, they even left the workforce altogether. On the other hand, it was argued that the focus on family in Latin American countries ensures the availability of childcare facilities which assist those women who want to stay in the workforce to find ways of adapting their working schedules. In the same study it was also noted that women's decisions regarding prioritising work and home were made on the way up the corporate ladder so that, by the time they reached senior management level, they had already found ways of balancing work and home (Stein, 2002).

In a study entitled "Executive women and the myth of having it all", Hewlett (2002) in the United States showed how some women had found that the claims inherent in building

careers resulted in their waiting too late in life to have children. Consequently, some women who want a career are forced to forgo having children, and those who want children to sacrifice promising careers. Among the women who had given up their careers to concentrate on their families, 66% would have liked to return to a full-time job. Employers were addressing the problem in a fragmented way: 12% recommended paid parenting leave and 31% job sharing, 6 to 9% percent offered staggered working hours, and 48% offered working from home.

The respondents listed a number of strategy alternatives for attaining a more adequate balance between their family lives and careers: The elimination of retirement plan penalties for career interruption; up to three years unpaid leave of absence from work with a guarantee of a job on return to work; reduced work hours that did not penalise promotion prospects; an active retirement option whereby women who no longer worked could stay in the loop as consultants and the company would continue to pay their dues and certification fees so that they could maintain professional standing; and three months' paid leave for child care until the child attained adulthood.

The study indicated the way that organisations supporting family-friendly policies would be more likely to retain professional women than companies that did not. Nonetheless, the general belief was that women who exploited such strategies were not serious candidates for promotion and would have to be eliminated from the corporate culture.

In Slaughter's (2012) article, titled "Why women cannot have it all", she revealed her experiences in terms of her career and family life. She explains that building a career is good, but it's sometimes difficult to combine the work with family responsibilities. She further mentions that most career women don't really find this easy in the midst of their career pursuit. The decision to step down from a position of power – to value family over professional advancement, even for a time – is directly at odds with the prevailing social pressures on career professionals (Slaughter, 2012). The following quote says it all about current attitudes toward work and family, particularly among elites. In response to her write up, an anonymous response said:

> *Most people, even men, don't put in the hours that Ms. Slaughter did. I think we're generalizing too much from a small number of people who not only have careers, but are at the very top 0.01% of their profession. I know lots of people,*

men and women, who've traded off *some* level of professional accomplishment, or at least time spent in the office, for more time with the family. That level of balance probably can't be maintained at the level of Secretary of State, partner in a very prestigious law firm, or perhaps Nobel prize winning scientist. But those jobs aren't typical, even for someone with a career.

However, engaging in family responsibilities and pursuing a career could be a potential barrier to women's career development. In this study women are seen as performing different roles as caregiver, wife and mother and at the same time as manager, and that could at times affect them in the course of their career journey in the workplace, especially for categories of women who are interested in building their career to managerial levels in the organisation.

On a more intense level, women in Pakistan often have little choice but to choose family over work. In a study entitled "Work-life integration: Experience of mid-career professional working mothers in context of Faisalabad, Pakistan" conducted by Manner, Afzal, Zahra, Mahmood and Hussain (2010), it was found that some women miss out on the opportunity of having a career due to their family. They further noted that from time to time there is the possibility for some women to advance from middle management to senior administration yet they reject this opportunity because of their family, feeling that their family would suffer if they availed themselves of the opportunity to build their career. This point to the limitations and struggle women face in progressing to and maintaining top management positions as a result of the responsibilities that constrain their career choice and progression.

3.7   Creating opportunities for lifelong learning

3.7.1   Personal strategies

3.7.1.1   *Networking*

"Networking can be best described as a support system characterized by interrelationships for the main purpose of providing assistance to others" (Shakoor, 2002:31).

Researchers have suggested that individuals with a suitable education and the requisite technical knowledge and skills gain entry to lower management positions, whereas individuals with established networks and subjective social factors gain advancement to higher levels of management (Tharenou, 2001:1006).

Ibarra and Hunter (2007:41) identify three distinct but interdependent forms of networking. Operational networking assists emerging leaders in managing current interpersonal responsibilities; personal networking boosts personal development; and strategic networking identifies new business directions for which stakeholders' involvement is required. For women personal networking appears to be the common route to building networks that allow for professional development and career.

Networking can afford women an ideal opportunity to develop career strategies and, in turn, their ability to succeed in the corporate world; however, when aspiring leaders do not believe that networking is one of the most important requirements of their jobs they tend to not allocate the time and effort required to see the benefits of networking (Ibarra & Hunter, 2007:45).

3.7.1.2 *Personal career development plan*

Mackay (2005:55) highlights the importance of setting personal goals and asserts that "if you don't have a destination, you'll never get there". He continues by defining goal-setting as the long-term version of keeping track of your time and defines the process as comprising three steps: setting goals; developing a plan to achieve such goals; and managing one's time to ensure such plans are executed.

Mackay (2005:63) emphasises the importance of projecting oneself into the end-goal situation as being one of the most powerful ways in which to achieve personal goals. Mackay (2005:57) defines a goal "as a dream with a deadline".

A career development plan is a "written list of the short- and long-term goals pertaining to current and future job prospects, as well as a planned sequence of formal and informal experiences to achieve goals linked to the individual's potential". A career development plan should assist the individual in achieving goals by setting realistic expectations for career growth, suggesting time frames for certain milestones (such as promotions) and identifying areas requiring further development toward becoming eligible for the next career milestone. A career development plan assists in maintaining momentum towards the ultimate goal, as well as providing the opportunity to write down achievements and goals achieved along the career path (Carliner, 2002).

As a personal development strategy it is important to believe in oneself, particularly when no one else does. Athletes attempted to break the four minute per mile barrier for years, to no avail. It was decided by athletes, doctors, scientists and others that it was impossible to run a mile in under four minutes until one man, Roger Bannister, proved all the doctors, scientists, professionals and other athletes wrong and broke the four-minute mark. The year following Bannister's feat other athletes broke the four-minute mile and, the year after that, a further three hundred runners did likewise (Mackay, 2005:59). To achieve this involved no great breakthrough in training, nor any physiological improvements on the human body. What changed was human attitude. All the athletes who did not manage to break the four-minute mile believed the experts, while Bannister believed in himself and changed the world (Mackay, 2005:59).

Flexibility is a key element in a career development plan. Changing circumstances should be allowed for as the plan may necessitate changes en route; however, a core plan will better equip the individual in spite of changes that may be made to it (Hansen, 2007).

A study entitled "The career development of women executive in information technology" by Wentling and Thomas (2007) revealed that life events have assisted career progression plans in all of the study participants they explored, and they acknowledged that events in their family/personal lives assisted in their career development plan. The five most recurrent family/personal life events reported by the study participants included the following: supportive and encouraging spouse (40% of respondents); learning the value of hard work and good work ethics from parents (32% of respondents); supportive and encouraging parent (60% of respondents); supportive children (24% of respondents); and parenting and raising children (32% of respondents). Over half of the participants reported that having encouraging and supportive parents/family was important. One participant stated that her parents had supported her in developing good work ethics by involving her as a child to work on projects around the house.

This is what the participant had to say:

> *My parents got me involved in doing projects around the house. For example one time I assisted them in remodelling a room and I had to learn how to tear the plaster off the wall, measure and saw the panelling, and then put the panelling up. My parents taught me how to organize projects, follow directions, and make*

things happen by being a good worker. When I was a project manager I drew on what I learned from my parents when I was a child, as far as concentration, focus, and the many things you need to consider when panelling a big projects together.

On the other hand, in other cases having supportive parents/family implied having parents who encouraged them to do well in school, assist them to address personal obstacles that they experienced in their lives, encouraged them to seize opportunities that were accessible to them, and encouraged them to take risks. This is what one study participant said in relation to her parents:

My parents were key influences in my career. They always told me that I could do anything I wanted to do if I set my mind to it. They provided a really good and supportive environment for me. My parents were both school teachers and they provided me with a lot of encouragement to do well in school and in everything else I did. They also provided me with a lot of discipline and told me to work hard and do well, and that good things would happen to me

However, having an encouraging and supportive spouse was also mentioned by the participants as having a positive impact on their career progression. Some participants pointed out that their spouse was tremendously influential in their careers and without them it would have been hard to succeed.

One participant explained it this way:

Early in my career when I started to advance my husband told me that I was going to higher and was going to start to make more money than him and that he was okay with it. He has been incredibly supportive and has taken more and more responsibilities at home, as my travel schedule has increased. There is no way I could be doing what I am doing without this kind of support. Thirty-two percent of the participants identified parenting and raising children as having a positive impact on their career development plan. The participants who saw parenting and raising children as a positive to their career development indicated that being a parent made them a more balanced person. In addition, the lessons they learned from parenting in their personal life many times extended to their professional life

It is clear from Wentling and Thomas's (2007) study that parents have a significant long-term influence on the professional and work ethics, and commitment of their daughters.

Curtis and McMillan (2008:38) argue that women's occupation-related career advancement plans are important for occupational attainment. In support, Curtis and McMillan assert that women ought to utilise the Web in the form of information searches, resumé advancement and posting, and networking with respect to their career planning approach. I support this as I believe it can help to expand skills and assist their career pursuit in the workforce.

On the other hand, women employees can benefit from finding a mentor, usually a more senior executive who helps influence their movement through the organisation and affects their career success. A mentor usually supports career and emotional functions. Women can also search for developmental support from various departments in the organisation that provide common support for their career objectives. I contend that the career planning of women in the corporate world is a lifelong process consisting of establishing personal career goals, building networks, finding mentors and so embarking on a journey of lifelong learning

3.7.2   Organisational strategies

In attempts to appropriately prepare female executives for the challenges facing them in managerial positions, the literature highlights organisational strategies aimed at this goal. This section provides an overview on a number of these strategies.

3.7.2.1   *Mentoring*

Mentoring can be characterised as a process where one person takes on the responsibility of overseeing the career and development of another person, outside the normal subordinate/manager relationship (Clutterbuck, 2001:3). This relationship allows for a confined space in which experimentation and learning can take place.

Fowler and O'Gorman (2005) explain mentoring as a relationship between an individual with advanced knowledge and experience and more a junior individual who searches for assistance and support in their career, professional and personal development. Likewise, Parsloe and Wray (2000) describe mentoring as a procedure that supports learning and by doing so enhances the performance of the individual, group and organisation.

Triple Creek Associates (2004) explain mentoring as follows. They see mentoring as an enhancement technique through which one individual encourages the advancement of another by sharing resources, values, expertise, perspectives, proficiencies and attitudes. This technique allows knowledge and skills to be built, and provides the experienced party with the chance to enhance his/her own knowledge and skills.

Parsloe and Wray (2000) argue that there are few differences between coaching and mentoring. Coaching focuses on building the specific skills required for a particular task, whereas mentoring has a wider and longer-term perspective. Mentoring seeks to prepare the individual to make their own informed decisions about a broad range of work and even personal issues, while coaching aims at improving specific work-related skills. Mentoring is describes as a "process that uses a mixture of inductive ('pushing-in', or telling) and deductive ('drawing-out', coaching) techniques to increase an individual's ability, and sometimes willingness, in a specific subject. Ideally a structured approach is used and the mentor needs to be an expert in the subject" (Mullins, in Berry, 2003:53).

The benefits the mentee is likely to derive include personal benefits: developing "learning to learn" (Berry, 2003:55) skills where mentees become increasingly confident and competent as learners; greater understanding of the holistic organisational perspective; awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses; as well as improved problem-solving techniques and approaches and increased career benefits (Berry, 2003:55).

The mentor usually accepts responsibility for a mentee out of a feeling of satisfaction; however, the benefits derived by the mentor are largely dependent on the mentor–mentee relationship. Apart from the personal satisfaction obtained by the mentor, additional benefits could include their own role enhancement and expansion of skills by means of learning from the mentee; improved one-to-one communication; a sense of belonging to the team; as well as a sense of competence and self-worth (Berry, 2003:58).

On the other hand, women are behind in having networks that link them with decision-makers and that lead to their advancement in the workforce (Wells, 2001). For example I refer to an interview study carried out by Davies-Netzley (1998), which found that women in top corporate positions reported being excluded from informal networks with male companions. As a result of not being included among key networks women felt that their performance suffered and was so noted in their performance assessments. The study also

found that women feel that being isolated from networks reduces any possible future career opportunities for them.

The mentoring process women participate in within the workforce is often informal. Informal networking in this context means mentoring connections happen by chance and are not organisationally structured. Essentially, connections develop when the mentee looks to another person that they like and sometimes imitate for career support and guidance (Armstrong, Allinson & Hayes, 2002) Nonetheless, women have a difficult time finding quality formal mentors to advance in their career so they opt for informal mentors, which is definitely considered to be the best planning choice for their career growth within the labour force. Researchers have revealed that women who had an unassigned mentoring relationship and informal mentoring were more influential than those that had an assigned mentoring relationship and formal mentoring (Lonnie & Crawford, 2005). Accordingly, the difference in usefulness between the two types of mentoring was mainly ascribed to the level of commitment between the mentor and the mentee. However, the level of commitment in informal mentoring relationships is higher than in formal mentoring relationships. It is further argued that the development of informal mentoring relationships generally consists of mutual respect by both parties as well as similar objectives; that is, long-term career progression as it relates to women's career development in the workforce (Ragins & Cotton, 2000). Informal mentoring relationships are long term, which offers women greater learning opportunities as and steady guidance as they develop professionally. Studies have revealed that informal mentoring connections are believed to consist of shared feelings of respect, caring and trust; whereas formal mentoring relationships generally develop based on the compatibility of two individuals, which also helps to develop a thriving career for women (Armstrong, 2001). Informal mentoring relationships generally develop based on the compatibility of two individuals, which also helps to promote successful career development.

Researchers have revealed that mentees in informal mentoring relationships regularly have greater promotion opportunities than mentees in formal mentoring relationships. I discovered that mentees in informal mentoring have a higher level of job fulfilment and improved socialisation than protégés in formal mentoring relationships. Nevertheless, as a result of these differences, protégés in informal mentoring relationships appear to have higher levels of fulfilment and more positive results from the mentoring experience than protégés in formal

mentoring relationships. In this context I discovered that successful mentoring relationships can be used as a means to overcome women's career barriers in the workforce.

This study considers mentoring as a powerful strategy that can be used by women to get to the top. For instance, if organisations are serious about developing women, mentoring should be part of the organisational strategy for developing female leaders with high potential. The mentoring process can be a very empowering one for women as they need to become more aware of their abilities and realise their self-worth within the workforce (Darwin, 2000).

In a study of Fortune 500 organisations in 2003, 96% of women executives identified mentoring as an important developmental means, and 75% of them said it had played a key role in their career development (Heinz, 2003). "Current patterns in the workforce such as continuous learning and at work progress have championed the utilization of mentoring as an issue for human resource development" (Vaughan, 2008:1).

Harris (2006) argues that while mentoring relationship might be important for men, they are even more necessary for women's career progression, as female managers face greater organisational barriers to career success. However, "mentoring is exclusive in that the primary focus of the relationship is on women's career development" (Ragins & Kram, 2007:277). A mentoring relationship connects an individual with skills and to a mentee, and allows them to share their support and expertise. As indicated by Robinson (2001), mentoring is the most efficient way to transfer knowledge and skills quickly and motivate loyalty in new employees to cooperate in an organisation.

Mentoring is generating great interest in business and educational settings. "Mentoring is considered of crucial importance by many authors for the career, academic, and psycho-social development of women" (Bierema, 2002:65). Rothwell and Kazanas (2003:52) focused on the use of mentoring for the development of human resources in organisations, while Wallace (2001) proposes the use of mentoring as a means to enhance various personal outcomes in women.

Bhatta and Washington (2003:9) argue that women are more likely than their male counterparts to have a mentor. Two possible explanations could be because women may need them and women may have made a more deliberate attempt to access mentors. They continue by arguing that "mentoring is a valuable career development tool for women". This is

affirmed by Clutterbuck and Ragins (2002:57) who state that numerous organisations have established mentoring programmes with the aim advancing and developing women.

More recently, researchers have expanded the field by exploring the characteristics, dimensions and results of mentoring relationships for women. Studies from the literature on women's mentoring experiences suggest that mentoring continues to play a significant role in the lives of working professional women. For instance, research from Catalyst suggests that corporate women believe that a mentoring relationship is important to their career development (Catalyst, 1996). The emergence of the role of modelling in mentoring, as an entity separate from the career and psychosocial functions, is important for women. The importance of a role model, that is, someone you respect who accomplishes goals to which you are aspiring and is a source for strategies for both success and survival, is important in women's career progression.

3.7.2.2 *Personal and life coaching*

As the practice of coaching gained popularity and familiarity it developed various branches, one being that of life coaching. A life coach concentrates on whole-life dilemmas comprising personal relationships, life balance and future planning (Rogers, 2004:11). Life mentors are part motivational speaker, part advisor and part companion. Mentors work with administrators, business visionaries or persons disconnected from business, helping them characterise and attain their objectives – vocation, individual or both (Hamilton, 1996:48)

A life coach is thought of as the catalyst who draws out answers, highlights the options and separates the probabilities from the possibilities (Edwards, 2004:34). Personal life coaches can, therefore, assist to speed up transitions into new roles by eliminating potential mistakes (Underwood, 2005:83).

A personal life coach directs individuals to who, what and how questions. Who are you? What do you really want? How are you going to get it? An ideal coach is an expert listener and strategist who draws out an individual's goals and holds the individual accountable to these goals. Life coaches are not concerned with answers; rather, they are concerned with questions (Streisand, 2004:117).

Coaching is not a new discipline and has been employed in some form or other for hundreds of years. Apprentices once bartered their time and labour to obtain the skills and knowledge

of a craft or business (Weiss & Kolberg, 2003). Today, it is not an uncommon practice for businesses to provide learnerships where individuals are often unpaid but afforded the opportunity to learn from those persons with skills in their trade.

Coaching is defined by Meyer and Fourie (2004:5) as the systematically planned and direct guidance of an individual by a coach to develop specific skills in a work situation. The coaching is directed towards achieving specific performance outcomes over a relatively short period of time. Rogers (2004:7) place emphasis on achieving a speedy, increased and sustainable effective outcome for the individual being coached. She defines the role of a coach as working with an individual to assist that individual to achieve his or her full potential (Rogers, 2004:7).

Mackay (2005:147) emphasises the benefits of coaching as a development strategy. An individual will, however, only benefit from coaching once the skills developed are put into practice. Coaching and perfect practice form a symbiotic relationship where individuals should foster the desire to continually be coached in various skills and then to practise such skills, thereby honing their abilities further (Mackay, 2005:147).

Gender, race, culture, language and educational diversity in South Africa create significant challenges in the workplace. South Africa is at the early stages of dealing with these complexities and coaching is viewed as a privilege far beyond the hopes of all but an elite few. Previously, privileged executives were the ones to benefit from all that coaching has to offer; paradoxically, many previously disadvantaged persons (such as black males and females of all races), who work in these same organisations but who are not yet at a level at which they qualify for coaching, are often the very people who would reach executive levels with appropriate coaching (Rostron, 2007:1, 2).

3.7.2.3 *Leadership development programmes*

Disparity exists between the number of women afforded the similar leadership development experiences as their male counterparts, thus restraining their ability to vie for high level positions (Bush, 2005:118).

Organisations where little or no attention is paid to leadership training and development often suffer the result of either attrition in talent or retention of personnel with outdated skills. Organisational survival in the modern age depends on employing the most talented

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individuals in the appropriate positions (Cohn, Khurana & Reeves, 2005:64). Reports have revealed that organisations invest more on the male gender in terms of leadership training and professional courses as compare to women.

Studies into social conditioning have demonstrated that women, in contrast to their male counterparts, need different support and encouragement techniques to achieve leadership status. Leadership development programmes created specifically for women offer a purposeful intervention and provide the most efficient and direct means to harness these differences and to accelerate the rate at which women are equipped to move into leadership (Bush, 2005:119). Such leadership development programmes are, therefore, designed to support women in leadership positions and to advance their success when assuming a high level position in a mainly male environment. These programmes afford participants the opportunity for self-discovery, exploring individual management approaches and developing self-confidence in their abilities without fear of judgement (Bush, 2005).

Additionally, leadership development programmes could reveal future leaders, thereby allowing the organisation to not only assist such participants in broadening their power bases and spheres of influence, but to also empower them in their knowledge of how the organisation functions as a whole and, hence, an understanding of the overriding corporate strategy (Cohn et al., 2005:65).

Leadership training and development programmes for women frequently consist of a sequence of workshops, each aimed to enable women develop the interpersonal skills, self-awareness and personal influence that provide a base for effective leadership (Perkins 2011/12). Leadership development programmes typically focus on common leadership techniques such as coaching and developing others, communicating and using feedback effectively, learning to manage upward and goal setting, and learning to lead oneself and assessing one's own leadership capabilities.

An effective leadership development programme is not merely a portfolio of "off-the-shelf" (Cohn et al., 2005: 65) components, such as 360-degree feedback, competency-profiling tools or continual training. Rather, it should be a system which is tailored to, and prepared specifically for, a particular organisation (Cohn et al., 2005:65). Meadows and Arneson (2007:16) assert that a leadership development programme should contain five crucial elements:

Motivation: The individual should have a desire to grow as a leader and, hence, be open to change. The individual who is motivated and engaged will always learn and reap more benefits than another who is merely going through the motions.

Powerful insight: The learning experience should provide effective feedback and insight. This is often done by means of 360-degree feedback tools or mechanisms, as well as personality testing such as emotional quotient development tests. Feedback should always be constructive and delivered professionally to ensure it is received properly. Powerful insight provides for meaningful growth.

Skill-building: This includes the teaching of proven leadership techniques, practices and skills, such as problem-solving, stress management, techniques for setting strategy and effective communication, amongst others.

Real-world practice: Programmes should allow time for the on-the-job application of new skills. Suitable intervals will enable participants to implement new skills and to reflect on and share the lessons learnt.

Accountability for growth and change: An effective leadership development programme cultivates a mind-set of accountability. Emerging leaders should be held accountable for their progress after their involvement in a leadership development programme and, likewise, the organisation is accountable to provide an environment which encourages experimentation, bold thinking and risk taking (Meadows & Arneson, 2007:16).

Central to the phenomenon of leadership development is that it is a procedure and it involves goal attainment (Northouse, 2007). Leadership development programmes are "structured, frequently off the job events that bring individuals together for shared learning and development experiences, although they do vary widely in their content, targeted outcomes, purposes and pedagogical technique" (McCauley, 2008:40). I found that in spite of the fact that there is a dearth of information on leadership development programmes that focus on the needs of women leaders and almost no information on emerging women leaders (Jennings, 2009), researchers in this context nevertheless suggest that leadership development for women benefits both the organisation and the individual (Hopkins, O'Neill, Passarelli & Bilimoria, 2008).

Thomas, Bierema and Landau (2004:30) argue that the human resource development literature provides pathways for women and their employers to think about ways to foster diversity in academic leadership. As women face exclusive challenges at workplace, Hopkins et al. (2008:30) stress that it is essential that leadership development approaches are advanced to meet women's exact needs. Women-only leadership training, alongside other leadership development plans, is essential for women to develop a stronger sense of self and stronger relationships to other women (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003:31).

Escandon and Kamungi (2008) stress in their reports on African women leadership that, in the leadership journey of women professionals, there are certain specific steps to be taken to influence change in the current position. However, in order to take them to a subsequent level of leadership the following is required:

Visualise new options: Women do not observe pathways to leadership; as an alternative they see pathways to traditional function. Women require being able to imagine how they can create a distinction or how they can develop into role models for change. They need someone to show them new alternatives through role modelling and mentorship. Social networking can be a means of doing so by helping women engage in the everyday activities of their neighbourhood.

Mentorship and guidance: Current women leaders are inaccessible and some are not helpful. This situation has shaped a need for strong female role models in society. A leadership forum that would allow women leaders in senior positions to exchange experiences and knowledge with one another is also essential, as mentoring and coaching programmes can be modified to precise leadership desires.

Self-confidence: Women require experience in speaking out and mobilising others, whether through training or otherwise. They ought to learn to be brave – a skill many previously have achieved through their responsibilities of supporting their family. Women also need to learn to rely on their experience rather than rely on what they are told is true or exact. They need to gain self-confidence in their inner knowledge.

Advanced leadership training: Women need to learn exact, high-level skills such as leadership basic transferring skills to other people, accountability and organisational management. Leadership coaching on how to be an efficient leader and how to market oneself for promotion is essential to compensate for weaknesses in existing training modules.

Greater importance should be placed on self-improvement through access to educational opportunities such as evening/weekend classes and e-learning that support continued skill attainment. Training in lobbying and negotiation skills would equip women with the skills required to rally support around an issue or manage conflict. Finally, educating women in time management, behaviour, and appearance skills, that is, in how to dress and how to choose a language of communication, would also be a great asset for potential women leaders.

Communication skills: Speech writing, proposal writing, self-expression and delivering speeches are all key leadership abilities. Women need to be able to communicate their dream.

Support: Families need to support women in pursuing leadership opportunities and education by freeing up the time necessary to further their education, and/or going to work and providing childcare.

Creating a bigger vision: Women need to exceed other people's vision and dream big for themselves. One way of accomplishing this is by studying advocacy at the top echelons of leadership.

On-the-job training: Learning at work or through field training allows women to apply what they have been taught and to progress into senior positions of authority.

Credentials*:* Training needs to be accredited as certification and as a key to get promoted and acquire a position (Escandon & Kamungi, 2008:8–10).

3.7.2.4 *Organisational culture*

A study conducted by Buddhapriya (2009:31) found that a lack of gender-sensitive policies within organisations is considered one of the most important impediments to the career advancement of women professionals. Without the support of top management for the advancement of women to all levels throughout the organisation, policies and procedures will neither be put in place nor enforced to ensure these become more gender-sensitive (Nesbit & Seeger, 2007:20).

Meyerson and Fletcher (2000:131) argue that changes in organisational practices merely address the symptoms, rather than dealing effectively with the underlying sources of inequality. They propose the following steps toward entrenching change: recognition of the

existence of a gender inequality problem; identification of the causes by establishing which policies and practices in the organisation undermine effectiveness; and experimentation with options for replacing redundant practices with ones more effective for all employees. This approach, therefore, seeks to eliminate ineffective policies and practices, rather than masking them by only dealing with the symptoms.

Aycan (2004) notes that a male-dominated culture is an obstacle to women's progression to higher positions, as women frequently find it difficult to enter the "old-boys' club" (Aycan, 2004:458). Leaders play an important role in eliminating discriminatory behaviour through different processes; for example the establishment of various informal and formal rules. The combination of these rules creates a unique culture that shapes the attitudes and experiences of those involved (Mills, 2005:245).

A masculine organisational culture, therefore, comprises the norms and hidden assumptions, and organisational practices that promote various forms of communication, approaches and organisational values, self-perception, as well as definitions of achievement and effective management, all of which are stereotypically male (Merida, 2013). Organisational cultures are, therefore, often defined as power-oriented cultures rather than people-oriented cultures; power and achievement cultures rather than support and role cultures; or logical goal cultures rather than human relations cultures. The masculine dimension can be summed up as self-sufficiency, the promotion of independence, hierarchical relations, competition, task orientation and the establishment of authority and position. The feminine dimension, however, is explained as balancing life's activities, participation and collaboration and promotion of the relational self (Van Vianen & Fischer, 2002:316). The majority of senior top positions are still held by males and it might, therefore, be argued that organisational cultures are expected to continue to be dominated by masculine norms and values (Van Vianen & Fischer, 2002:317).

The fact that men take decisions at the highest level of management means that the organisational policy will continue to favour males. For organisational policy to change there is an essential need for women's representation and participation in the executive positions of the organisation.

3.7.2.5 *Flexible working arrangements*

A study conducted by Nesbit and Seeger (2007:11–12) of thirty Australian organisations found that most women supposedly leave employment for reasons of family responsibilities Respondents pointed out the flexibility of part-time managerial functions as being highly effective in supporting women's development within organisations.

Historically, strategies such as part-time management or job-sharing were not considered a viable option; however, in a modern society where diversity within the organisation is valued, such options are increasingly being implemented to a greater degree throughout organisations (Nesbit & Seeger, 2007:12).

3.8   Conclusion

In sum, the review of the literature shows that many factors such as sexual harassment, discrimination, lack of mentoring, lack of leadership development programmes, lack of access to education and other external societal factors are some of the barriers to the careers of African women managers. Some of these gender-related issues are fully discussed in the review. More importantly, there is a paucity of empirical studies on women's career development in the telecommunication sectors in two different countries, hence the need for this study to examine lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods used to conduct this study. I provide an explanation for choosing a mixed method design, and discuss the sampling technique. I used an interpretative paradigm to allow me to be open to and to 'hear' what each of the respondents said. This approach created the space for a contextual understanding of what was important to each of the respondents. In so doing I was consistently conscious that, as a man, my understanding of their experiences may have been compromised. Cole, (2006); Weaver and Olson, (2006) states that:

> *''Interpretive paradigm is associated more with methodological*
> *approaches that provide an opportunity for voice, concerns and*
> *practices of research participants to be heard''.*

As a reminder I restate the research questions.

How can lifelong learning determine the career opportunities of women in the telecommunication industry?

In order to respond to this main question the following sub-questions were identified.

- What are the factors that encourage women professionals to choose a career in MTN in South Africa and Nigeria?
- What factors enable women to experience job satisfaction and career progress in the telecommunication industry?
- How can education and lifelong learning shape the progress of women in the telecommunication industry?

4.2   Research design

The focus of this study was on exploring and discussing the way in which women managers and junior workers experience career development through lifelong learning in a telecommunications network in both Nigeria and South Africa. Women managers were chosen because through them I could attempt to understand the factors that enabled their

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progress to senior positions. Junior women workers were likewise chosen in order to understand how they were planning to build their careers. Specifically, the study sought to understand how lifelong learning influenced the women's career progression. Accordingly, an interview method was chosen for data collection with respect to the women in senior management positions, with the in-depth conversations with the participants providing me with insight into the challenges and demands they had faced along their career paths. A survey technique (a questionnaire) was also adopted to obtain data. Thus, my aim was to obtain data from women who had "arrived" and those who were "not yet there" but were perhaps planning to become senior managers. The questionnaire was intended largely to focus on sub-question 2 and the interview on sub-question 3, although both sets of data were used to obtain data on all three sub-questions.

This study adopts sequential mixed methods research which involves collecting, analysing and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study in an iterative process. The quantitative study, which was done first, helped to refine the interview questions. The question has been rephrased to include the obstacles and not only the advantages that women encounter in their personal and family life in relation to their career development

This method helped me to read both sets of data alongside each other. The quantitative data was used to offer some generalisations. This is possible in this situation since the data gathering had gone through a process of validation using mixed methods (see Creswell, 2008). The quantitative and qualitative elements of the study complemented each other and allowed a depth of analysis and insight that would not have been possible if only one data collection method had been used. Recognising the complexity of using both methods for the qualitative part of this study, I used an interpretive lens to understand the racial, feminist and gender issues (see Mertens, 2003) through interviews and observation. On the other hand, in the quantitative part use was made of instruments such as questionnaire for data collection and analysis. What was interesting about using these methods was that both were found to complement each other and provide strong evidence-based information.

4.2.1   Rationale for mixed research designs

According to Plano and Creswell (2008), "mixed methods research is used when two sets of different data – quantitative and qualitative are integrated or synthesised together". In addition, Creswell (2014:218) argues that mixed methods design has the following advantages: Firstly, it assists the researcher to draw on both the quantitative and qualitative research problems, and secondly, it allows the researcher to have a clear understanding on how to minimise the limitations of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The 'mixed research design directs the course of gathering and analysing the mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the research processes' (Johnson, Onwugbuzie & Turner, 2007). As a method, the main reason for using it is that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies is consolidated to give a better understanding of the research than either approach alone (Casebeer & Verhoef, 1997). Therefore, Creswell (2011:22.) states that "mixed methods plans are methods for gathering, examining, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study".

Acknowledging the link between research questions and mixed method designs, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), in one of their studies on mixed methods research titled, "A research paradigm whose time has come", explain that "mixed methods research is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than limiting or constraining researchers' choices (i.e. it rejects dogmatism). Many research questions and combinations of questions are best and most fully answered through mixed research methods."

Silverman (2000:50) sums up these opinions, stating that the use of "multiple methods give[s] a fuller picture and address[es] many different aspects of a phenomenon".

4.2.2   Relationship between the research questions and mixed research designs

Creswell (1998:99) points out that qualitative research questions are "open-ended, non-directional and evolving". Such questions have a tendency to look for, find and investigate a process, or describe experiences (Creswell, 1998). They ordinarily endeavour to acquire experiences relating to specific educational, social processes and experiences that exist within a particular setting and context (Connolly, 1998). As result, qualitative research questions commonly depict, as opposed to relate, variables or compare groups, avoiding the use of words such as, "influence", "compare," "relate" and "affect" (Malterud, 2001). More

particularly, qualitative research questions have a tendency to address "how" and "what" questions (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2006).

4.2.3   Mixed research designs procedures

This study adopts sequential mixed methods data collection strategies which involve collecting data in an iterative process. Using this design, data that was collected in one phase contributes to the data collected in the following phase. In this study, the quantitative phase comprised the initial phase, consisting of the administration of a questionnaire designed to elicit data pertaining to the following categories: Section A of the questionnaire comprised questions designed to gather socio-demographic data on the participants, while the other sections were designed to gather data pertaining to (a) factors influencing the career choices of women; (b) the determinants of women's workforce, job satisfaction and career progression in corporate organisations; (c) the factors that determine women's placement and location in the hierarchical order of corporate organisations; (d) the barriers and impediments to women career progression in the corporate organisations; (e) the implications of education and lifelong learning for the career aspirations of women in corporate organisations; and (f) strategies to enhance women's career advancement in corporate organisations.

The administration of the questionnaire was followed by face-to-face, semi-structured interviews which were conducted with selected senior women members of the telecommunications organisation. The core questions in these interviews were the following:

* Why did you choose to enter a career in the mobile telecommunication network? And what factors have assisted your career development?

In this study "learning" is conceptualised as the opportunity for continuous education that is inclusive, thus promoting the values and rights of individuals in society (UNESCO, 2008). However, training is considered to be an organised process through which workers acquire knowledge and skills for a definite purpose (Thaker, 2008). Contextually, training programmes are organised for workers for the purpose of enhancing their human capital development and contributing to organisational goals.

4.3   Population of the study

The target population for this study comprised women employees of MTN in Nigeria and South Africa. The sample selection included all categories of women employees, both junior

and senior, at MTN in both countries. "Junior workers" in this study refers to women employees whose duties fall within the lower levels of the organisational structure. The senior workers, on the other hand, have spent a considerable number of years gaining enough work experience to qualify them to occupy top management positions. Thus, they are considered to have both served their time in a job and attained higher status and rank.

The table below depicts the total population of women employees in MTN Nigeria and South Africa**.**

Table 4.1:   Number of women employees by position and company

Company	Women employees	Women in junior and middle management	Senior women executives
MTN Nigeria	1860	1500	360
MTN South Africa	2841	1876	965
Total	4701	3376	1325

Source: Corporate Research Foundation (2011)

4.4   Sampling techniques

In this study I used purposive sampling to select women in senior managerial positions. In addition, a simple random probability sampling technique was used to select women junior workers in both Nigeria and South Africa. The latter sampling technique ensures the chances of every woman in both junior and senior positions being selected.

I firstly used purposive sampling to select senior women managers from the population of women in top managerial positions at MTN in both countries. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:73) argue that probability sampling techniques are primarily used in quantitatively oriented studies and the process involves "selecting a relatively large number of units from a population, or from specific sub-groups (strata) of a population, in a random manner where the probability of inclusion for every number of the population is determined". Furthermore, Teddlie and Yu (2007:77) maintain that probability samples aim to achieve representativeness such that the sample accurately represents the entire population. Although purposive sampling techniques are selective in terms of the subject to be studied, in which the sample is usually quite small, its main goal is to focus on particular characteristics of the population that will best enable the research questions to be answered (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009:187). Maxwell (1997:87) further defines purposive sampling as "particular

settings, persons, or events [that] are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices". Moreover, Silverman (2000) notes that a purposive sampling technique ensures that all participants are selected because they possess characteristics that are of interest to the study. Teddlie and Yu (2007:77) affirm that purposive sampling techniques are primarily used in qualitative studies and may be defined as units (e.g. individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) selected on the basis of specific purposes associated with answering the questions pertaining to a research study.

On the other hand, I used a simple random probability sampling technique to select women junior workers from the population of women in junior positions in the mobile telecommunications network in Nigeria and South Africa. Table 4.1 shows the number of women employees according to position and company. This data was accessed from the mobile telecommunications network database. Hence, the two sampling techniques used for this study consist of a probability sampling technique and a purposive sampling technique.

4.4.1   Sampling techniques and sample size for the quantitative study

In selecting the sample for the quantitative part of the study, a simple random probability technique was used to select samples that would represent the entire population of women employees in junior management positions at MTN Nigeria and MTN South Africa. The total number of junior women employees that was sampled quantitatively was 227 for Nigeria and 234 for South Africa. Hence, the sample size generated from the total number of women junior workers at MTN Nigeria and MTN South Africa, namely, 1500 and 1876 respectively, amounted to 461 junior women workers. This represented the total n value for the study to be sampled quantitatively in both MTN Nigeria and MTN South Africa.

The study made use of a confidence interval of 6 and a confidence level of 95% for both MTN Nigeria and MTN South Africa. The table below illustrates the way in which the sample size was determined.

Table 4.2:   Sample size by position, company location and confidence level

	Population size	Sample size	Confidence level	Confidence interval
MTN Nigeria	1500	227	95%	6
MTN South Africa	1876	234	95%	6

Source: Creative Research System (2007:1)

The confidence level in the study is described as the percentage that represents the true percentage of the population chosen for the research. This means that there is a certainty of 95% that the study will be accurate. In social research, 95% or 0.05 is the margin of error and the extent to which the findings of the study may be accepted – otherwise known as the "confidence level".

4.4.2   Sampling techniques and sample size for the qualitative research

A purposive sampling technique was chosen for the qualitative part of this study in order to select senior women executives in managerial positions; a sample of six women senior personnel were interviewed, that is, three from each country. While the sample for the interviews was not intended to be representative, it was deemed to be sufficient to offer insight into their experiences relating to the way in which they had traversed the path to seniority.

Although the sample may not have been representative and the interviewees' comments may not be generalisable, this is not the primary concern with such sampling; rather the concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010:115). Similarly, Creswell (2010:209) posits that, in qualitative research, a few individuals are typically studied because the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual. Cresswell argues further that the number of individuals to be studied may be several, ranging from one or two to 30 or 40.

The sample selection was therefore based on criteria such as years of experience as manager and educational attainment. This is sufficient to offer insight into their experiences relating to the way in which they had traversed the path to seniority. Hence, the sampling technique adopted was purposive and three participants were chosen to give me and the interviewees an opportunity not only to interact deeply on the subject matter but also to ensure that detailed information was collected. This was considered preferable to choosing more than three participants, as scant information or information lacking in detail would have been collected owing to a lack of control. Although the sample may not have been representative and the interviewees' comments may not be generalisable, this is not the primary concern with such sampling; rather the concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it (Cohen et al., 2010:115).

4.5 Data collection instruments and procedures

Having chosen a mixed research design, both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed for the purposes of data collection. I personally administered the questionnaires to the selected junior women employees. This was followed by interviews with women managers at MTN South Africa and MTN Nigeria. However, identifying willing senior women participants in both countries was not easy. While I had relatively easy access to MTN Nigeria, MTN South Africa was quite difficult in terms of gaining access to participants and the relevant information.

Letters seeking permission to conduct the interviews was sent to both MTN South Africa and Nigeria (This would have to be appendix 1). A consent letter was given each participant's in the qualitative study (appendix 2).

Data analysis

Mixed methods data analysis was utilised in the study. As noted by Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003), when analysing both quantitative and qualitative data within a mixed methods framework, it is essential that the researcher embark on at least some of the following seven stages: (1) data reduction; (2) data display; (3) data transformation; (4) data correlation; (5) data consolidation; (6) data comparison; and (7) data integration. For instance, *data reduction* involves reducing the dimensionality of the qualitative data (e.g. via exploratory thematic analysis, memoing, etc) and the quantitative data (e.g. via descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, cluster analysis, etc). *Data display* involves describing pictorially both the qualitative data (e.g. matrices, charts, graphs, networks, lists, rubrics, and Venn diagrams) and the quantitative data (e.g. tables, graphs) (see Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 1998). This is followed (optionally) by the *data transformation* stage during which quantitative data is converted into narrative data that may be analysed qualitatively (i.e. *qualitised* [Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998]) and/or qualitative data is converted into numerical codes that may be represented statistically (i.e. *quantitised* [Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998]). *Data correlation* involves either the quantitative data being correlated with the qualitised data or the qualitative data being correlated with the quantitised data. This is followed by *data consolidation* in terms of which both quantitative and qualitative data are combined to create new or consolidated variables or data sets. The next stage, *data comparison,* involves comparing data from both the qualitative and quantitative data sources. *Data integration* is

the final stage, during which both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated into either a coherent whole or two separate sets (i.e. qualitative and quantitative) of coherent wholes.

In this study data obtained through quantitative and qualitative means were display on charts, graphs and tables. Tables and charts were necessary in this study in order to organise and arrange data in a way that any viewer can easily understand the data. Data correlation as applied to this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were harmonised to give full picture and deep understanding of the data obtained. In the case of data integration quantitative and qualitative data were combined to form a coherent whole for the purpose of having a comprehensive data.

It is these understandings of data analysis that informed the method and process for the analysis of data collected from the participants of this study.

4.6   Questionnaire

The reliability (questionnaires) and validity (interviews) of the data collection instruments, that is, the questionnaire and the interview questions, were submitted to professionals (the Statistics Department at the University of Pretoria) and my supervisor for proper scrutiny and evaluation.

As Haralambos and Holbon (2000) put it, a pilot study is generally completed on parts of the significant populace, but not on the individuals who will form part of the final sample. This is because it may influence the later behaviour of research subjects if they have already been involved in the research. Billé (2010) argues that pilot studies can be referred to as small-scale studies that will help identify design issues before the main research is done.

I opted for piloting the questionnaire of the present study to check for any ambiguity and misunderstanding of the questions and statements. Haralambos and Holbon (2000) clarify that a pilot study is conducted before the primary research to check the attainability or to enhance the design of the research. Pilot studies, therefore, may not be appropriate for the case studies. They are frequently carried out before large-scale quantitative research in an attempt to avoid time and money being wasted on an inadequately designed project. Collis and Hussey (2003:175) stress the importance of piloting the questionnaire as fully as possible prior to distribution, thereby ensuring that any errors are detected and corrected prior to sending it to the respondents. Furthermore, the pilot study is more effective if the pilot

respondents are similar to the members of the research sample. In the pilot method for this research I tested the validity of the questions related to women working in the communications organisation in both countries with women employees at a different communications organisation.

In order to establish the reliability of the questionnaire, the research questions were verified by the Statistics Department at the University of Pretoria for appropriateness before the pilot study was carried out. I then conducted a pilot study with a sample of twenty staff at Airtel, a communications organisation in Nigeria, and Vodacom, a telecommunications organisation in South Africa. Managers at these organisations granted me access to the organisations to administer pilot questionnaires for validation purposes. The feedback and comments received from the pilot study were useful in redesigning the questionnaire, leading to a shortened simplified version. Consequently, some questions were reworded or even eliminated. I subsequently re-piloted the questionnaire after having it validated by the University of Pretoria Statistics Department and thereafter proceeded to administer the final questionnaire. The final questionnaire used in this study has been included in this document as Appendix 3. In addition, proof of ethical clearance for the study was presented in order to obtain access to the organisations to administer the questionnaires.

In Lagos, Nigeria, the questionnaires were administered during an onsite training session at MTN, as this provided an opportunity to access considerable numbers of participants. Seventy-six questionnaires were distributed and 72 questionnaires were returned. I then proceeded to travel a far distance to Enugu, to administer the questionnaire at the Enugu regional office of MTN Nigeria, which was another regional office that had granted me permission to conduct the study. At Enugu, 76 questionnaires were administered and 58 were returned. Finally, in Abuja, a northern regional centre, 76 questionnaires were administered and 55 were returned. Many of the junior workers in the northern region were occupied with fieldwork and it was thus not easy to locate them all. I was physically present when all the questionnaires were administered, apart from Lagos where the questionnaires were administered during an onsite training session. The questionnaires were administered to the participants at the other centres with the assistance of the manager in charge of talent and development.

A similar protocol was followed in South Africa. After I had finished administering the questionnaires in Nigeria, I travelled back to South Africa to administer the second phase.

The same procedure was followed as before, with the first set of questionnaires being administered at the MTN South Africa head office in Fairlands on the outskirts of Johannesburg, Gauteng.

At MTN Fairlands office, 70 questionnaires were administered of which 45 were returned, and three days later a further 15 questionnaires were returned. In addition, 82 questionnaires were sent to the North West MTN centre of which 42 were returned, and 82 were sent to the Western Cape MTN centre of which 31 were returned.

In order to collect more statistically correct data and in view of the challenges of meeting physically with participants who are always busy, the second set of questionnaires was administered through an online process, by means of which the questionnaires were sent to individual email addresses with a short message clarifying the reasons for the study. A copy of the consent letter was also attached. Twenty-eight respondents responded through their electronic mail. A third set of questionnaires was administered by means of the same process; 50 questionnaires were sent via email to respondent in the North West region, with 46 being returned by email.

In total, of the 227 questionnaires administered in Nigeria, 185 were returned and of the 234 administered in South Africa, 133 were returned, resulting in the total number of questionnaires returned being 318. Therefore, the *n* value (total questionnaires distributed) is 461, but only 318 questionnaires were returned.

4.7 Semi-structured interviews

As indicated, the core questions used in the interview addressed the implications of education and lifelong learning for the career aspirations of women in corporate organisations, and strategies to enhance women's career advancement in corporate organisations.

Creswell (2010:218) notes that interviews in qualitative research have a number of advantages: firstly, interviews provide useful information that cannot be directly observed, and secondly, interviews permit participants to describe detailed personal information.

The data generated by this method was captured by recording the responses on audio tape and taking notes. In my notes, I noted the participants' emotional state, body language and language used. The notes were categorised according to the various themes and the research questions. In the course of this study I was consistently aware that the fact that I, as the

researcher, am a male may have shaped their responses. The following core interview questions guided the interview.

- What factors have assisted your career development? How has your education, both formal and informal and on site, enabled you to build your career. What makes you happy/unhappy about working here?

I wrote an email to each of the senior women I had identified through the company profile as potential candidates, requesting their participation. When I had received consent to conduct the study from MTN (six participants in both Nigeria and South Africa), I began the interviews.

The first interview I conducted was at the Lagos regional office of MTN Nigeria. The second interview was conducted at the regional office in Enugu. The third interview was also conducted in Nigeria, but telephonically, as this is what the participant chose to do.

The second phase of the interviews was conducted in South Africa, with the same approach as for Nigeria being used to reach out to the participants. I conducted the first interview with a General Manager at the corporate head office of MTN South Africa. The second interview was conducted telephonically with a participant at the Western Cape office of MTN and the final interview was conducted with a participant at the North West MTN office. All six interviewees gave electronic consent for the interview.

4.8   Research ethics

In order to encourage respondents to complete the questionnaires, there are certain ethical protocols that I had to follow. The data and information collected were used exclusively for the purpose of this academic work. I confronted my first ethical dilemma as I entered the field for the semi-structured interviews. I was concerned about intruding into their private lives (Geert 1999), as I needed to collect sufficient information to reconstruct each women's story, while respecting their privacy. This was complicated by the fact that I was male. I tried to deal with this by relying on my social sensitivity and made sure I did not encroach on areas where they appeared to be reluctant to share information. Each interviewee chose her own pseudonym and, through member checking of the transcripts, I was able to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the data I was going to use. In writing up the stories from the interviews I was careful not to reveal information that could possibility identify my

respondents. No names or other identifying data was collected through the questionnaires and thus ensured their confidentiality. In addition, the questionnaires were analysed in two batches, one for Nigeria and the other for South Africa. In so doing the regional source of each questionnaire was not identifiable, thereby further ensuring the confidentiality of respondents.

4.9   Informed Consent

Before starting with data collection, I ensured that I gained informed consent from the research participants. Berg (2001:56) states that informed consent means the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation. The participants were requested to sign the form that indicates the understanding of the research's aims and their free choice to participate in the study and freedom to withdraw from that participation.

When conducting member checking, some of the participants showed interest in reading their stories. I provided them with the draft transcripts and to make comments to ensure that the information they had intended to share was what I had captured. This process created a mutual understanding between me and the participants, as well as clarifying the information I had gathered. In addition, a few of them indicated that they would be interested in reading the final thesis. I indicated that I would make available to them on finalisation of the study.

Farnham and Pilmlott (1995:47) explain informed consent as the knowing consent of individuals to play a part in an exercise which is free from any element of fraud, deceit or similar unfair inducement or manipulation. According to Trochim (2001:24), informed consent means that all research participants are fully informed of the procedures and risks involved in the research and must give their consent to participate. This informed consent entails providing adequate information regarding the purpose of the investigation and its credibility to possible participants. Informed consent is essential and mandatory even if the prospective participants are not actually listening to the researcher or they don't really want to know (De Vos, 1998:26).

4.10   Trustworthiness

The three themes emerging from this study are ambition, education and training, and job satisfaction. These are overarching themes because they are all linked to career advancement

or career opportunities for women in the corporate sector. These three themes emerged from the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data and came specifically from the responses of the participants. In the data analysis process, similar responses were grouped and categorised as themes.

According to Finlay (2002), for trustworthiness purposes researchers need to evaluate the way elements influence data collection and analysis. In view of this, the credibility and trustworthiness of my study was assured by triangulating the data from the participants. This was done by seeking similarities between the quantitative and qualitative data. I also used member checking whereby participants who were interviewed were asked to confirm transcriptions before they were used for analysis., I followed Creswell and Miller's (2000) procedure involving triangulation and member checking (see also Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1990), prolonged engagement in the field and collaboration. I therefore compared similarities and differences in the analysis of the data obtained from 318 junior women workers and the interactive interviews with the six senior women executives.

As a researcher, I am aware that my personal experience may contribute to my personal bias, especially as an outsider in South Africa and an insider in Nigeria (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). In an effort to address issues of bias I requested the assistance of experts in the field of psychometrics, including the statistics office at the University of Pretoria, to verify the accuracy of the data and to peruse a draft of my interpretations for their critical comments. This is Chenail's (2011) idea, which contributes not only to instrumentation rigor and but also reduces bias in the research process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Also, information collected from the participants is presented in this thesis in the form of direct quotes. I verified raw data by submitting my transcripts to the participants to rectify any mistakes or omissions that occurred during the interviews and also to ensure that what was stated in the transcript was what the participants had said. Where there were discrepancies in the information that was supplied, follow-up interviews were conducted to address and clarify these discrepancies. For example, questions related to family and work life were clarified and follow-up interview were conducted with some participants who were willing to talk more about the issues. This is what Sharan et al. (2001) consider to be a process for exploring the complexities of researching within and across cultures. In addition, a document that contains some employee biographical information, namely, the MTN annual bulletin, was analysed. This document provides information such as the number and percentage of

women in MTN in terms of career progression and the racial ratio of women in senior positions. These aforementioned strategies were used throughout the data gathering and data analysis exercises to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

4.11   Paradigm perspectives

In this study I wanted to find out about the career experiences of women and how lifelong learning influences their career paths in the corporate world. As a researcher, I am aware that I speak from the perspective of a particular gender, racial and ethnic community and that I have a particular cultural perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In other words, I entered the research scene with my own interpretive frame of reference and my own belief system. This paradigmatic perspective played an important role in guiding my research. My philosophy of reality (ontology) and how we come to know that reality (epistemology) was an important factor in guiding the way in which I went about finding out what I believe can be known (methodology). The epistemological view is that knowledge is the creation of ideas which bring about interaction between the researched and the researcher. Ontologically, I believe that there are multiple realities which make each individual's perception of reality a valid one. I therefore attempted to create a picture of the realities of the women from whom I had collected data through my own lens.

CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS (NIGERIA)

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the quantitative analysis of the data collected in Nigeria for the purposes of the study. The data is organised into the following sections: socio-demographic data pertaining to the respondents, factors influencing career choice, determinants of female job satisfaction, factors determining the placement of women in corporate organisations, barriers to the careers of women, continuous learning and the career progress of women and strategies to promote the careers of women in corporate organisations.

This structure reflects the structure of the questionnaire. This chapter focuses on women in middle management and below. The quantitative data collected by means of the questionnaires administered in the field is discussed using descriptive statistics, while the key variables are illustrated with the assistance of frequency tables and charts.

The SAS Version 9.3 statistical analysis program was used in the analysis of the data. This program allows an effective visual presentation of data in tabulated form and reduces the time and energy required to perform the requisite calculations. The quantitative analysis of the data was conducted by the computer services support section of the Statistics Department at the University of Pretoria (STATOMET).

In short the data suggested that career choice, job satisfaction and continuous learning are valuable factors in the career development of women in a communications organisation. Firstly, in terms of career choice it emerged that it would appear that women find the communication industry to be an attractive sector in which to build and pursue a career. This may be ascribed to the fact that there are extensive opportunities in the industry for them to explore, as well as scope for their immediate career aspirations. Secondly, job satisfaction on the part of women is clearly associated with the interesting work, good income, promotion opportunities and job flexibility to which they have access in the corporate world of the communication industry. Thirdly, continuous learning may be seen as a feasible, internal motivation factor that enables women to progress in their career paths.

5.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: RESPONDENTS' BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Age of the respondents
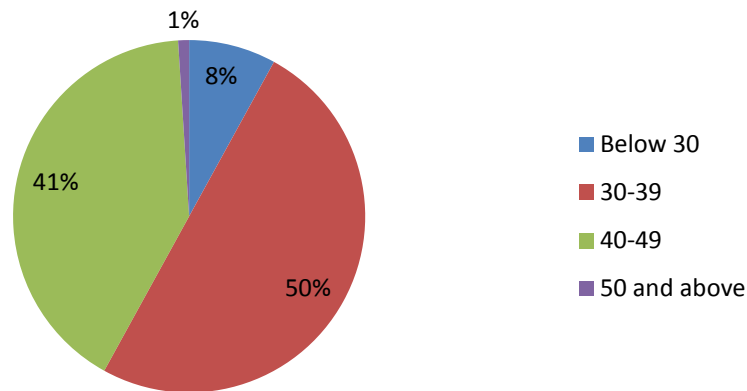
Figure 5.1:   Age of the respondents

Figure 5.1 above depicts the age distribution of the respondents, which ranged between under 30 years and 50 years and over. The figure shows that 50% of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39, while 2% of the respondents were older than 50. This indicates that 91% of the respondents were between 30 and 50 years old. The stage of life between 30 and 50 is often characterised by a fear of both missed opportunities and failure to realise accomplish significant dreams, the inability to achieve an acceptable balance between work and other commitments and the need to shed the youthful illusions that would have propelled earlier career stage in the workforce (Greenhaus et al., 2000). The figure shows that at least 41% of the respondents were at the stage of building their careers; thus, it would appear from the frequency output that the respondents believed that their career growth in the communication organisation would enable them to achieve their career goals and also that they tended to make use of the opportunities available to them in order to realise their future career goals in the communication environment. It is clear from the figure that the age ranges of 30s constitute the largest percentage of the workforce with such categories of respondents being in their middle career stage in the communication organisation. Accordingly, it is feasible that the majority of the respondents may be anxious about their future career prospects in the mobile sector.

From the frequency output it is evident that most of the junior female workers in the communication organisation were around 30 years of age (92) and the fewest (3) between 40

and 50 years of age. This suggests that the majority of the members of the workforce in MTN Nigeria are young and, thus, in the early stages of their careers and with time ahead of them for career development.

Marital status
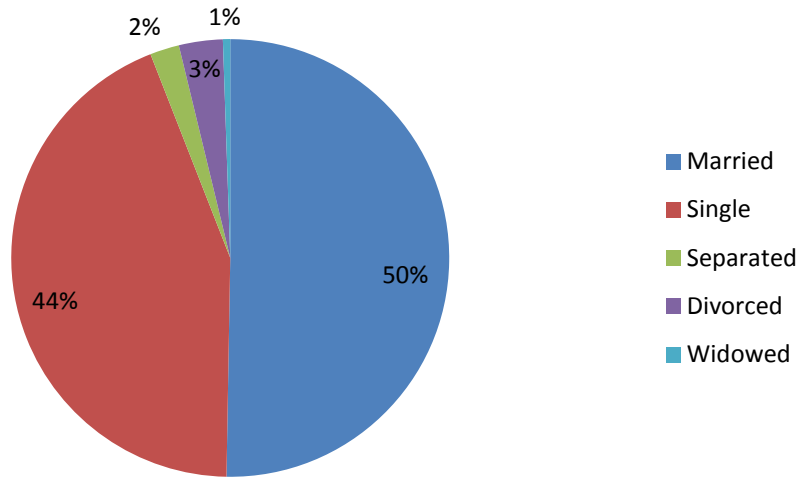
Figure 5.2:   Marital status

Figure 5.2 reveals that the respondents included married, separated, divorced, single and widowed women. Of the total number of respondents, 92 (50%) were married, one (1%) was widowed, 81(44%) were single, four (2%) were separated and six (3%) divorced.

Family and home arrangements of the respondents
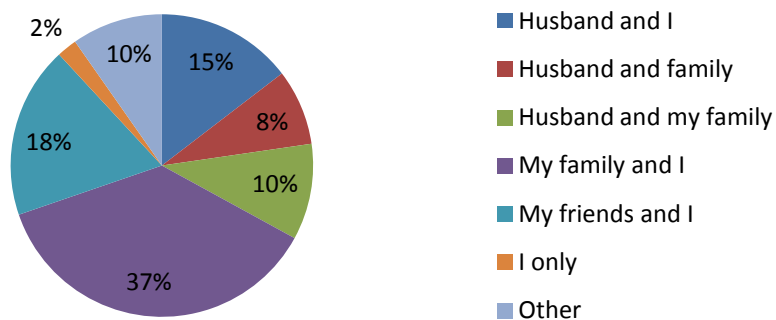
Figure 5.3:   Family and home arrangements of the respondents

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Figure 5.3 also shows that 68 (37%) of the respondents were living with family, 34 (18%) were living with friends, 27 (15%) were living with their husbands only, 19 (10%) were living with their husbands and families, 15 (8%) were living with their husbands and their husbands' family. Thus, four (2%) of the respondents were living alone, while 19 (10%) were living with others.

Irrespective of the respondents' family status and their commitment to family issues, they were, nevertheless, committed to developing their careers in the communication organisation. Indeed, Greenhaus et al. (2000) argue that their married and single women respondents all displayed career aspirations and, irrespective of their marital status, were determined to realise their career goals. It was evident from the views expressed by the respondents that they valued their work and, at the same time, were committed to realising their career objectives in the telecommunications organisation.

Educational qualifications of respondents
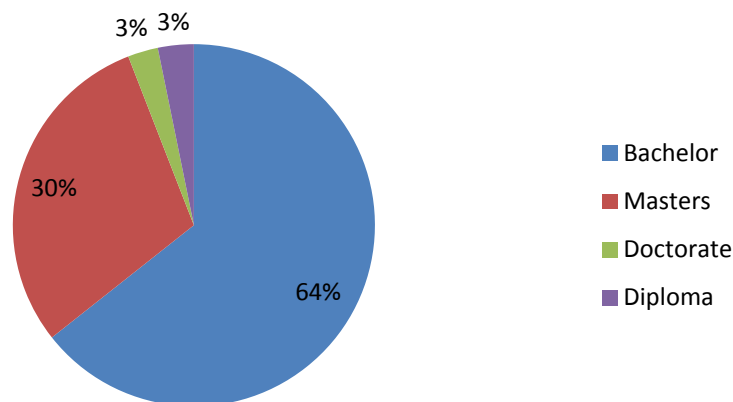
Figure 5.4:   Educational qualifications of the respondents

Figure 5.4 depicts the responses of the respondents to the question relating to educational qualifications. It was found that 119 of the respondents (64%) possessed bachelor degrees, while 55 (30%) had master's degrees, thus there were more women junior workers who possessed bachelor degrees as compared to women with master's degrees. This illustrates the reliance placed by the corporate world on university degrees when making appointments. This suggests that, in the communication organisation in question, qualifications are considered to be relevant as regards the advancement of women workers in the corporate

environment. In addition, the figures reveals that six (3%) of the respondents had doctorates while six (3%) respondents were in possession of diploma certificates.
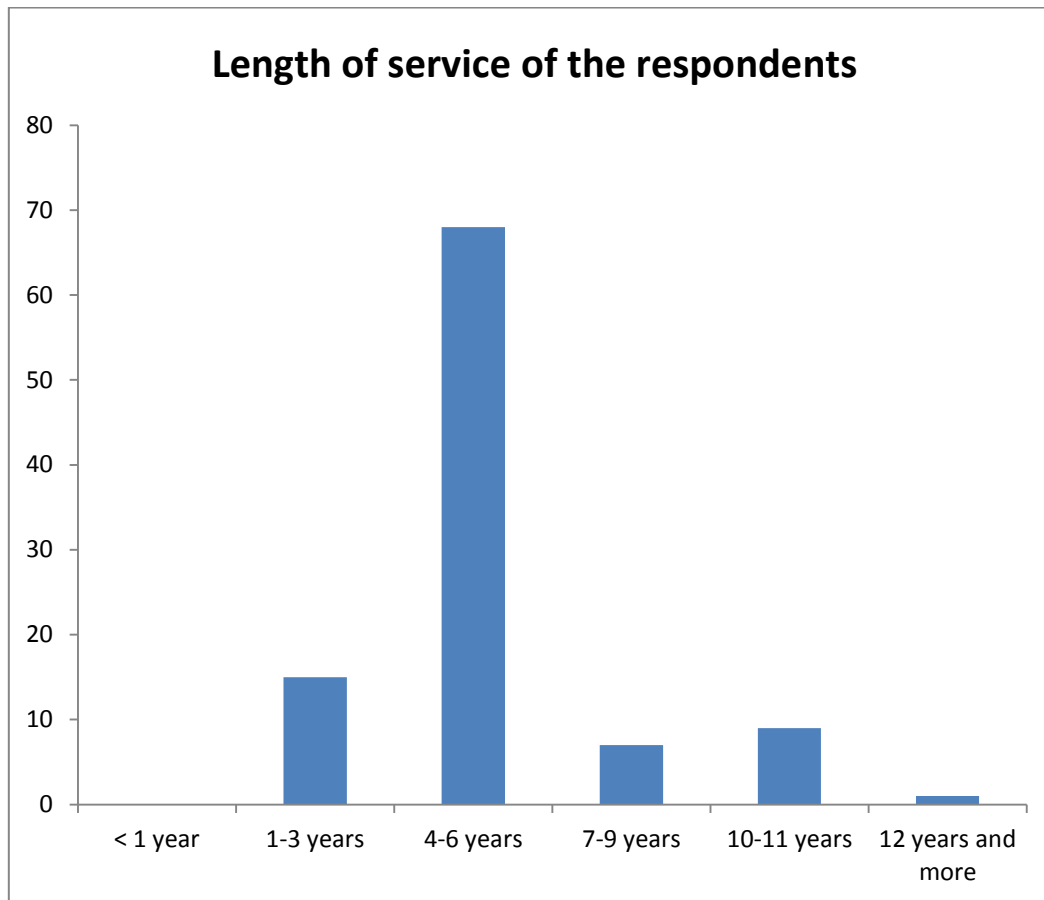
Figure 5.5:   Length of service of the respondents

Figure 5.5 reveals that 15% of the respondents had worked for the organisation between one and three years, and 68% had worked for the organisation for more than four to six years. This shows that over 50% of the respondents had worked for the organisation for between four and six years. Seven percent had worked for the organisation between seven to nine years, 9% for ten and eleven years while 1% had been there for twelve years and more.

This suggests that many of the women junior workers in the MTN Nigeria workforce are still relatively new in the organisation and, thus, that they have time in which to develop and build their careers. A small cohort of women had spent between 12 years and more at the organisation and this may possibly influence their career progression in the organisation. However, large cohort of the women junior workers were still in the process of acquiring the job experience which may possibly assist them in their future careers.

Table 5.1:   Career goals of the respondents

Career goal	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	155	83.78
No	28	15.14
No response	**2**	**1.08**
Total	**185**	**100**

Table 5.1 refers the respondents' responses to the question as to whether they had had career goals when they embarked on their careers. The table shows that 155 (83.78%) of the respondents indicated that they had career goals when they started their careers, while 28 (15.14%) respondents stated that they had not any career goals at the start of their careers. This suggests that an overwhelming majority of the women junior workers at MTN Nigeria had identified specific career goals and it is thus arguable that they would work towards the attainment of such career goals as they considered such career targets to be important. This is in line with the high level of qualified women in the workforce.

Table 5.2:   Factors influencing the career choices of the respondents

Factors influencing career choices	Frequency	Percentage
Self-generated	90	48.65
Parents	34	18.38
Male colleagues	14	7.57
Friends	14	7.57
Female colleague	8	4.32
Manager	2	1.08
No response	23	12.43
Total	185	100

In response to the question as to who had influenced the career choices of the respondents, 90 (48.65%) respondents indicated that self-generated factors had influenced their career choices, 34 (18.38%) believed that their parents had influenced their careers in the corporate environment, 14 (7.57%) stated that male colleagues and friends had influenced their careers, eight (4.32%) believed that female colleagues had influenced their careers, while two (1.1%) cited their managers as a factor which had influenced their careers. It is significant that, for almost 49% of the respondents, their career goals had been intrinsic and they had not relied on external stimuli in setting these goals. However, almost 51% had found inspiration in those around them (parents, colleagues and friends). It is thus arguable that both intrinsic factors and external motivation are vitally important in career development.

Table 5.3:   A lack of interest in career planning on the part of the respondents

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
No context for career planning	12	6.49
Lack of role models	5	2.7
Other	5	2.7
Not aware of career options	4	2.16
Did not know career was important	4	2.16
Did not think of a future career	2	1.08

It emerged from the responses that there was, broadly speaking, a lack of awareness among the respondents about career development. Table 5.3 reveals that 12 (6.5%) of the respondents believed that they had no context for career planning, two (1.08%) indicated that they had not thought about a future career, four (2.16%) stated that they had not been aware of career options and did not know that careers were important, while five (2.7%) agreed that an absence of role models and other factors had affected their lack of interest in career goals. It is thus feasible that, with the correct information, more of the respondents may have thought consciously about their careers. However, it is also interesting that a large number of the respondents had indicated their ambition to develop their careers. This is illustrated in the frequency output in Table 5.5, which revealed that most of the respondents believed in the viability of personal career planning in the corporate environment.

Table 5.4:   Factors influencing the career choices of respondents

Factors influencing career choice	Frequency	Percentage
Job opportunities	28	15.14
Challenging field	33	18.38
Interesting and fun field	36	19.46
Good job market	29	16.22
High salaries field	25	13.51
No other options	30	15.68
No response	4	2.16
Total	185	100

In response to the question regarding the factors which had influenced their choice to embark on a career in the telecommunications sector, 36 (19.46%) of the respondents indicated that they believed telecommunications was an interesting and fun field, 28 (15.14%) maintained that job opportunities had determined their career choices, 30 (16.22%) believed that telecommunications represented a good job market, 25 (13.5%) indicated that the high

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salaries in the sector had influenced their career choice in the communication organisation, while 33 (18.38%) considered that the fact that telecommunications was a challenging field had prompted them to explore and pursue a career in the sector. These findings imply that the career choices of women workers are influenced by a multiplicity of factors, including personality, interests and social supports.

It is clear from the data above that the communication organisation was regarded as an attractive organisation in which to work. This may be ascribed to the fact that the company has supportive developmental and training programmes in place to assist its workers, including the female workers, to advance on their career paths. In addition, the telecommunications industry in general and Nigeria in particular is developing rapidly. This has opened up extensive opportunities for women in Nigeria to explore their careers in an organisation which they believe create the space in which they may aspire to advance in their careers in the future.

Table 5.5:   Factors influencing career choices and career goals of respondents

Factors influencing	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job opportunities and good market	47	82.46	10	17.54	57	31.67
Challenging and other factors	55	88.71	7	11.29	62	34.44
Interesting field with high salaries	50	81.97	11	18.03	61	33.89
No response	5	-	-	-	-	-
Total	157	84.44	28	15.56	185	100

Chi-square result = 0.5181 > 0.05

- Career choice may be described as the choices which an individual makes in a lifetime with regard to work and which may be attributed to social and structural factors
- Career goals may be described in this context as personal goals which are dependent on a goal setting in during the course of an individual's career.
- Career path may be described in this context as personal, long range career lifetime objectives.

Table 5.5 presents the variables that may have influenced the respondents' career choices and career goals. In other words, the variables presented in Tables 5.5 and 5.4 were integrated for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was a link between the two variables of career

choice and career goal. However, the results from the statistical findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between these two factors although, on the other hand, the data presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.4 revealed that the respondents did have career goals and that they had made their preferred career choices so as to enable them to fulfil their future career plans within the communication organisation. Meanwhile, the table 5.5 shows the responses of the respondents revealed the various factors (as indicated in the table above) that had influenced their career choices. Based on the statistical results in table 5.5 it is possible that the career choices of the respondents in the telecommunications organisation may determine whether they will realise their career goals in the communication sector.

It emerged that 62 (34.44%) of the respondents believed that their choice of career and their career goals in the telecommunications organisation had been facilitated by factors such as family members, colleagues in the workplace and friends, 61 (33.89%) indicated that the remuneration and their interest in the job itself had influenced their choice of career in the communication organisation, while 57 (31.67%) believed that the opportunities in the communication sector had influenced their choice of a career in the industry and that possibly they felt that they could attain their career goals in the communication organisation in the future.

The frequency output on the table 6.5 revealed that the career choices of the respondents had been determined by both internal motivation and the job market. In other words, the data presented in this table supports the data presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.4 which revealed that the respondents had career goals which they wished to attain in the communication organisation and that both external and internal factors had shaped their career goals. It is clear from the frequency output that there is a correlation between career choice and career goals, and that the respondents' choices of a career in the mobile telecommunications company as well as their strong commitment to their jobs may influence the career goals of women in the corporate world.

Table 5.6:   Respondents' career paths

Career path	Frequency	Percentage
Interest in the job	79	42.7
Training on the job	49	26.49
Organisational learning	18	9.73
Experience	27	14.59
Friends	5	2.7
Male colleagues	2	1.08
Female colleagues	2	1.08
No response	3	1.62
Total	185	100

According to the understanding of Bohlander, Snell and Sherman (2001) of the notion of the career paths of women, women aspire to careers in an occupational field (career choice) in an organisation for the purpose of building their career paths and achieving their personal career goals within the organisation.

In response to the question as to what determined their career paths, a total of 79 respondents (42.7%) stated that they were working for MTN in Nigeria because they were interested in the job. In other words the respondents were interested in this particular type of work. Meanwhile, 49 (26.49%) respondents indicated that training on the job determined their career paths, 18 (9.73%) maintained that organisational learning determined their career paths, 27 (14.6%) stated that experience was determining their career paths, two (1.08%) believed that male and female colleagues determined their careers in the workplace, while five (2.75%) were of the opinion that friends determined their careers. It would, thus, appear that the findings suggest that, in the communication organisation, organisational policy encouraged the career development of women in the workplace. The data presented above 94 indicates that the career planning of the respondents was affected primarily by intrinsic factors, while the data presented in Table 5.2 revealed that external factors had motivated the career development of the women. It is, however, feasible that the communication organisation was offering opportunities to the respondents relating to training and a supportive work atmosphere.

Table 5.7:   Respondents' career satisfaction

Career satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	126	68.11
Not satisfied	25	13.51
Indifferent	29	15.68
Other	2	1.08
No response	3	1.62
Total	185	100

Table 5.7 reveals that that all the respondents responded to this item, with 126 (68.11%) respondents agreeing that they were satisfied with their careers, 25 (13.51%) indicating that they were satisfied with their careers in the communication organisation, 29 (15.68%) were not sure of their career satisfaction at MTN Nigeria and two (1.08%) responding "other". It is clear from the frequency output above that the majority (68%) of respondents found their careers to be satisfying. As indicated by the respondents, the mobile telecommunications sector offers them the opportunity to progress in their careers while also offering them substantial benefits. They also indicated that internal motivation was the most important driving force in building their careers in the corporate environment.

Table 5.8:   Respondents' job satisfaction

Job satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Opportunities to study further	29	15.68
Income/benefits	60	32.43
Mentoring	25	13.51
Promotion	19	10.27
Good working conditions	43	23.24
Friends at work	5	2.7
Total	185	100

In response to the question on the factors which played a role in their job satisfaction, 60 (32.42%) respondents cited income and benefits as the main factors that determined their job satisfaction. This is in line with the views of the respondents to the effect that salary was an important factor in their choice of career and that a good salary contributed to their job satisfaction in the workplace. On the other hand, five (2.7%) of the respondents indicated that friends in the workplace determined their job satisfaction at MTN Nigeria, 29 (15.68%) cited opportunities for further study and 25 (13.51%) mentioned mentoring as factors determining their job satisfaction, while 43 (23.24%) mentioned good working conditions and 19

(10.27%) cited promotion in this regard. In other words, job satisfaction is clearly associated, firstly, with a good work environment and then the promotion opportunities, adequate remuneration and opportunities for further education which are available in the corporate environment.

Table 5.9: Respondents' career progress

Career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	166	89.73
No	13	7.03
No response	6	3.24
Total	185	100

One hundred and sixty-six (89.73%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were progressing in their careers in the communication organisation, while 13 (7.03%) disagreed. In other words, the majority of the respondents appeared to be satisfied with their career progress. This finding supports by the previous statistical data presented in Table 5.7 which revealed that the respondents found their careers in the communication organisation to be satisfying while they also felt they were progressing in their careers.

Table 5.10: Factors determining respondents' career progress

Factors determining career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Organisational policy	30	16.22
Personal development	78	42.16
Nature of job	29	15.68
Individual career plan	21	11.35
Opportunities to study further	6	3.24
No response	21	11.35
Total	185	100

In response to the question on the factors that determined their career progress, 78 (42.16%) of the respondents cited personal development as the main factor that determined their career progress. Thus, the data presented in Table 5.6 supports the responses of the respondents which indicated that they engaged in extra efforts in order to achieve career success in the communication organisation. On the other hand, six (3.24%) respondents mentioned that the opportunities available to study further determined their career progress in the telecommunications organisation, 30 (16.22%) cited organisational policy, 29 (15.7%) mentioned the nature of their jobs, and 21 (11.35%) indicated that their individual career

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plans determined the progress of their careers in the workplace. Thus, the findings suggest that the most significant factors determining the career success of the respondents in the corporate environment are personal development and organisational policy. In other words, the career progress of the respondents is primarily dependent on their hard work and competency as well on the job itself.

Table 5.11:   Factors influencing the lack of career progress

Lack of career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Work environment	10	5.41
Being a woman	4	2.16
Personal circumstances	6	3.24
Lack of opportunity to study	4	2.16

As indicated in Table 5.11, 10 (5.14%) of the respondents believed that the work environment was the most significant factor in the lack of career progress of women in the organisation, four (2.16%) cited the lack of opportunity to study further and the fact that they were women as factors affecting their lack of career progress in the telecommunications organisation, while six (3.24%) mentioned that personal circumstances were the cause of their lack of career progress. It is important to note that the respondents expressed strong views about the personal role of the respondents, personal commitments of the respondents and fewer expectations about the work environment. They mentioned a positive work environment but it would appear that their primary expectations were about themselves. The data revealed that a few of the respondents disagreed. It emerged from the data discussed above that a small percentage of the respondents believed that factors such as work environment, being a woman and personal circumstances were affecting their career progress in the communication organisation. However, the data above showed that, in MTN, the respondents were, in fact, progressing in their career paths with a few women in the organisation only believing that they were not progressing in their careers. In other words, the data in table 5.11 further confirms the data presented in Table 5.10, which reveals that the respondents were of the opinion that personal development and the supportive received from the organisation assisted them to propgress in their careers in the corporate environment.

It is interesting that the qualitative data from the study conducted in MTN Nigeria revealed that the working conditions in the communication organisation played a role in the respondents' career progress and that they were satisfied with their career progress.

According to the respondents, the work atmosphere in the telecommunications organisation fostered career development.

Table 5.12:   Access on the part of women to senior positions

Access to senior positions	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	157	84.86
No	26	14.05
No response	2	3.7
Total	185	100

In response to the question as to whether the respondents believed that women had access to senior positions in MTN, 157 (84.86%) of the respondents agreed that women did, indeed, have access to senior position in the communication organisation, while 26 (14.05%) disagreed. In other words, the vast majority of the respondents believed that they had the opportunity to be promoted within the communication organisation; thus implying the likelihood that they would be committed to their careers in the organisation.

Table 5.13:   Reasons for the non-access of women to senior positions

Reasons for the non-access to senior positions	Frequency	Percentage
Workplace challenges	35	18.92
Qualifications	18	9.73
Role models	4	2.16

In response to the question regarding the reasons why women would not have access to senior positions in MTN, 35 (18.92%) of the respondents cited workplace challenges as the main reason why women did not have access to senior positions in the organisation., While it appeared that the absence of role models was an insignificant factor in terms of career progress, the absence of qualification seemed to be of greater importance. The data presented in Table 5.12 reveals that more than 80% of the responses indicated that the respondents believed that women had access to senior position in the communication organisation and also that qualifications played a critical role in such access.

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Table 5.14:   Factors influencing the access of women to senior positions

Factors influencing the access of women to senior positions	Frequency	Percentage
Organisational culture	83	44.86
Job competition	67	36.22
Women do not like occupying senior management positions	3	1.62
No response	32	17.29
Total	185	100

In response to the question regarding the factors which influenced the access of women to senior positions, 83 (44.86%) of the respondents cited organisational culture as a factor influencing their access to senior positions in the communication organisation, while 67 (36.22%) stated that job competition influenced such access to management positions. This suggests that the work environment plays a significant role in the access of women to senior positions. It is worth noting that an insignificant number of the respondents did not believe that women did not like occupying senior positions. It would therefore appear that external factors played a critical role in the respondents' decisions to seek senior positions and that intrinsically there is a strong desire on the part of women for such positions.

Table 5.15:   Personal barriers affecting the respondents' career progress

Personal barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of career aspirations	69	37.3
Lack of education	9	4.86
Poor self -esteem	36	19.46
Leadership style	61	32.97
No response	10	5.40
Total	185	100

In response to the question on the personal barriers which affected the career advancement of women, 69 (37.3%) of the respondents stated that a lack of career aspirations could be attributed to the personal barriers affecting the career progress of women in the communication organisation. Thus this finding contradicts the data presented in Table 5.9 which revealed that the majority of the respondents believed that they were progressing in their careers. This finding also contradicts the data presented in Table 5.1 which indicated that the respondents believed that they had career goals. However, it is clear that some of the respondents were of the opinion that they were experiencing personal challenges in terms of their career growth and that the barriers affecting their career progress may stem from a lack of career aspirations. If this data is read in conjunction with the data presented in Table 5.14,

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which revealed that a lack of self-esteem was not a significant factor, it may be that the organisational culture is thwarting personal career aspirations. This argument is reinforced by the data presented in Table 5.18 below which revealed that 36 (19.46%) of the respondents were of the opinion that poor-self-esteem constituted a barrier to their career progress, while nine (4.86%) cited a lack of education, with 61 (32.97%) citing leadership styles as barriers affecting their career growth

Therefore the data presented in Table 5.15 supports the views of the respondent to the effect that factors such as being a woman and personal circumstances may hinder their career progress in the communication workplace.

This is supported by Reichman and Steling (2004), who observed that the fact of being female, as well as the inability on the part of the women to show an interest in career aspirations and leadership in the corporate setting, continues to play a role in the career advancement decisions of women. This compromises and is likely to affect the career progress of women in the corporate environment.

Table 5.16:   Institutional barriers affecting the career advancement of the respondents

Institutional barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Belief that women are not able to be managers	19	10.27
Sexual harassment	39	21.08
Discrimination against women	89	48.11
Lack of mentoring	18	9.73
Attitude of senior male managers	8	4.32
Lack of formal qualifications	6	3.24
No response	6	3.24
Total	185	100

It emerged that the two most significant barriers to the career progress of the respondents were discrimination against women (48.11%) and sexual harassment (21.08%). It is arguable that while internal motivation and the desire for career advancement play an important role in the career advancement of women (Tables 5.6, 5.8, 5.10 and 5.18), the external institutional environment is a critical variable in their career advancement. If these factors are taken together, approximately 70% of the respondents felt that their gender played a crucial role in respect of the barriers that prevented them from attaining success.

The pervasiveness of this perception among women workers in corporate environments is endorsed by numerous research studies (Martin, 2008; Paludi et al., 2007; Qualan, 1999; Ward, 2008). In the main, such studies argue that factors such as sexual discrimination, sexual harassment and the lack of a family-friendly policy and culture contribute to the persistent gap between the number of men and women in senior positions. It is therefore feasible that the fact of being women is a key factor in the lack of advancement of women, although such a gendered barrier is not of their own making but rather the result of the cultural and institutional environments in which women work.

The findings showed that six (3.24%) of the respondents believed that a lack of formal education was one of the barriers affecting their career progress despite the fact that an overwhelming number of the respondents were in possession of bachelor degrees (Table 5.3). It is feasible that additional qualifications may be seen as a viable route to career advancement as such qualifications are perceived as 'protection' against discrimination and sexual harassment.

Meanwhile, 19 (10.27%) of the respondents agreed that the belief that women are not capable of being managers was one of the institutional barriers affecting their career advancement while 18 (4.32%) cited a lack of mentoring, eight (4.32%) mentioned the negative attitudes of senior male managers and six (3.24%) noted as barriers affecting their career advancement.

Table 5.17:   Continuous learning and career progress of respondents

Continuous learning and career progress of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	174	94.05
No	7	3.78
No response	4	2.16
Total	185	100

With respect to the question as to whether continuous learning on the job enhances the career progress of women, 174 (94.05%) of the respondents said yes that continuous learning does, indeed, enhance the career progress of women, while four (3.78%) said no. It is, thus, clear from the responses that the majority of the respondents believed that learning on the job could influence their career development in the communication organisation. If the argument posited above in respect of the findings presented in Table 5.16 and with respect to gender discrimination, sexual harassment and the need to obtain further qualifications is plausible, then it is arguable that the overwhelming belief in the value of continuous learning may

reinforce the view that learning and improved qualifications may operate as a form of protection for women in the corporate environment.

The value of continuous learning for women employees is corroborated by Maurer and Weiss (2010) who argue that experience supported by learning is a useful means of career development.

Table 5.18: Factors encouraging continuous learning and the career progress of women

Factors encouraging learning and career progress	Yes	No	Total
Motivation	61	0	61
Learning culture	30	1	31
Time allocated for development	12	0	12
Financial resources	12	0	12
Supportive family	30	0	30
Institutional support	10	0	10
No response	29		
Total	184	1	185

In response to the question as to the factors that encourage continuous learning, 61 (39.35%) of the respondents argued that motivation determines the career advancement of women, 30 (25.16%) cited a learning culture as a factor in the career advancement of women, while 10 (6.45%) were of the opinion that institutional support assisted career development. On the basis of the data presented above it is feasible that internal motivation is a key factor in career advancement.

The findings showed that 12 (7.74%) of the respondents believed that the time allocated for development had assisted them to learn more on the job and that this, in turn, had influenced their career development, 30 (19.35%) mentioned that family support had encouraged them to advance on their career paths, while 12 (7.74%) were of the opinion that financial resources had enabled them to attend courses relevant to their work and that this had been useful in terms of their career development in the organisation. The data revealed that the communication organisation had given the respondents opportunities to progress on their career paths. Together with the data presented in Table 5.9 it is evident that internal motivation enables women to progress in their careers and that institutional support plays a minimal role in this regard.

In support of the views expressed above, Maurer and Weiss (2010) argue that the ability of women to continuously acquire new skills and to improve their existing skills has become an

essential ingredient in the career success of women particularly in the corporate setting. Maurer and Weiss explain further that the more the respondents are open to opportunities to continue to learn on the job the better their chances of progressing in their careers in the corporate world.

Table 5.19:   Number of training programmes the respondents had attended

Number	None	1–2	3–5	6–8	9–10	Total
None	11	26	10	1	2	50
5 or more	1	0	2	14	4	21
3–4	1	1	57	8	2	69
1–2	3	12	23	4	0	42
No response	3	-	-	-	-	3
Total	19	39	92	27	8	185

The findings revealed that 92 (49.72%) of the respondents had attended at least three to five training programmes held by the communication organisation; 39 (21.08%) indicated that they had attended more than one training programme, 27 (14.59%) had attended more than five training programmes, eight (4.32%) indicated that they had attended more than nine training programme, while 19 (10.27%) had not attended any training programmes at all. This suggests that the respondents were given opportunities to attend training programmes, as a significant number of the respondents had attended more than one training programme on the job. This implies that the company offered their women employees training opportunities to assist them to progress on their career paths. In addition, this finding verifies the value of internal motivation for career advancement (Tables 5.18 and 5.9) in view of the large number of women (166 of the 185 respondents) who had attended some form of training.

Table 5.20:   Training programmes for women

Training programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Professional training	108	58.38
Leadership training	44	23.78
On the job training	19	10.27
No response	14	7.56
Total	185	100

In response to the question as to the type of training in which women should participate in order to assist their career advancement, 108 (58.38%) of the respondents agreed that women workers should attend professional training, 19 (10.27%) believed that on-the-job training

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benefited career development, while 44 (23.8%) were of the opinion that that leadership training would aid their career progress in the communication workplace. This suggests that training offers a way in which workers may enhance their skills and knowledge, thus creating an opportunity for career development in MTN Nigeria. In support of the these findings the data presented in Table 5.19 revealed that the respondents had had opportunities to attend training programmes, thus emphasising that training plays an important role in helping women to build their career in the telecommunications industry with training creating an avenue for the respondents to develop and grow on their career paths in the corporate world.

Table 5.21:   Factors enhancing the career advancement of the respondents

Factors enhancing career development	Frequency	Percentage
Hard work	80	43.24
Willingness to take risks	27	14.59
Educational qualifications	10	5.41
Continuous learning and training	39	21.08
Family support	13	7.03
No response	16	8.64
Total	185	100

In response to the question as to the factors which promote the career development of women, 80 (43.24%) of the respondents cited hard work as a factor which had enhanced their careers, 39 (21.08%) were of the opinion that continuous learning and training aided career development, 27 respondents (14.59%) cited a willingness to take risks, 10 (5.41%) mentioned educational qualifications, while 13 (7.03%) indicated family support as factors which could enhance their career development in the communication workplace. These findings support the data presented in Tables 5.10, 5.18 and 5.20 regarding a strong identification that personal development can assist women to develop in their careers. Clearly, internal motivation and training play a significant role in career development in the communication organisation.

The findings above are supported by Anderson (2005), who argues that specific factors such as the role of family support, educational qualifications and training all enhance the career development of women in the corporate sector. Anderson explains further that continuous participation in training programmes creates opportunities and, thus, assists women to develop their career paths in the corporate world.

Table 5.22:   Career development of respondents

Career development	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	137	74.05
No	36	19.46
No response	12	6.48
Total	185	100

In respect to the question as to whether women engage in career development, 137 (74.05%) of the respondents said yes that women in the communication organisation engaged in career development, while 36 (19.46%) said no. It is clear from these findings that the majority of the respondents believed in career development as a way in which to develop on their career paths. It is feasible from the data above that the respondents valued their career development and thus that they focused on building their career and ensuring that they achieve their career goals.

Table 5.23:   Career development plans of respondents

Career development plans of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Personal life events	106	57
Peer influence	11	5.95
Parental influence	5	2.7
Spousal support	18	9.73
No response	45	24.32
Total	185	24.32

In response to the question on the career development plans of women working at MTN Nigeria, Table 5.23 above reveals that 106 (57%) of the respondents believed that personal life events determined their career development plans, 18 (9.73%) indicated that spousal support influenced their career development plans, 11 (5.95%) cited peer influence and five (2.7%) mentioned parental influence as factors determining their career development in the communication organisation. Taken in conjunction with the respondents' stated conviction that they were primarily responsible for their career progress through internal motivation and continuous learning, it is not surprising that the women cited events in their personal lives as the most important factor affecting their career development. It would appear that, in the main, the respondents held themselves accountable for their progress and not the institution. On the other hand, the strong indications of gender discrimination and sexual harassment (Table 5.16) contradict this perception. Nevertheless, it is likely that, despite their negative

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institutional experiences, the women still hold themselves primarily accountable for their career progress.

The data above correlates with the findings of Staden and Du Toit (2011), who argue that women feel responsible for their career development in the corporate world and that they actively plan personal efforts in order to achieve their career goals.

Table 5.24:   No plans for career development

No plans for career development	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of mentorship	14	7.57
Inadequate leadership programmes	6	3.24
Lack of motivation	15	8.11
Work flexibility	8	4.32

The findings revealed that 15 (8.11%) of the respondents were of the belief that a lack of motivation was a factor in their lack of plans for career development, 14 (7.65%) cited a lack of mentoring as a factor, six (3.24%) mentioned inadequate leadership programmes while eight (4.32%) stated work flexibility as factors responsible for their lack of career plans for career development. It is clear from the findings that a small number of women in the mobile organisation appeared to believe that career planning was not necessary for them in order to further their careers. It is interesting to note that 43 respondents mentioned the constraints in respect of the career development plans of women, while 36 (Table 5.22) only mentioned that they felt they had limited career plans. The absence of leadership programmes appeared to be insignificant although the role of motivation was accorded a degree of importance. The data presented in the table reinforces the pattern observed throughout the study, namely, that the respondents held themselves primarily responsible for their career progress.

5.3   Conclusion

In short, the study revealed that the respondents regarded the communication organisation as an attractive company which gave them opportunities to pursue their careers. The respondents clearly regarded the telecommunications industry as a fast-growing industry in the corporate sector and one which offered them opportunities to build their careers.

The findings also revealed that learning on the job is a key factor in the career development of the women in the communication organisation. The vast majority of the respondents were in possession of bachelor and master's qualifications, with such qualifications being seen as

playing an extremely important role in their career development and creating opportunities for them to aspire to advance in their careers. The findings also revealed a correlation between continuous learning and the career development of women in that the study showed that, if the respondents are given the opportunity to engage in the organisational learning process this improves their chances of developing their career paths in the corporate world. Internal motivation was attributed to be the desire for continuous learning with internal motivation appearing to be the most important factor in career development.

It emerged from the data analysis that the respondents appeared to experience job satisfaction, they felt comfortable with their careers and they believed that their careers in the communication organisation were progressing. In others words, the respondents found their jobs to be satisfying. This was attributed to interesting work, job security and the promotional opportunities which they were offered in the communication organisation.

The findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents were still young. It is, thus, likely that they possessed the zeal and courage required to develop their careers. It would appear that they believed that the communication sector offered them ample opportunities to advance towards their future career paths.

Despite the fact that the respondents indicated widespread experience of sexual harassment and gender discrimination, they nevertheless chose to cite factors such as internal motivation, continuous learning, and personal life factors as the most critical factors that determined their career advancement in the corporate world.

CHAPTER 6

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (NIGERIA)

6.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the interviews which were conducted with women managers. Three senior Nigerian women managers with more than 10 years' experience apiece were interviewed. The analysis of the interviews indicated three broad themes, namely, career choice, continuous learning and job satisfaction. For the purposes of this study, career choice may be described as the factors that influence the career choices of women managers in the communication organisation for which they work. These factors include both social and structural factors. Continuous learning refers to on-the-job training for women by means of organisational training programmes, in particular, in professional courses related to their jobs. On the other hand, job satisfaction in the context of this study refers to the satisfaction which the women managers derived from their career development paths and which enabled them to feel comfortable in their progression up the corporate ladder. The data gathered from the interviews conducted with the three women managers in Nigeria are thematically discussed below. The qualitative data analysis programme, ATLAS.ti, was used to code, analyse and organise the data into relevant themes.

Table 6.1:   Themes that emerged from the analysis of the data (Nigeria)

Themes	Findings
Career choice	Women connecting in the workplace Career plans Organisational opportunities
Continuous learning	Internal training External studies
Job satisfaction	Organisational policy Remuneration Promotion Work environment

6.2   The Interviewees

In order to contextualize the interviews which were conducted with the participants, a brief background to each woman is presented below in order to enable a better understanding of their views and career progress.

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6.2.1 Bola

Bola is a married woman with three children – two boys and a girl. Her husband is a businessman. Bola was eager to talk for almost two hours despite the fact that the interview had been scheduled to last for just an hour. Bola was very ready to share her career experiences because she was extremely relaxed while she also felt that this was an opportunity for her to talk about her work in a communications organisation. She was also prepared to listen and eager to respond to the questions posed. When her telephone rang during the discussions she ignored it and apologised for the interruption.

Bola's first work experience was as a graduate trainee with a leading commercial bank in Nigeria in 1998. She worked in various departments including operations, marketing and customer care. Bola mentioned that she liked working in a corporate environment. Since completing her degree in 1997 she has worked for a number of private sector organisations. She believes in pursuing a career and exploring any opportunity that comes her way. This was, in fact, what had prompted her to join the mobile telecommunications company MTN in Nigeria in 2003. In addition, she also believes that the telecommunications industry offers job security. Since her appointment she has developed an intense interest in her job and works as a senior manager in the company.

6.2.2 Sandra

Sandra is a mother of two and is married to a civil servant who is a director in the Federal Civil Service. She appears to have a good relationship with the women in her workplace as she answered several telephone calls relating to enquiries from female colleagues during the interviews. As a senior marketing manager and head of department her advice and guidance was widely sought and appreciated. During the interviews Sandra was reticent in her responses to certain questions about her and she also requested that her personal information should not be made public. However, it was explained that the personal information was for research purposes only. Sandra then relaxed and answered all the questions posed.

Sandra started her career as a graduate trainee with a shipping company in 2001. She then joined the mobile telecommunications industry shortly afterwards in July 2001 because she saw greater potential and further opportunities to develop her career in the new global system mobile communications organisation as compared to the shipping company. She believes in the value of hard work in order to achieve her goal in life and appears to be extremely

committed to her job. She has faced personal challenges in building her career in the corporate world and has had to raise her children alone because her husband is a Federal Civil Service worker and is employed in another region. However, despite these challenges she has forged ahead to focus on and pursue her career. Her husband encouraged and supported her career development. Sandra appears to have strong people skills and a thorough understanding of the telecommunications industry, especially the way in which decisions are made in the industry. She has occupied various positions, including marketing supervisor, promo classic manager and product executive manager. At the time of the study she held a senior management position at MTN's regional offices in Nigeria.

6.2.3   Aisha

Aisha is married to a medical doctor and she has two daughters. Her numerous questions about the purpose of the study and the fundamental concept of lifelong learning indicated that she possessed some degree of knowledge about the value of education in career development.

She started her career in 2001 in the digital satellite company, Multi Choice, where she worked for a year as a trainee before being permanently employed. Aisha regards pursuing a career in the corporate environment as a priority and she believes that, in order to do this, it is essential that she study further as she places great value on additional qualifications. This, in turn, prompted her to enroll for a postgraduate degree programme in information management. After three years with Multi Choice, Aisha joined the mobile telecommunications organisation. She finds the communication industry both challenging and fulfilling. Aisha is a committed person who is challenged by having to juggle the demands of family life and a career in the corporate world. She believes that the communications industry has given gave her the opportunity to make long-term career plans because it is a new and developing industry in Nigeria. At the time of the interview she had already worked in various departments as a supervisor and a manager and was a senior manager in the Human Resources Department.

6.3   Theme 1: Career choices of the participants

The discussion of the first theme, namely, the career choices of women in the corporate world, focuses on the following sub-themes: how women connect with people in the workplace; the career plans of the women; and organisational opportunities.

During the interviews conducted with Bola, Sandra and Aisha, the three participants shared their experiences in the telecommunication industry. Bola had chosen to enter the industry because she wanted to work in an industry that offered opportunities for career development and in which there was job security. She believes that a career in a corporate organisation provides the necessary motivation to achieve success in life and indicated that she had realised her dream by working for a mobile telecommunications company. She stated: "*I have worked with different organisations but I was not enjoying the work over there and that is why I decided to work in a mobile telecommunication organisation.*"

According to Sandra, a lack of employment opportunities had prompted her to choose a career in a communications organisation. The opportunities in the industry to which she referred were related to career development and jobs for women.

While Sandra had chosen the mobile telecommunications industry because of the extensive job opportunities the industry offered to enable her to further her career, Aisha had chosen to work in that sector because she regarded it as a favourable environment in which to develop her career. Aisha maintained: "*I have flair for telecommunication and, when the opportunity came, I had to leave my former work and join the sector.*" Aisha believes that her career choice to move to the greener pastures of the telecommunications industry will assist her success and career development. Since university Aisha had had the ambition to join a mobile telecommunications organisation. She maintained that, unlike other sectors, such as banking and manufacturing, telecommunications is relatively new in the corporate world and that it would be possible for her to be promoted more rapidly to a senior executive position than would have been the case in other industries. She stated: "*My career has been tremendous in terms of career progress here in the mobile telecommunication.*"

In their responses the three participants shared a common view that their choice of a career in the communications sector had been prompted by the extensive opportunities for career development, future success in the industry and job security. For example, Bola stated: "*I like the communication organisation because it offers career opportunities for women at any time.* Sandra added: "*I have chosen the right job at the appropriate time and I have also chosen to work with an organisation where I felt that my career will continue to grow.*"

Sandra expressed the opinion that, in view of the fact that the mobile telecommunications organisation in question was a new company, the opportunities for long-term employment

and career advancement were better than in other companies and that she wanted to build a career in such a company. She had decided to change jobs when a viable mobile communications organisation with a good reputation had offered her a better salary, while she had also seen the potential for career development. She said: "*I could build my career in the telecommunication industries because I knew that other telecommunication operators were going to come into the market.*" She emphasised: ''*I am, indeed, enjoying my job*''; and concluded: "*It wasn't that I didn't apply to other companies, but none of them came through.* Bola was of the opinion that the telecommunications sector would boost the Nigerian job market and, thereby, create job opportunities for women. Aisha confirmed this view by saying: "*I have chosen the right job at the appropriate time and I have also chosen to work with an organisation where I feel that my career will continue to develop.*"

The interviews with the participants suggested that the communication industry provides a favourable working environment that supports the career development of women and also that the industry offer better opportunities for women to reach a managerial level as compared to other industries. Company policy encourages women to aspire to high levels in their career development as it makes provision for them to be mentored and to network with others, both within and outside of the company. In other words, the communication organisation's open policy enables women to explore opportunities that assist them to develop and grow in the corporate world. The participants all believed that they had made the right career choices when they had decided to work in the telecommunication industry.

6.3.1   Women connecting in the workplace

Despite the opportunities available in the telecommunication sector, the participants all believed that their friends already in the communication organisation had played a key role in their choice of career. Aisha reported that she had been struggling to join the mobile company until her friend had told her that there were vacancies at MTN. She had applied and been given the job. Aisha stated that joining the industry had been a dream comes true for her.

Bola and Sandra agreed that their female colleagues had influenced them in their choosing to work in the telecommunication industry. Bola enthusiastically said: "*Some of my colleagues at mobile telecommunication assisted me to join the industry*." She confirmed that she had chosen the telecommunication sector because her friends who worked in the sector had portrayed the industry as one with opportunities for the career development of women.

Sandra related how, after she had joined the communication industry, she had used a coach to train her in terms of career development – an idea suggested to her by her friends in the company. The coach she had hired had taught her certain organisational techniques to grow her career as well as how to define and achieve her goals within a corporate setting. In addition, her coach had assisted her to separate the probabilities of her aspirations from the possibilities of achievement; how to break through invisible sub-conscious barriers within the organisation in order to move up the ladder of success; and to be self-conscious. Although the coaching had enabled her to accelerate her progress by eliminating potential mistakes, some of her friends who had also used a coach had taught her organisational skills such as job competency.

All the participants, who were senior managers, expressed the view that development in the corporate environment is possible when a preferred career is chosen. However, the choice of this career should not be accidental, but rather a purposeful decision aimed at realising career objectives.

In support of the viability of the future success of women managers in telecommunication organisations, Shakoor (2002:4) describes networking as a system characterised by inter-relationships for the purpose of providing assistance to individuals in the corporate environment. According to the participants, women in the corporate world do support each other in terms of networking for the purposes of career advancement.

6.3.2 The career plan of the respondents

The senior managers all maintained that they had career plans when they had joined the mobile telecommunication organisation. Aisha spoke at length about her career plan and reported that she aspired to become a top executive, such as a general manager in marketing, in order to be part of the management team. She was, however, aware that achieving such a high position would demand much hard work in the communication organisation. Sandra reported that she had had major career plans when she had joined the communication sector. For example, she said: *"My plan was to become a regional manager in the sales department."* It emerged that she aspired to be a member of the decision-making management team in the future as she was interested in using the managerial ability which she had acquired on the job over the years. In terms of leadership skills, Sandra believes that sharing her experience with other women who aspire to advance their careers is a way of supporting

their growth in the corporate environment. Bola had decided to work in the telecommunication industry because she wanted to become a chief information officer in the industry.

The participants clearly all had career plans and objectives as regards advancing to the top management echelon in the telecommunication organisation. They agreed that it was possible to achieve such career goals in the communication industry as there were ample opportunities in the industry as well as a great deal of organisational support for women in their career growth.

Sheryl Sandberg (2013) identifies different facets regarding the way in which women may reach senior management levels. Firstly, there is collective self-awareness which is usually associated with the view that there should be no stepping back and neither should be any lack of self-confidence in the quest for top management positions in the corporate setting. Secondly, women should push forward and break through invisible, sub-conscious barriers in order to move up the ladder. Sandberg's work supports the views of the participants who believed in aspiring to greater heights in their careers in the corporate world, maintaining that career growth is important and may be achieved through their own efforts and hard work.

6.3.3   Organisational opportunities

The participants emphasised the opportunities to achieve their career plans in the corporate world and which were offered by the communication organisation. Sandra said: *"My career achievements as a senior manager in the communication industry were based on the opportunities I had to hire a coach who tutored me on my career path."* Bola reported that that both her immediate boss and a friend who also was a senior manager in one of the leading telecommunication companies in Nigeria and who once used a coach had assisted her by introducing her to a coach who had focused on her career development. It would appear that using a coach outside of the organisation was an aspect of the participants' personal networking and also a way in which the women discovered opportunities to develop their careers in the corporate environment. Bola had hired a coach because she had needed someone to guide her on her career path. She admitted that her career progress in the communication organisation had been rapid because the company culture supported the career development of women.

The participants believed that the organisational environment had an influence on their career development; explaining how opportunities, such as flexibility in the organisational policy, enabled them to move across departments and sections and to diversify in order to explore unknown areas. For example, Sandra had been given the opportunity to become a senior manager in marketing as opposed to her initial plans to be a sales manager.

As business expands in Nigeria Sandra is of the opinion that there will be opportunities to shift careers within the company, maintaining that the realities in the communication organisation will dictate the type of move that may best suit her career growth. She had noticed that the mobile telecommunication network does not promote people merely because they have been in a particular position for years and that promotion is not automatic. Initially, she had worked in customer care but she had been ambitious and had wanted to find another job as a consultant in marketing. Sandra said: "*If any opening comes and it fits in with your profile, then you apply; after applying, if you are shortlisted, then there is a need to write a test and, after writing a test, you will need to go for an interview; at times you need to go for two sets of interview or three sets of interview before one can be finally promoted.*" She reported that several people often applied for the same position and the whole process was not easy. She also maintained that, at times, opportunities may present themselves but that one may not see them. For example, in 2002, the mobile telecommunication network had been about to expand its business functions, but she had not been aware of it because she was busy with her master's degree. However, as a result of the company's flexible policy that encourages women to develop their careers, she had been able to explore available opportunities to shift and build her career in the area of marketing in which she had developed an interest.

Certain opportunities in the communication organisation allow for career rotation and job flexibility in terms of which women are able to change their career plans and benefit by moving into other areas in which they believe they may build their careers. King (2004) confirms that organisations develop a culture, structure and practice to support employees in realising their various career plans. Bola related how she had changed her career plans in the telecommunication organisation. Her initial plan had been to become a senior manager in marketing but, when an opportunity had opened up in the sales department, she had decided to explore it. She had believed that it was in her own interests to move from her former department because she had spent nine years there and, thus, she moved intentionally to sales

because she had developed an interest in sales as regards furthering her career. She said: "*I have no regrets about this option because my career development in the company is not affected at all.*"

Aisha, too, had changed her career path as opportunities arose. She said: "My initial plan was to become a general manager, but I discovered that there were opportunities in the Human Resources Department; I decided to explore such opportunities and now I am a senior manager in the Human Resources Department.'' Her decision to move to Human Resources had been prompted by the fact that she had an MBA with a specialisation in human resource management. She felt that the opportunity she had had to make a change in her career had been because of the organisation's job flexibility policy which supports women in their career development.

All the participants appear to have changed their career plans in the communication industry as opportunities presented themselves in the corporate world. They described how their desire to work in the telecommunication sector had enabled them discover opportunities in the mobile industry; to advance their careers to a managerial level; and to take advantage of the job security offered by the new company.

6.4   Theme 2: Continuous learning on the part of women

The following two issues are discussed under theme 2, namely, how internal training within the communication organisation influences the career progress of women and how external studies assist women in their career development in the corporate world.

According to the participants they had all acquired skills on the job. As they spoke about their career development experiences they cited the additional qualifications they had acquired on the job as well as other professional training courses they had attended – all of which had helped their career progress.

6.4.1   Internal training

Sandra, Bola and Aisha all emphasised the importance of on-the-job learning as a factor which had influenced their career development within the corporate environment. They maintained that they had learnt a great deal on the job and which had contributed to their successful careers in the mobile telecommunication industry. Bola stated: "*I have been fortunate in the communication organisation to learn new ideas on the job through the*

training I have attended so far since I joined the company." According to Bola, the training courses she had attended throughout her career in the mobile organisation had contributed to her career success in the corporate world. She added that she used the experience gained on the job as a result of training to train her subordinates as regards their job performance and routine. She explained that part of her job description and responsibilities as a manager in the company was to guide subordinates to understand their job specifications in respect of carrying out their tasks and roles.

Bola maintained that her career development in the organisation was based on what she had learnt on-the-job through the organisational training that she had experienced since joining the mobile company. Initially, her job had been to handle issues related to customer care services and this, in turn, had given the opportunity to deal with people from diverse cultures in a corporate settings. The continuous activities in which she had been involved during the first three years of her career had provided her with opportunities to learn on the job in the corporate world.

Sandra considered on-the-job learning as an integral component of what had improved her knowledge of the work: "*I have gained knowledge through the opportunities I had to learn on the job since I joined the mobile organisation.*" She related how she had developed over the previous ten years in terms of job experience and through training opportunities which had assisted her to acquire a variety of skills, including prioritising issues that were urgent before attending to issues that were not urgent; time management where she had learnt how to prioritise at an appropriate time; and taking on the leadership role in terms presiding over meetings and making decisions. She added that her training on the job had assisted her because some of the roles she assumed assisted her to understand the nature of her job while the opportunities offered within the company had contributed to her self-development. For example, she spoke about how she had been nominated by her manager to attend a leadership training programme after which an opportunity for promotion in the company had occurred. She had applied for the position and, following a set of successful interviews, she had been promoted to a managerial position. As a result she is convinced that learning on the job has been extremely supportive and useful in her career progress in the corporate world.

According to Aisha, "[her] *career progress was achieve through the knowledge [she] acquired on the job.*" She maintained that her experiences on the job in terms of continuous learning in terms of professional courses and training sessions had added value to her career

development in the mobile organisation. For example, project management training had enabled her to learn about team building while business analysis training had developed her skills in rationalising and being innovative on the job. The continuous opportunities she had had to attend training courses had clearly broadened her knowledge as regards the leadership roles she assumed on the job, including co-ordinating the duties of subordinates and directing them in performing their tasks. For Aisha the training courses she had attended on the job had widened her experience and contributed to her career development in the corporate world. They had assisted her to understand the nature of her job in terms of assuming supervisory roles and making decisions as the head of a section. She referred to how, after six years with the mobile industry and in view of her performance on the job, she had been nominated by her manager to attend a three month leadership training course after which she had been promoted to a senior position. This had been made possible by the opportunities that were available for women in the company to develop in their careers. Aisha believes that the knowledge she gained during the leadership development training course assisted her in her role as a manager to carry out her functions, including delegating responsibilities to others.

Bola also considered her career development in the corporate world to have been made possible by of the opportunities she had had to learn on the job. She said: "*I have gone through learning on the job and that continues to sustain me on the job up till now.*" Bola believes that, since joining the mobile company, she has acquired extensive experience on the job with organisational learning opportunities in terms of attending job-related training courses, such as project and time management courses, broadening her understanding of the work. These training opportunities have enabled her to learn how to deal with organisationally sensitive issues, such as disputes between subordinates and that require urgent attention. According to Bola, her experiences in banking, where she had worked as a graduate trainee in various departments, including marketing, customer care and operations, had prepared her for her job in the telecommunication organisation and had helped her to fit into the corporate setting while, at the same time, assisting her to grow in her career in the organisation as her former work experiences had motivated and encouraged her to continue to build her career in the corporate world.

Sandra suggested that in communication organisations learning on the job assists in the career development of women. She believed that the opportunities provided by the company to attend training programmes have improved her competency in, and understanding of, her job

and this, in turn, has resulted in career success. According to Sandra, the organisational behaviour training programme had taught her to relate professionally to both her co-workers and other colleagues in the corporate setting in terms of her formal interactions with other workers. As a result of her on-the-job training she was committed to working diligently and this, in turn, had assisted her in her career path in the corporate world. She confirmed this by saying: "*I have developed in my career through organisational training such as on the job competency training.*" Leadership training programmes had taught her how to lead subordinates and how to motivate them in their tasks while, in her project management, training she had learnt how to plan, control and be self-analytical in terms of interpreting and explaining information to co-workers and subordinates.

Aisha maintained that her job had taught her how to manage the employees under her supervision in the organisation and that this was part of what she had learnt on the job and which had assisted her career development. According to Aisha, the leadership innovation and strategic management training programmes which are intended for senior supervisors and managers and which she had attended three years previously, had exposed her to certain organisational intricacies as regards dealing with internal organisational issues involving staff management, including staff rationalisation and how to play a leadership role effectively as regards creating a good impression and instilling confidence in workers to enable them to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently. Thus, this training had offered her the opportunity to learn how to lead successfully as a senior manager. She added: "*I have learnt on the job in terms of decision-making, competency and staff management.*" Aisha believes that attending continuous training courses represents a way in which to understand the job; to develop oneself through the acquisition of skills; to acquire knowledge about people from different cultural backgrounds in the company; and to perform effectively tasks by the appropriate use of the human resources of the company.

The participants spoke about the company's organisational learning culture in terms of which the company provided on the job training for its employees so that they were more adept at performing their work. The company's policy stipulates that every employee must undergo trainings at least three times a year in addition to departmental and sectional training, such as the competency evaluation training which happens each month. Training at all levels within the company is part of the company's structure and it is considered to be a way in which to improve staff skills, such as the analytical thinking in terms of which problems to be resolved

within the company are broken down into smaller parts. The participants believed that they had learnt a great deal through the company's learning programme. They had all participated in various training programmes and had attended different professionally mediated courses which had, invariably, improved their skills on the job and contributed to their career development.

According to Bola, Sandra and Aisha, some training was compulsory, such as leadership training for staff members who occupy senior supervisor; senior manager and higher posts. They are convinced that leadership training has assisted them to understand supervisory and managerial functions; project management training has helped them in their role as manager to understand the planning and scheduling of events process; time management courses have shown them how to prioritise issues that require urgent attention within the company while competency training has rendered their performance on the job more effective and efficient than would otherwise have been the case.

In speaking about her career experiences Sandra said that she had become a manager three years after she had started work in the telecommunication industry and, since then, she had attended many different training courses related to her job. She said: "*I discovered when I joined MTN some years back and found out that training is necessary for all employees and I realised that it is a culture and a policy in the company for all staff to participate in training programmes.*" According to Sandra, the leadership programme was an extremely effective training course which had exposed her to possible leadership challenges, such as taking decisive decisions in critical situations. In addition, she had also learned how to equip herself to co-ordinate and plan within the company. She felt that all the training opportunities she had had in the mobile company had been extremely useful in terms of her career development. She firmly believes that the company policy is effective because it encourages women to progress in their career while the company culture embraces the career dreams of workers, irrespective of their positions.

According to Bola, the mobile company offers training programmes and professional courses for women as part of its culture. She has had several opportunities to participate in professional training. Customer centric training was one of the first courses she had attended when she joined the mobile company and had taught her to deal with customer-related issues and customer relations as well as how to address and resolve contentious issues. She felt that the training she had received a long time previously continued to assist her in her role as a

manager when dealing with subordinates. Bola described the training she received in the mobile company as follows:

> *Mobile telecommunication trains its staff regularly to be competent on the job; for instance, in my own case I have attended so many training courses. Some of the training I have attended are: Time management, customer service series, basic selling skills, writing and communication skills, speech and sound training, and aspire leadership. All the training adds value to my career development in the communication organisation.*

According to Bola, the writing and communication skills training programme was an extremely good programme and it had greatly interested her because it had helped her to understand her function of writing reports on a monthly basis; to develop good writing skills; and how to interact with, and relate to, subordinates, colleagues and top managers in the workplace. She had also been fortunate to attend a short NIIT certification training course on information technology four years previously and which had broadened her on-the-job skills and helped her both to continue to demonstrate her ability to work well with others in the company and to show a high degree of self-awareness and a capacity to understand the feelings of co-workers and subordinates. Bola has attended more than forty training courses since she joined the telecommunication organisation. She agreed with Sandra that the company learning culture had assisted her career development and that all the training which she had undergone had been extremely useful in terms of her job.

Aisha cited quality training programmes that the company had offered her, such as the e-reporting course which she had attended four years previously and which had been how to write and send reports electronically. She had been nominated for the course because of her position a senior supervisor in the Human Resources Department. The new report writing skills she had acquired had enabled her to send memos electronically to her subordinates and co-workers. Other training opportunities, such as project management, had taught her about scheduling techniques in the organisation and how to organise and plan events related to her functions as a manager, at an appropriate time and when necessary. Aisha considered that "*the training and courses [she] participated in as part of what assisted [her] understanding of the job.*" The views of the participants suggest that women in the corporate world have access to on-site training in those companies which support women in developing their careers.

Aisha emphasised company policy on organisational learning, specifically where such policy supports the notion of mentoring. She believes that a mentorship had assisted her in her career development in the telecommunication organisation as the mentorship process had helped her to understood how to build her career and how to achieve her career goals in the corporate world. In addition, there had also been opportunities to learn from colleagues within the company while subordinates were encouraged to shadow senior officers as part of the mentoring process. Aisha had been mentored by senior officers in the company from the time she had started her career in the industry and, as a mentee, she had been able to follow the career paths of her senior colleagues in terms of the way in which they succeeded in their careers because of organisational support and their own self-support. She was of the opinion that the mentoring and training she had received had assisted her to move up the corporate ladder in the mobile organisation. In support of what Aisha had said, Triple Creek Associate (2004) perceives mentoring on the job in relation to the career development of women as a personal enhancement strategy that facilitates the career progress of women through the sharing of values, resources, perspectives, attitudes, expertise, skills and proficiencies.

The participants appeared to regard training as a key factor in the building of their careers in the corporate world. For them training had helped to create opportunities for career development as well as assisting in their promotion to senior managerial positions. In support of the participants' views, Ruth (2004 et al) argues that on-the-job training for employees in an organisation and for women, in particular, is good because it enhances their skills and increases their knowledge about their jobs. Ruth (2004) maintains that any form of training assists women in their career development. Similarly, Tom (2007 et al) suggests that constant access to training programmes provides women with better opportunities to learn in a practical way than would otherwise have been the case and that this, in turn, improves their competency and invariably assists them to develop their careers in the corporate world.

Maurer and Weiss (2010) argue that learning on the job creates an opportunity for women to continuously acquire new skills and also to improve existing skills and that, as such, it has become an essential vehicle for career success within the corporate setting. They believe that the skills and experiences that women managers acquire on the job result in enhanced career development opportunities for them in the corporate world. Their argument supports the views of the participants who were of the opinion that they had acquired the majority of their skills through the opportunities they had had to attend professional training courses on the

job. According to the participants, they had been able to make use of their long term experiences on the job to gain knowledge and to understand their roles in the mobile industry. Some of the knowledge and skills referred to by the participants were related to management functions such as team leading and co-ordinating subordinates in their duties. They had clearly all continuously engaged in opportunities that had enabled them to develop their career paths.

Hansen (2007) maintains that the continuous learning of women in corporate settings in relation to their careers will definitely assist them to develop their career pathways within an organisation. In support of the views expressed by Bola, Sandra and Aisha, Hansen (2007) suggests that there is a need for women to attend professional training courses which are relevant to their jobs in order to acquire a better understanding of the job and to enable them to succeed in their careers.

6.4.2   External studies

The participants all considered additional post-graduate qualifications to be an advantage in their career development in the mobile telecommunication organisation for which they worked. When she had joined the mobile company Sandra had enrolled for a post-graduate degree in business administration and this, in turn, had prompted her to pursue a master's degree which she felt it would be useful in the future: *"My post graduate qualification is an advantage for me when I was about to be promoted to the position of a senior manager."* Sandra firmly believes that additional qualifications are useful for moving up the corporate ladder in Nigeria as she had found, when she had joined the communication company, that opportunities to rise to the top were dependent on relevant additional qualifications for the job and, thus, such qualifications were an added advantage for a woman who aimed to progress in her career in the corporate world. She added that it was not official company policy that one had to have an additional qualification in order to be promoted but that her master's degree had assisted her on her career path. When she had received her degree an internal vacancy had occurred. This vacant position had required a master's degree in business administration with a few years' work experience and, based on the opportunities available for women in the organisation to move in terms of job rotation, she had been able to benefit from this policy of open recruitment. She had been promoted to a senior position because of her relevant master's degree in the area of marketing and also because of her

experience which had made her upward mobility possible. Sandra described how her MBA had added value to her career development:

> *I must confess having obtaining my MBA, I had acquired knowledge through the degree programme. I learnt about practical issues concerning how to deal with organisational challenges, In fact, I learnt about how issues involving subordinates are to be dealt with in a critical situation. I realised the value of my post-graduate qualification as an advantage for me to learn more about the practical issues involved in the job. I am happy that the additional qualification assisted my career development in the telecommunication organisation.*

Sandra's post-graduate degree had included a course in organisational behaviour and in terms of which she had entered an internship programme in order to experience practical, real world situations; to control people and to interact with them in the workplace. The practical experience involved in her Master of Business Administration degree programme had taught her about organisational practicability as regards dealing with sensitive issues within a corporate setting; her role as a manager in terms of making unbiased decisions within the company but, at the same time, being an objective leader; and perform her functional roles diligently and without any form of favouritism in the workplace. For Sandra, the value of her post-graduate studies had helped her in deliberating on organisational issues involving subordinates and other colleagues.

Bola has two post-graduate qualifications – a master's degree in Information Technology as well as a master's degree in Business Administration. Her first master's degree had proved to be extremely useful in the mobile organisation when she had joined the company as her additional qualifications had helped to place her on a higher level than those employees who did not have either experience or a post-graduate qualification. When she had joined the industry she was had been placed in a supervisory position which was higher than the usual entry point level and she had learnt how to perform a supervisory role and supervisory functions, including acting as team leader in co-ordinating subordinate workers. This had been possible because she had had a post-graduate qualification which had served as an advantage.

Bola also spoke about how her master's degree in Computer Science had assisted her in learning about information technology and communication-related issues. The skills she had

acquired on the course guided her in handling technical issues while the course had also provided her with the proficiency and expertise required to carry out specific tasks in terms of interpersonal communication with other colleagues within the company as well as helping her to further develop her skills over time through her experience on the job. Bola added that she had decided to enrol for a further post-graduate qualification in Business Administration as there was an opportunity in the company to move to the sales department and such a qualification would be useful in this area in which she had developed an interest. She was of the opinion that her move to sales would be an upward move made possible by the company's open policy and her relevant qualification for the position. The position included the type of business analysis which had contributed to her innovative approach as a manager in the company. Thus, it would appear that additional formal educational qualifications had played a significant role in the careers of the participants because such qualifications had opened up opportunities for career development in the corporate world. Bola said:

> *My additional MBA degree with my other master's degree in Computer Science gave me an edge at MTN. I have gained knowledge through my post-graduate qualifications. In fact, my upward mobility to the present position I occupy now was as a result of my MBA. I must confess that my additional qualifications served as added advantage for me on my career path in the communication industry.*

She reported that the decision to pursue an additional degree had been a personal decision she had taken immediately she had joined the mobile company as she had believed that an additional qualification would be useful for her future career development in the communication industry. Bola believes that the knowledge she had gained through her formal education had broadened her understanding of the job and created opportunities for her to pursue her career in the corporate world.

Over the years she had learnt through her job and had become proficient in the roles she was expected to perform and this, in turn, had created further opportunities for career development. Bola explained that the mobile organisation valued additional qualifications which employees had at the time at which they were employed as well as any additional qualifications which they obtained when already employed by the organisation, especially if they wished to pursue their career in other fields of specialisation. However, she also stated

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that, although the organisation valued additional degrees, such degrees were not a criterion for obtaining employment with the company but merely an added advantage.

It would appear from the participants' responses that they were given on-the-job opportunities to progress in their careers in the mobile company because of their post-graduate qualifications. It is, indeed, apparent that an additional formal educational qualification is useful for the women pursuing their careers in the corporate world as the knowledge gained during their courses of study assists them on the job to understand organisational technicalities and to deal with issues within the company, such as managing people. Thus, it is clear that formal learning on the job is advantageous for employees because it teaches them about organisational related issues and they are able to make use of the knowledge acquired through their formal education to understand the nature of the job and to explore other opportunities in the company. Therefore, formal learning may influence the career development of women in the corporate world.

6.5 Theme 3: Job satisfaction on the part of the respondents

The focus of this theme is the satisfaction that the participants derived from the communication organisation for which they worked, how organisational policy supports and encourages women in their careers; how remuneration and promotion opportunities give them a feeling of satisfaction on the job and the influence of the work environment in determining job satisfaction.

The participants all confirmed that they were comfortable with their jobs in the communication organisation. Their satisfaction with the nature of their jobs is discussed under this theme with specific reference to issues concerned with how they found happiness in their careers.

6.5.1 Organisational policy

According to Bola, Sandra and Aisha they have all enjoyed company benefits since they joined the mobile organisation. Bola said: "*I like the company because my immediate family enjoys the company's medical benefits.*" She elaborated by explaining that the mobile company provided a medical scheme that covered her, her husband and her children with all her family members being entitled to free medical treatment every quarter of the year. Permanent staff member benefits are subsidised by the company while staff members enjoy

the other inclusive fringe benefits which the company offers its staff, such as the extra incentives and bonuses in terms of excess workload allowances which were part of Bola's total monthly remuneration package. These incentives and bonuses both encourage and motivate Bola. Bola was also impressed by the company's study leave benefits which have been part of its policy since she joined the mobile industry and which allow workers to travel abroad for short three month training courses. She had apparently benefited from an offshore training opportunity in the company when she had travelled to the Netherlands four years previously to attend a short course in management training at the Maastricht School of Management. In order to qualify for such training, an employee must be in a managerial position and the company nominates at least five managers across departments to attend such training overseas on an annual basis.

Other benefits that Bola cited included the regional movement of staff from one location to another and career moves between departments. She had evidently benefited from these opportunities when she had been able to move within the company in order to pursue her career in another department in which she felt that she could build her career. According to Bola, she had moved from customer care to sales because she was bored with and tired of working in customer care services and she had wanted to work creatively; to find the best in herself; and to explore her potential. She appeared to experience job satisfaction because she believed that the company had provided for her as a staff member of the company in terms of its open policies and its support for the career development of the workers. Sandra and Aisha also reported that they enjoyed the excellent medical benefits that the mobile company offered to them and their families. The company clearly believes that staff welfare is important and, thus, the company strives to meet the needs of its staff members in order to make them comfortable and, at the same time, to ensure their job satisfaction.

Sandra enjoyed the benefits of her job in the communication organisation. She believed that company policy supports staff development in terms of access to training opportunities and considers this to be a huge benefit. The training courses she has been able to attend have helped to make her job interesting while also assisting her to develop on the job; to explore other possible positions within the company and to take her career further. Sandra also reported that the medical benefits offered by the company covered her family's medical expenses. She was of the opinion that the company looks after the staff's welfare in terms of

organisational benefits which motivate staff members, increase their commitment to their jobs and assist them to pursue their careers in the corporate world.

6.5.2 Remuneration

Bola, Sandra and Aisha discussed the remuneration they received from the company, maintaining that, with the inclusion of their allowances, their remuneration was more than satisfactory. In addition, their salaries would increase as they were promoted to more senior positions in the company.

Aisha felt that her total annual income was extremely good, stating that: "I *am, indeed, very satisfied with my salary in the communication organisation.*" The total salary package includes allowances factors such as excess workload while, at times she also benefited from extra bonuses and incentives, such as the outstation allowances which cover transportation and accommodation. She cited the example of the time she had organised a recruitment drive at a regional office of the company for new employees to be absorbed into the company. Her expenses for the week, including her flight ticket and accommodation, had been paid for by the company as part of the company incentive benefits she received. According to Aisha, the company treats its staff extremely well in terms of the good salary packages which help to ensure job satisfaction.

Sandra and Bola also spoke about the benefits they enjoyed in the mobile organisation in terms of extra allowances and the salaries that the mobile company offered them. According to them, they also received extra allowance benefits which covered hazards on the job. It was clear that they appreciated the mobile organisation's policy of looking after the staff's welfare. Sandra said "*I am, indeed, very satisfied with my job in the communication organisation because I enjoy extra allowance benefits in the company.*" She was satisfied with her job because her salary was very satisfactory while salaries were paid promptly. In addition, in certain situations, staff members were entitled to ask for a salary advance. According to Sandra, it was not the amount she was paid, but the fact that she was always paid on time that made her happy. She said: "*My career satisfaction in the company is above average according to my own rating.*" She liked both her job and the company management style and there is no doubt that she was happy working for the communication organisation.

Bola had been offered an extremely good salary package by the mobile organisation. Since she had started her career with the company she had also benefited from the extra allowances,

such as an allowance for excess workload. In addition, the company offered her on the job incentives. The nature and routine of her job in the company required her to do fieldwork to promote company products by means of special events, such as product launches. These special events took up much of her time and often resulted in her working extra-long hours. However, she maintained that she has benefitted from the company allowances, particularly since she had become a sectional head in the sales department five years before. She was clearly comfortable and happy in her job as the company ensured that her job was interesting and provided extra allowances to cover on the job hazards. It appeared that the company was concerned about its staff's welfare because the company ensured that it offered extremely good incentive packages that covered extra duties and helped to motivate the staff.

6.5.3 Promotion

The participants were satisfied with the company policy on promotion. Bola expressed her satisfaction as follows: "*I have experienced upward mobility in my career since I joined the mobile organisation.*" According to Bola, the company's criteria for promotion were flexible and she had been promoted since joining the company. The company's policy on promoting staff is not biased as promotion is based on individual performance appraisals. The promotional criteria are clearly not rigid because virtually all staff members who are in line for promotion are promoted without any delay. Bola was of the opinion that her promotion had been rapid because of the opportunities she had identified in the company. She had been promoted in her previous department – Customer Care Services – when the company's business had expanded and the company required more workers. In terms of the expansion staff members who had joined the company at least two years prior to the expansion had been promoted and she had been fortunate to be promoted to a supervisory position in her department. After three years she had been promoted to the position of Senior Supervisor. She had, subsequently, decided to pursue her career in the Sales Department where an internal vacancy was advertised. She had been prompted to move to sales as she had wanted a greater challenge in terms of her career in the corporate world. She had applied for the position; attended a set of interviews and, based on positive result from these interviews, she had moved to a managerial position in the sales department. After three years as a sales manager she had had the opportunity to be promoted to the position of senior manager of a region. According to Bola, it had taken her nine years to reach her present position of senior regional sales manager. She explained that her promotion in the company had been rapid with

the exception of her promotion to her present position. This had taken four years because she had had to acquire further experience on the job before she could occupy for the position of a senior manager. Bola believed that her promotion within the mobile company was based on excellent performance. She mentioned some of the awards of excellence she had received in the company, including Best Sales Supervisor in 2006; Best Products Achiever in 2008; and Best Supporting Manager for Product Launches in 2010. In addition, she had represented the company at international business summits. She stated: "*I like my company and my company values me as well.*" She maintained that the company valued her contribution to the development of the organisation and she always makes sure that – through her own efforts – she is adept at her job. Bola is convinced that her proficiency skills, which she acquired on-the-job by means of training, assisted her to manage her subordinates effectively in order to realise the organisational goals. She concluded by stating that she appreciated the way her career was progressing and she was comfortable, happy and satisfied with her job.

Sandra also felt that her career development in the telecommunication organisation had been excellent because of rapid promotion. She said: "*I felt very satisfied with the promotional policy here in the communication organisation.*" She maintained that promotion within the company was not automatic but rather that it was on merit. In her opinion one did not need to have a godfather before being promoted to a senior managerial position. She explained the godfather concept and reported that there was no form of favouritism in terms of lobbying before an employee was promoted in the mobile company. According to Sandra, the company policy is not biased and does not allow for lobbying in order to be promoted to a higher position within the company. When a particular employee is due for promotion the employee is promoted immediately. Sandra explained that she had started her career in the mobile organisation in the Customer Care Services Department. She had had the opportunity to move from the front office to back office support because some members of staff had complained that they had spent several years on the front desk and they needed to move elsewhere within the same department. She maintained that she had found working at the front desk unsatisfactory as she needed new challenges. When she had been transferred with senior people this had given the opportunity to consciously build her career further. The move had been not a promotion but an internal transfer within the same department. However, although it had not been promotion she had accepted the move because she was determine to build her career and the move had offered her new learning challenges in a different environment and demanded different job skills. She explained that, after she had

spent five years in Customer Care, she had become bored. She wanted to work creatively and explore other opportunities in the company and did not like the regimentation of being in one position for too long. This, in turn, had prompted her to move to the Marketing Department to face new challenges and gain further work experience. She had found the Marketing Department challenging because she had had to work hard to succeed on her chosen career path and achieve her career goals. She had moved to the Marketing Department as a senior supervisor. As a result of her commitment to her job and her own efforts she became a manager within three years and two years later she was promoted to the position of senior manager in the Marketing Department. Sandra said that her promotions in the company had provided her with good experience because she had worked in various sections and this, in turn, had helped her career development in the corporate world.

Aisha was pleased with her promotion in the company: "*I have enjoyed being promoted to different positions within the mobile organisation.*" She maintained that her promotion had been "wonderful" since she had joined the company. She was happy and satisfied with her job because the company does not "joke" about promoting staff members but promotes people as and when promotion is due. The company policy of equal opportunity assists staff members to move up the corporate ladder, thus also enabling women to progress on their career paths. According to Aisha, certain departments within the organisation, such as Marketing, Public Relations, Customer Care Services and Sales, are dominated by women. However, women are not widely represented at the senior levels in these departments and most of them are at the lower and middle management levels. In other words, senior management in the company is still predominantly male orientated. Thus, despite the fact that the organisation supports women in the development of their careers, women are poorly represented at the top executive levels within the mobile organisation.

When Aisha had started her career in the mobile organisation she had experienced rapid promotion in her former department – Customer Care Services –, in which women made up at least seventy per cent of the workforce. When she had joined the company ten years previously the majority of the Customer Care supervisors were women while there were also women managers. In addition, the head of the department was a woman. After spending four years in the Customer Care Services Department, Aisha had wanted to face new challenges and that had prompted her to move to the Human Resources Department in order to explore opportunities that would enable her develop her career in terms of new experiences within the

company. Aisha revealed that she enjoyed her career in Human Resources where she occupies a senior position. She intended to pursue her career in that field, aspiring to higher levels in the future within the mobile organisation. She believed that, as a result of the company's policy which supports and encourages the career development of women, she had a good chance of reaching a top position in the company in the future.

The women participants all shared a common view about the company's promotional criteria which supports women in the development of their careers. All the participants had enjoyed promotional opportunities since they had joined the mobile organisation. As a result of their keen minds and their energy to meet new challenges, they were continuing to pursue their careers within the organisation. They all believed that there are still further opportunities in the company for them and they all aspired to greater heights in their careers in the corporate world.

It is clear from their responses that the participants were secure in, and satisfied with, their work. They maintained that the company has a sound policy of promoting women within the company. The views expressed by the participants are supported by Handel (2005) who argues that job satisfaction for women in the corporate world is the result of their being offered promotion opportunities, receiving adequate remuneration, sound employee relations, the freedom to work independently, positive co-worker relations and job security. The job satisfaction experienced by the women in the communication organisation is strongly associated with interesting work and a positive management style.

6.5.4   Work environment

Bola, Sandra and Aisha reported that the company working environment suited them. According to Sandra, she liked the working environment at MTN as there was a friendly atmosphere. She said: "*I am always happy working in such a lovely environment.*" She felt that the working environment in the communication organisation was both friendly and pleasant. In describing how she related to and interacted with her co-workers and subordinates she reported that she enjoyed the co-operation of her subordinates; there was good communication and everybody worked as a team She maintained that everyone appeared happy most of the time; there were good facilities in the company, such as separate lounges in which to entertain visitors; the company premises were always neat and tidy; there was free movement of staff members in the company; a safe parking garage for both staff and

visitors; and tight security in order to safeguard the property of customers, visitors and staff. Sandra explained that what made her particularly happy in the mobile company was that it is not like the civil service in terms of formality and cultural traditions regarding respect, such as calling people "aunty" or "uncle". She appreciated the fact that all staff members were accorded dignity and were called by their first names, maintaining that the workplace gave her a sense of dignity and equality. The MTN organisational culture does not permit any form of cultural tradition within the company. In addition, age is not used in order to gain respect on the job because the company operates a structure that classifies all staff members according to their job designations and, as a result, senior and junior relationships within the company are naturally formal. Sandra suggested that it was the South African influence from the past that had created this broader African flavoured culture within the company and removed the typical Nigerian tradition of calling people "aunty" and "uncle" within the workplace. She derived intense satisfaction from her work because the company provided good job facilities, such as a large spacious office for her, she had a secretary and a personal assistant; computers for office use, coffee was always available and there was a restaurant.

Aisha spoke about her experiences in relation to the working conditions in the company. She reported that the company provided her with every modern facility she required to do her work competently and her office was well-equipped. She stated: "*I am, indeed, happy about these facilities because it encourages me to work efficiently.*" She continued by saying that she was extremely happy with the work atmosphere in the telecommunication organisation because there was no hostility among the staff members. It appeared that everyone, including Aisha, felt happy every day; there was no discrimination among the staff while women were not excluded from decision-making as there is a woman in a top management position and the company secretary to the board of directors of the company is a woman. Thus, women are represented at the highest levels with one woman as a member of the company's board of directors, a few women in managerial positions and others holding senior positions in the Sales, Customers Care and Marketing Departments. Aisha was happy working for the mobile organisation because the company ensures that all employees are treated equally, irrespective on their gender and they all enjoy opportunities such as participating in training, attending management meetings and representing the company at international events. She mentioned that there is high level of discipline among staff members; sound moral behaviour; everyone is adept at their work; there is no interference from third parties and there is no gossip about

workers with everyone respecting each other. She confirmed this in the following quotation: "*I am, indeed, enjoying my job in such a friendly working environment.*"

Although Aisha enjoyed all the benefits available in the mobile organisation, including access to training, good pay and promotional opportunities, she was still relatively dissatisfied with the representation of women at management level within the company. She maintained that, despite all the opportunities provided by the company, women continued to lag behind in terms of the top executive positions in the industry. According to Aisha, the workforce was still male dominated with men occupying most of the senior positions, such as Managing Director, Financial Director, Human Resources Director, Marketing Director, Sales Director and Technical Director. She had climbed the career ladder as a result of the opportunities provided by the company's open recruitment policy and she had explored such opportunities in building her career in corporate world. She was convinced that she would be able to achieve her goal of a senior position because of her formal education in terms of a post-graduate qualification; her commitment, her potential; and her determination to strive for career success in her professional job.

Bola liked the working atmosphere within the company because the company provided extremely good working facilities in terms of computers in her personal office, including a laptop and access to the internet; spacious office space, her own personal parking area; a receptionist; a driver; a personal assistant and a secretary. According to Bola, these facilities enabled her to work efficiently as everything she required was available to make her job easier. She had, apparently, never felt unhappy on the job – even when she had started her career and she had not had access to the facilities that she now enjoyed. However, she had had access to other facilities in customer care services and which had helped to make her job interesting. As she had moved to more senior positions she had started to enjoy better facilities than previously. Bola appreciated the fact that the company provides access to opportunities, such as training, good medical benefits and rapid promotion. She believed that she had made the correct decision to work for a company that is concerned about the growth and welfare of its employees and this, in turn, had helped her as regards pursuing her career in the corporate world.

Bola liked working for the mobile company because of the pleasant atmosphere and the fact that the company supplied everything she required for her job. However, she believed that, although the company supports women in their careers, very few women – less than three per

cent – are in top management positions in the company because men occupy the top positions and control the departments, such as finance, technical, procurement and training and development, which are primarily responsible for the decision-making in the company. Although Bola had progressed in her career to a senior management position, she was concerned that the top positions were still held by men. She added that a few women do occupy senior managerial positions but that these positions are mainly in the regional offices of the company. She stated that, despite the support she enjoyed in the company in terms of career development, women in management are not well represented and, therefore, decisions made within the organisation are, at times, in favour of their male counterparts because men make up the vast majority of the total workforce in the company.

The participants all agreed that they were satisfied with their jobs in the mobile organisation and that the company provided them with good facilities and a secure working environment. However, they were adamant that women were still not well represented at the management levels within the corporate world.

6.6   Conclusion

The study found that the participants enjoyed extensive opportunities in the communication organisation as regards choosing and building their careers. The mobile telecommunications industry was seen by the women as a new industry in the market and one in which they could pursue their careers and, at the same time, exploit the available potential of the corporate world. It emerged from the findings that the participants perceived the industry as an attractive sector in which to work in terms of their careers because they believed the industry would provide them with job security and also better opportunities to develop their careers in the corporate world as compared to the opportunities they may be offered elsewhere.

The findings show that the women considered continuous learning on the job in terms organisational learning support programmes, including training and professional courses related to their jobs, as a way in which to promote their career development. It is, therefore, feasible to conclude that the opportunities that women are offered in the mobile industry in terms of on-site training add value to their career development and also create avenues for them to explore career opportunities further. It was clear that continuous learning had assisted the participants in their jobs; in realising their career plans in the mobile industry; and in aspiring to greater heights in their careers that may otherwise have been the case.

The participants described how learning on the job had helped them to acquire a better understanding of their jobs and had opened up opportunities for career mobility in the industry. Further education was also cited as important as it had stood the women in good stead in their career development. They were all of the opinion that the additional formal post-graduate degree programmes which they had taken while working for the organisation had increased their chances of finding opportunities in order to develop their careers. It would, thus, appear that continuous learning plays an important role if women wish to further their careers in the mobile industry.

The findings suggest that the participants were satisfied with, and confident about, their job and career progress because they had benefited from the broad corporate policies in terms of the remuneration, sound welfare packages, incentives and extra allowances that the mobile company offered them. They were all continuing to aspire to greater heights in the corporate world with the assistance of the internal support they were receiving for their career development. However, the participants did feel that there were too few women represented at the topmost levels in the mobile organisation and that their male counterparts in the industry continued to dominate the top hierarchy in the communication sector.

CHAPTER 7

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (SOUTH AFRICA)

7.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative analysis of the data gathered in South Africa. The information gathered is divided into the following sections: socio-demographic information of the respondents, components affecting vocation decision, determinants of the employment fulfillment of women, variables playing a role in the positions occupied by in corporate organisations, boundaries to the professional achievements of women, continuous learning and the career advancement of women and ways in which to upgrade the careers of women in corporate organisations. This structure is in line with the structure of the questionnaire which was administered. In essence, the chapter focuses on women in junior position.

The same analysis system which was described in chapter six was used to analyse the data presented in this chapter. This was done with the support of the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria.

The study found that professional decisions, continuous learning and job fulfillment are important in the career development of women in the communications organisation in question. Firstly, as regards vocational decisions, it was found that women regard the telecommunications sector as a developing industry which offers possibilities to enable them to advance professionally. Secondly, the study found that continuous learning plays an important role in enabling women to advance in their careers, thus opening doors for them to investigate organisational possibilities to help them to realise their profession objectives in the corporate world. Thirdly, the study found that women experienced job satisfaction if they received a good salary and if the working environment was good.

7.2   DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS – RESPONDENTS' BIOGRAPHICAL DATA
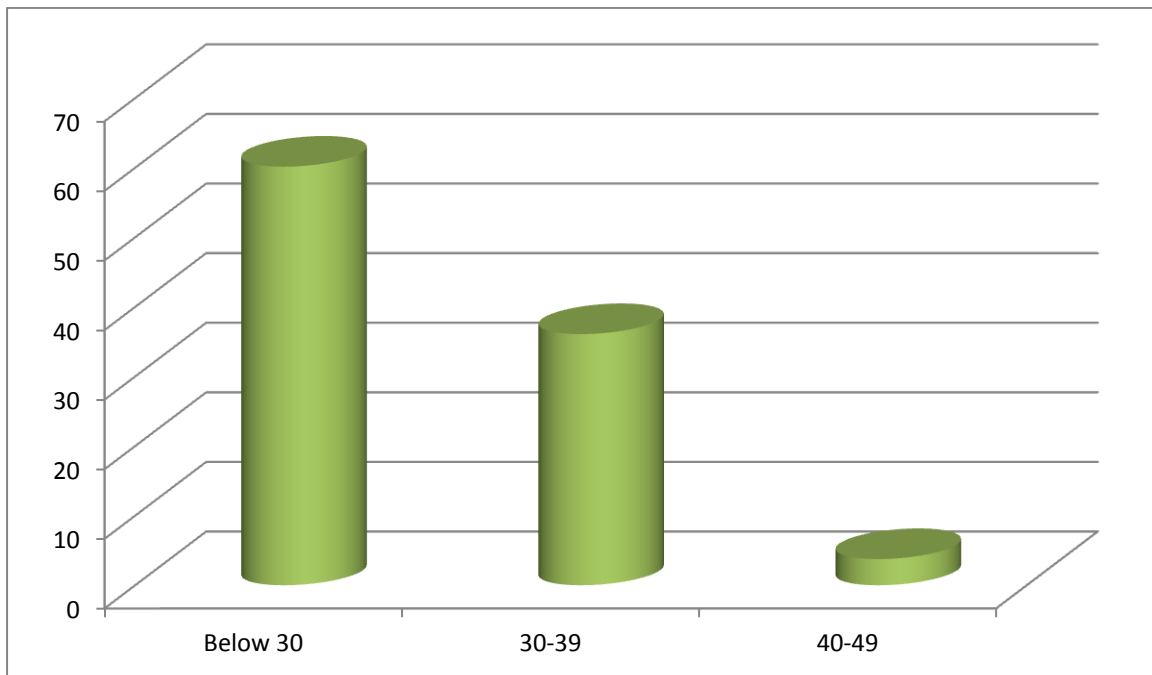
Figure 7.1   Age of respondents

The distribution in Figure 7.1 indicates the age of the respondents. Their ages ranged between below 30 and less than 49 years. According to the figure, 60% of the respondents were younger than 30 while 4% were older than 40, with 96% of the respondents being below 40 years old. This, in turn, indicates that the majority of the respondents were in the early stages of their careers, with 80 being below 30 and five being between 40 and 49 years of age. In other words, the majority of the respondents were still in the process of building their careers in the corporate world and, thus, there was every likelihood that the respondents would have been extremely concerned about their future careers while, at the same time, they would have had enough time ahead of them to plan for their careers in the telecommunications organisation and to build their careers in the corporate world.
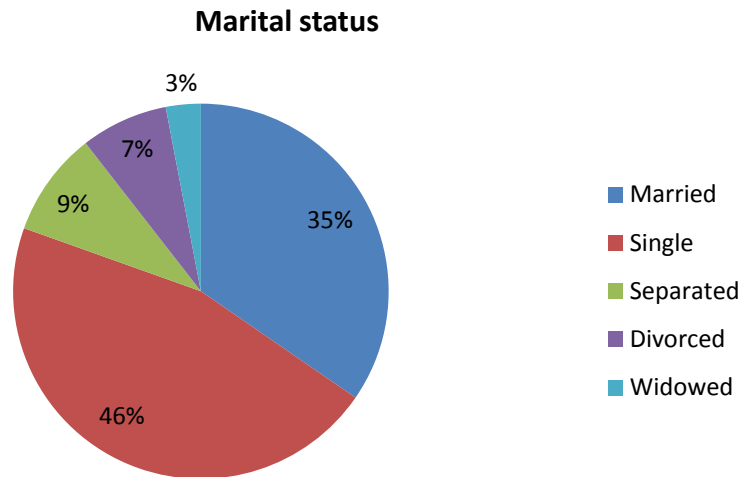
Marital status

Figure 7.2:   Marital status of the respondents

Figure 7.2 above presents the data pertaining to the responses to the question as to who lived in the respondents' homes with them. The respondents included married, single, separated, divorced and widowed women. It emerged that 61 (45.86%) of the respondents were single; 46 (34.59%) were married. 12 (9.02%) were separated, 10 (7.52%) were divorced and four (3.01%) were widowed. It is clear from the figure above that the majority of the respondents were either single or married. This suggests that certain categories of the respondents, such as the single and married women at MTN South Africa, were likely to be committed to their careers and, at the same time, have enough time ahead of them in which to advance on their career paths in the corporate world.
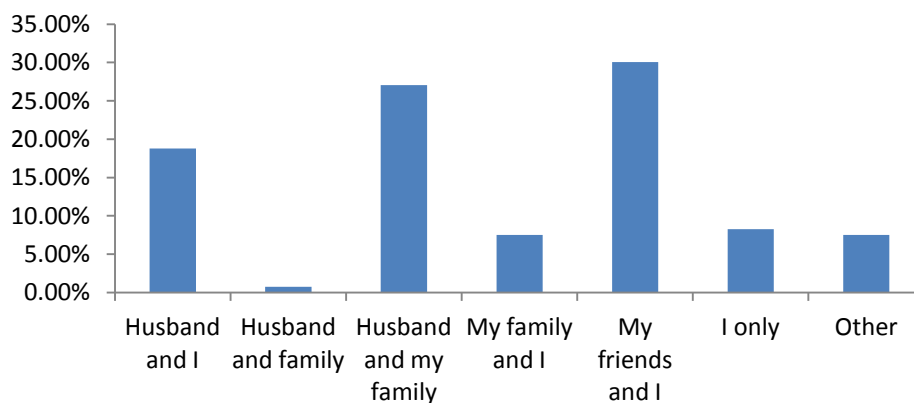
Figure 7.3:   Family and home status of the respondents

It also emerged that 40 (28 %) of the respondents were living with friends, 1 (0.75%), was living with her husband and family, 36 (27%) were living with family alone, 10 (7.25%) were with their husbands and the respondents' families, 25 respondents (18%) were living with their husbands only, while 10(11 %) lived with neither husband, family nor friends, respondents living alone 11(8%). This data may suggest that the majority of respondents were single, living with friends and/or alone, which indicates the strong social esteem and independence of these women in terms of freedom of decisions and interdependence in terms of peer influence in relation to their career aspirations and development. This social status may have possibly allowed them to continue pursuing their careers in the telecommunications organisation.
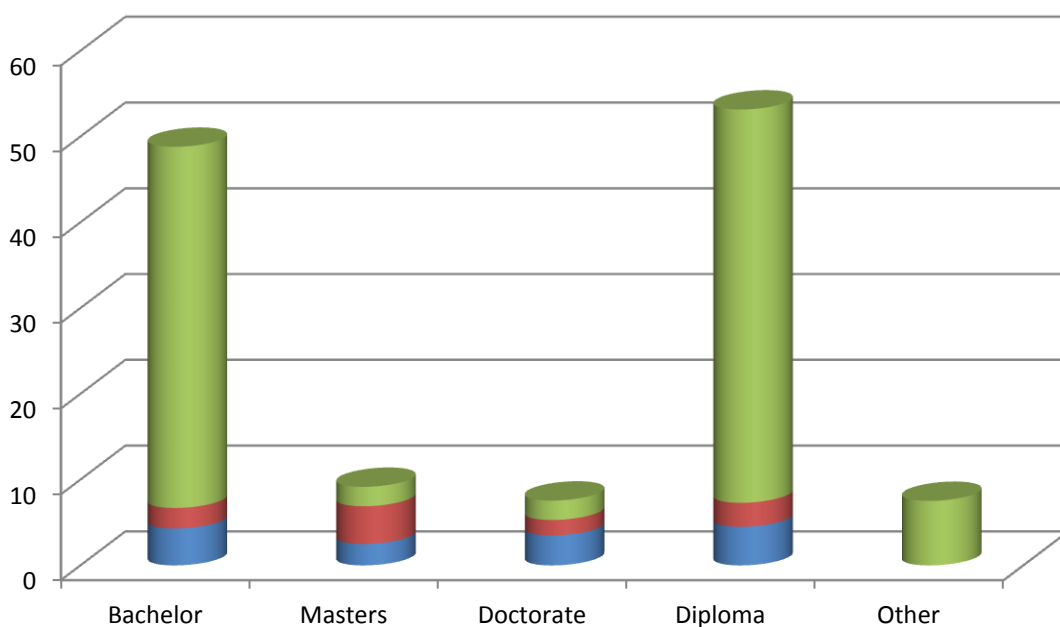
Figure 7.4:   Educational qualifications of the respondents

As depicted in Figure 7.4 above, 61 (45.86%) of the respondents were in possession of diploma certificates, while 56 (42.11%) had bachelor degrees. This suggests that the female workforce at MTN South Africa is dominated by women who possess diploma certificates and bachelor degrees and would be ambitious about their careers. Thus, it is likely that the majority of the respondents under 30 and in their early 30s and with either a diploma certificate or a bachelor degree would tend to be focused on their careers in the

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telecommunications organisation and also eager to explore the available opportunities in order to pursue their careers in the corporate environment.

The figure shows that three (2.26%) of the respondents had master degrees while three had doctoral degrees. However, 10 (7.52%) of the respondents did not have qualifications listed in the options. It is important to note that very few of the respondents had either masters and/or PhDs. This suggests that a large cohort of women have the qualifications required for career progression.

Length of service of the respondents
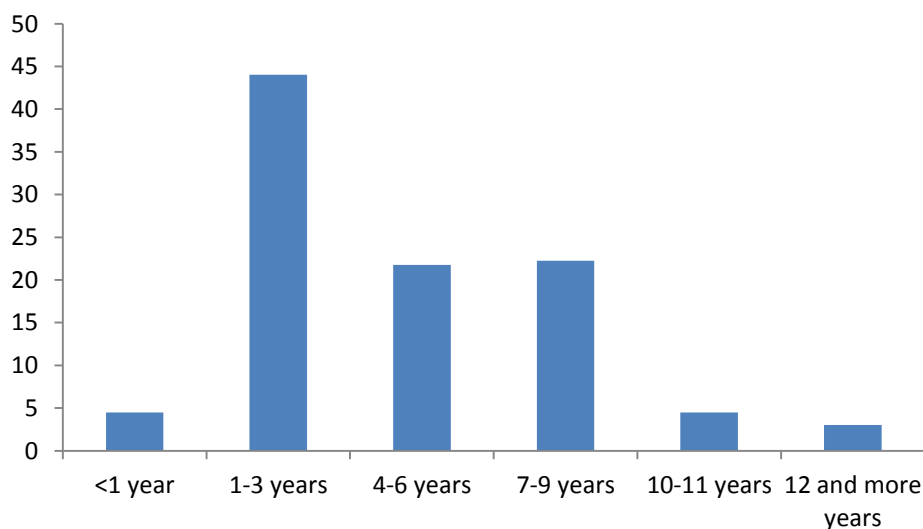
Figure 7.5:   Length of service of the respondents

As Figure 7.5 shows, it would appear that (44.%) of the respondents had worked for the organisation in question for 1–3 years, while the second largest category of the respondents (22%) had worked for up to 7–9 years in the organisation.

The figure shows that (22%) of the respondents had worked for the organisation for 4–6 years, (4.48%) had worked for the organisation less than 1 year, (4.47%) had worked there for 10–11 years and respondents who have worked for the organisation for 12 years and above are (3.05%).

It is clear that the majority of the respondents had worked for the organisation for between one to three years and, thus, they still had enough opportunities and would be anxious to develop on their career paths in the communication organization.

Table 7.1 dealt with the responses to the question as to whether the respondents had had a career goal when they had started their career. The figure reveals that 124 (93.23%) of the respondents agreed that they had had a career goal; while eight (6.02%) disagreed. It is thus clear that the overwhelming majority had had a career goal and that there was every possibility that they would plan to achieve such goals in the organisation.

Table 7.1:   Career goals of the respondents

Career goal	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	124	93.23
No	8	6.02
No response	1	0.75
Total	133	100

In support of the respondents' views above, Mackay (2005) argues that career goal-setting in a corporate environment is dependent on the way in which women set their personal career goals. Mackay (2005) maintains that this process of setting career goals includes the following two steps, namely, setting a goal and then formulating a plan to achieve such a goal. Thus, Mackay's findings support the finding that the majority of the respondents in this study had a long term career goal and that they had formulated career plans in order to achieve their goals in the telecommunications organisation.

Table 7.2:   Factors influencing the career choices of the respondents

Factors influencing career choices	Frequency	Percentage
Self-generated	83	62.41
Parents	10	7.52
Male colleagues	3	2.26
Friends	8	2.26
Female colleague	9	6.77
Manager	10	7.52
No response	10	7.52
Total	133	100

In response to the question as to the factors which had influenced the respondents' careers, 83 (62.41%) of the respondents reported that their own efforts had influenced their careers, 10 (7.52%) maintained that managers within the organisation had influenced their careers, eight (6.02%) mentioned friends as having influenced their careers, nine (6.77%) cited female colleagues and friends as having influenced their careers, three (2.26%) mentioned their

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parents and three (2.26%) mentioned male colleagues as the factors that had influenced their careers in the communication organisation. These findings suggest that the majority of the respondents had relied on their efforts to achieve their career goal, although 38% believed that those people around them, namely, parents, female colleagues and managers, had also been useful in their career development.

Table 7.3:   A lack of interest in career planning on the part of the respondents

Reason	Frequency	Percent
No career plans	5	3.76
No role model	2	1.5
No future career	1	0.75

Table 7.3 reveals that eight of the 133 respondents responded to this question and that five (3.76%) respondents had no career plans, two (1.5%) indicated that a lack of role models was the cause of their lack of interest in career planning, while one (0.75%) respondent mentioned that she was not thinking about a future career in the organisation. Thus, the findings suggest that a small of the respondents only lacked awareness about career development. This verifies the data presented in Table 7.1, which revealed that the majority of the respondents had career plans which they wished to attain within the organisation.

Table 7.4:   Factors influencing the career choices of respondents

Factors influencing career choice	Frequency	Percent
Job opportunities	21	15.79
Challenging field	23	17.29
Interesting job	15	11.00
Good job	24	18.05
High salary	37	27.82
No other options	11	8.27
No response	2	1.50
Total	133	100

In response to the question as to the factors which had influenced the respondents' choice to embark upon a career in the telecommunications sector, 21 (15.79%) of the respondents cited job opportunities as influencing their decision, 23 (17.79%) maintained that the fact that the industry is a challenging field had influenced them because they believed they needed to work in an industry which offered them opportunities to achieve their career goals, 15 (11.28%) mentioned the possibility of an interesting job, 37 (27.82%) cited high salaries, 24

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(18.05%) mentioned the job market as a factor which had influenced their career choice, while 11 (8.27%) stated that they had had no other options than the one they had chosen. This suggests that the respondents perceived the telecommunications organisation to be an industry that is growing rapidly in the corporate environment and which offers possible opportunities for them to explore and to build their careers. In other words, the respondents clearly regarded the communication organisation is an attractive prospect as they believed it appeared to offer them opportunities to develop on their career paths and, at the same time, it offered them job security.

Table 7.5:   Factors influencing career choices and career goals of respondents

Factors influencing	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job opportunities and good market	43		2		45	34.35
Challenging field and other factors	32		2		34	25.95
Interesting work and high salaries	48		4		52	39.69
No response	-	-	-	-	2	
Total	125	93.89	8	6.11	133	100

Table 7.5 presents the statistical results of the responses to the question on the factors influencing the career choices and career goals of the respondents. The findings showed that 45 (34.35%) of the respondents believed that job opportunities and a good job market had determined their choice of career and career goals in respect of working in the telecommunications organisation, 34 (25.95%) indicated that a challenging field and other factors had determined their choice of career and career goals in the telecommunications organisation, while 52 (39.69%) maintained that their career choice and career goals had been determine by the interesting work and high salaries offered by the organisation.

The statistical results demonstrated a correlation between the two concepts of career choice and career goals. This suggests that the respondents' choice of a career in the telecommunications organisation determined the career goals they wished to attain in the organisation. The data revealed that the 52 of the respondents' choice of a career in the telecommunications industry was being determined by the high salaries offered and the prospect of interesting work in the organisation. In other words, the data presented in Tables 7.1 and 7.4 supports the finding that the respondents believed that they had career goals which they wished to attain in the telecommunications organisation. In addition, both internal and external factors shaped these career goals.

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Table 7.6:   Career paths of the respondents

Career path	Frequency	Percentage
Interest in the job	75	56.39
Training on the job	24	18.39
Organisational learning	13	9.77
Experience	17	12.78
Friends	1	0.75
Male colleagues	1	0.75
No response	2	1.50
Total	133	100

In response to the question as to the factors which had determined their career path in the organisation, 75 (56.39%) of the respondents cited an interest in the job, 24 (18.05%) mentioned on-the-job training, 13 (9.77%) referred to organisational learning, 17 (12.78%) alluded to work experience, while two (0.75%) alleged that friends and female colleagues had determined their career paths in the organisation. As regards those respondents who stated that the interest that they had developed in the job had determined their career path, this suggests that it was internal motivation that was playing a role in the development of their careers in the corporate environment. The data presented in Tables 7.2 and 7.4 revealed that, apart from internal factors, there are other extrinsic factors that played a role in the career development of the respondents.

O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) corroborate the views of the respondents discussed above when they argues that the career paths of women in an organisation are embedded in larger-life of the women. They further stressed that the career paths of women are reflected in the wide range of patterns that determine the career development of women in a corporate environment. According to Deborah et al. (2008), these varieties of patterns include human and social capital factors.

Table 7.7:   Respondents' career satisfaction

Career satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage	
Satisfied	103	77.44	
Not satisfied	8	6.02	
Indifferent	20	15.04	
Other	1	0.75	
No response	1	0.75	
Total	133	100	

Table 7.7 presents the data pertaining to the career satisfaction experienced by the respondents. The table shows that 103 (77.44%) were satisfied with their careers, eight (6.02%) were not satisfied with their careers, 20 (15.04%) were indifferent about whether they were satisfied with their careers or not, while one respondent (0.75%) was not sure about her career satisfaction in the communication organisation. Thus, the findings show that the overwhelming majority of the respondents at the telecommunications organisation found their careers to be satisfying. It is possible that this career satisfaction is a function of the benefits offered by the organisation in terms of the extensive opportunities made available, including access to training in order to assist the career development of the women.

Table 7.8:   Respondents' job satisfaction

Job satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Opportunities for study	9	6.77
Income/benefits	60	45.11
Mentoring	13	9.77
Promotion	23	17.29
Good working area	21	15.79
Friends at work	2	1.50
No response	5	3.76
Total	133	100

In response to the question on the factors which determine the respondents' job satisfaction, nine (6.77%) of the respondents stated that opportunities for further study determined their job satisfaction, while 60 (45.11%) cited income/benefits as the major factor determining their job satisfaction in the communication organisation. The latter implies that the salaries offered were an effective internal motivation factor, which resulted in job satisfaction. In addition, 13 (9.77%) of the respondents agreed that mentoring determined their job satisfaction; 23 (17.29%) cited promotion, 21 (15.79%) mentioned the good working conditions while two (1.55%) of the respondents stated friends in the workplace determined their job satisfaction in the communication organisation.

Thus, the findings reveal that the respondents' job satisfaction was linked to factors such as the comfortable incomes as well as the other benefits such as rapid promotion and a good working atmosphere offered by the organisation. It is feasible that internal factors also provide the necessary motivation for the respondents to enjoy their jobs with the communication organisation

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The views of the respondents as discussed above are supported by Jadeska and Kramer (2005), who argue that the job satisfaction experienced by women in an organisation is often associated with the fact that they enjoy intrinsic career success and benefits such as promotion.

Table 7.9:   Respondents' career progress

Career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	104	78.20
No	24	18.05
No response	5	3.75
Total	133	100

Table 7.9 reveals that 104 (78.2%) of the respondents agreed that they were making progress in their careers in the telecommunications organisation, although 24 (18.05%) disagreed. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with their career progress in the communication organisation. This finding supports the data presented in Table 7.9, which revealed that an overwhelming number of the respondents were satisfied with their career progress in the telecommunications organisation. These findings suggest that the communication organisation supports and encourages the career development of women in the organisation.

Table 7.10:   Factors determining respondents' career progress

Factors determining career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Organisational policy	28	21.05
Personal development	30	22.56
Nature of the job	20	15.04
Career plans	14	10.53
Friends	2	1.50
Colleagues	7	5.26
Opportunities to study	6	4.51
No response	26	19.55
Total	133	100

In response to the question as to the factors which determine the career progress of the respondents, 30 (22.56%) of the respondents agreed personal development determined their career progress, thus suggesting that the respondent engaged in personal development in order to ensure that they achieved their career goal in the telecommunications organisation. Meanwhile, 28 (21.05%) of the respondents cited organisational policy as the main factor

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determining their career success in the workplace, 20 (15.04%) agreed that the nature of the job had determined their career development, 14 (10.53%) indicated that career planning had determined their career growth, two (1.5%) cited friends at work, seven (5.26%) mentioned their colleagues, while six (4.51%) agreed that opportunities for further study had played a vital role in their career progress in the environment. These findings suggest the respondents believed that their career progress was primarily a function of their own efforts, as well as support from the organisation itself.

Table 7.11:   Factors influencing the lack of career progress

Lack of career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Work environment	1	0.75
Gender (female)	1	0.75
Personal issues	11	8.27
Lack of opportunity for further study	7	5.26

As depicted in Table 7.11, 11 (8.27%) of the respondents agreed that personal circumstances had been a factor influencing their lack of career progress in the communication organisation; seven (5.26%) believed that a lack of opportunity for further study on the job had been responsible for their lack of career progress, while two (0.75%) were of the opinion that the work environment and their gender as a woman had contributed to their lack of interest in their career development in the organisation. Thus, a total of 20 respondents responded to the question as to the factors responsible for the lack of progress in their career. The findings discussed above verify the data presented in Table 7.9, which revealed that the vast majority of the respondents believed that they were progressing in their careers.

Table 7.12:   Access on the part of women to senior positions

Access to senior positions	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	114	85.71
No	17	12.79
No response	2	1.50
Total	133	100

As regards the question on whether the respondents thought that women have access to senior positions in MTN, 114 (85.71%) of the respondents agreed that they do have access to senior positions in the organisation, while 17 respondents (12.78%) disagreed with the notion. This suggests that it would appear that there are opportunities in the organisation for women to

progress in their career paths. This may be the result of the fact that the communication organisation seems to offer support to women in the organisation to assist them to develop their careers.

Table 7.13:   Reasons why women do not have access to senior positions

Lack of access to top positions	Frequency	Percentage
Work challenges	4	3.01
Lack of qualifications	12	9.02

In response to the question regarding the reasons why women in the organisation do not have access to senior positions, four (3.01%) of the respondents indicated that they believed that workplace challenges were responsible for their lack of access to top positions in the organisation, while 12 (9.02%) cited a lack of qualifications as a factor affecting their lack of access to management positions. Thus, a total of 17 respondents responded to this question. These findings verify the data presented in Table 7.12, which revealed that the vast majority of the respondents believed that they have the opportunity to access top senior positions in the communication organization.

Table 7.14:   Factors influencing the access of women to senior positions

Factors influencing the access of women to senior positions	Frequency	Percentage
Organisational culture	67	50.38
Competition for the jobs	46	34.00
No response	20	15.02
Total	133	100

In response to the question regarding the factors influencing the access of women to senior positions in the corporate organisation, 67 (50.38%) of the respondents indicated that they believed that the organisational culture influenced their access to senior position in the organisation, while 46 (34.59%) stated that they believed that the competition for jobs was one of the factors that influenced their access to top management position. It is feasible that the work environment plays a significant role in the access of women to senior positions in the organisation. In other words, external factors play a critical role in the decisions of the respondents to seek senior positions and that these women demonstrate a strong internal desire for senior positions.

Table 7.15:   Personal barriers affecting the respondents' career progress

Personal barriers	Frequency	Percentage	
Lack of career aspirations	46	34.59	
Lack of education	22	16.54	
Poor self -esteem	46	34.59	
Leadership style	15	11.28	
No response	4	3.00	
Total	133	100	

In response to the question on the personal barriers affecting their career advancement, 46 (34.59%) of the respondents indicated that they believed that a lack of career aspirations and poor self-esteem were the main barriers affecting their career development, 22 respondents (16.54%) cited a lack of education, while 15 (11.28%) referred to leadership style as factors affecting their career progress in the communication organisation.

However, these findings contradict both the data presented in Table 7.9, which revealed that overwhelming numbers of the respondents believed that they were progressing in their careers, as well as the data presented in Table 7.1, which indicated that the respondents had career goals. The responses to the question on the barriers affecting career advancement reveal that the respondents believed that personal barriers were affecting their career development.

The views of the respondents discussed above are corroborated by Litzky, Barrie, Greenhaus and Jeffrey (2007), who observed that the barriers affecting women in organisations may be attributed to the small degree of congruence that women perceive between senior management positions and their personal characteristics.

Table 7.16:   Institutional barriers affecting the career advancement of the respondents

Institutional barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Women belief	19	14.28
Sexual harassment	6	4.51
Discrimination against women	30	22.56
Lack of mentoring	41	30.83
Prevention by male	13	9.77
No formal qualifications.	20	15.04
No response	4	3.01
Total	133	100

Table 7.16 reveals that the two most significant barriers to the career progress of women include discrimination against women and a lack of mentoring. These findings contradict the data presented in Table 7.10, which showed that internal motivation played an important role in the career advancement of women and that the respondents had demonstrated a strong desire for career progress based on their personal efforts.

The perceptions of the respondents as depicted in Table 7.16 are endorsed by numerous researchers such as Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2010) and Pincus (1996). These researchers argue that the institutional barriers affecting women in corporate settings often include the practices, norms and traditions of the dominant gender group and the implementation of policies which are to the disadvantage of women and benefit their male counterpart at the workplace environment. It is feasible that the key factors in the lack of advancement of women, such as gendered barriers, are not by their own making but rather the result of prevailing norms, traditions and practices in the workplace environment.

The findings revealed that 20 (15.04%) respondents believed that a lack of formal qualifications was the main barrier affecting their career development. In view of the fact that the data presented in Figure 8.3 showed that the majority of the respondents were in possession of diplomas and/or bachelor degrees, it is feasible that qualifications may likely be seen as a way of advancing career development.

Meanwhile, 19 (14.29%) respondents agreed that that the notion that women are not suited to be managers is a factor affecting the career progress of women career, six (4.51%) cited sexual harassment and 30 (22.56%) referred to discrimination against women as organisational barriers affecting the lack of progress in their careers. In addition, 41 (30.83%) respondents believed that a lack of access to mentoring was affecting their career progress and 13 (9.77%) were of the opinion that prevention on the part of male managers was affecting their career progress.

Table 7.17:   Continuous learning and career progress of respondents

Continuous learning	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	127	95.49
No	4	3.01
No response	2	1.50
Total	133	100

In response to the question as to whether they believed continuous learning on the job may enhance their career progress, 127 (95.49%) of the respondents agreed that continuous learning did influence their careers, while four (3.01%) disagreed with the notion.

Thus, the findings revealed that the vast majority of the respondents believed that, in as much they continued to learn on the job, there was a possibility for them to advance on their career paths. In other words, continuous learning is a significant factor which invariably influenced the respondents' career development.

The value of continuous learning for women employees is corroborated by Maurer and Weiss (2010), who argue that experience supported by learning is a useful means of career development.

Table 7.18:   Factors encouraging continuous learning

Factors encouraging learning and career progress	Frequency	Percentage
Motivation	46	34.59
Learning culture	33	24.59
Time allocated to development	10	7.52
Financial resources	12	9.02
Family support	3	2.26
Institutional supports	22	16.54
No response	7	5.3
Total	133	100

Table 7.18 shows that 46 (34.59%) of the respondents believed that motivation encourages continuous learning in the workplace. The data shows that both motivation and a learning culture are significant factors in continuous learning, thus suggesting that internal motivation had played a key role in the career development of the respondents. The table also shows that 33 (24.59%) of the respondents agreed that a learning culture encourages women in the workplace, 10 (7.52%) believed that the time allocated for development encouraged the continuous learning of women, 12 (9.02%) were of the opinion that financial resources influenced women to continue to learn on the job, three (2.26%) agreed that family support was a factor that encouraged them to learn continuously, while 22 (16.54%) of the respondents believed that institutional support was a factor that influenced their continuous learning on the job in the communication organisation. Thus, the findings suggest that, while internal motivation plays a significant role in the career advancement of women, external support plays a minimal role.

Table 7.19:   Number of training programmes the respondents had attended

Number	None	1–2	3–5	6–8	9–10	Total
None	16	9	4	0	0	29
5 or more	0	8	4	11	1	24
3–4	8	0	27	4	3	42
1–2	1	24	10	0	1	36
No response	2	-	-	-	-	2
Total	27	41	45	15	5	133

As depicted in Table 7.19 above, 25 (20.30%) respondents stated that they had not attended any training programmes since they had joined the communication organisation, 41 (30.83%) indicated that they had attended one to two training programmes, 45 (33.83%) stated that they had attended more than three training programmes, 15 (11.28%) that they had attended more than six training programmes, while five (3.76%) reported that they had attended more than nine training programmes since they had joined the communication organisation. These findings, in turn, suggest that the respondents were given opportunities to attend training programmes by the communication organisation. The fact that the data above reveals a significant number of the respondents had participated in training programmes since they had started their careers in the telecommunications organisation indicates that there are training programmes available for the women to attend and, thus, that the organisation supports women through training programmes in order to assist them on their career paths.

The fact that 131 of the 133 participants responded to the question on the number of training programmes they had participated in verifies that internal motivation plays an important role in the career development of women, as the majority of the women had attended some form of training.

Therefore, for women to improve their abilities and learning at work, it is essential that they attend training in order to advance in their careers. It further shows that training helps women to move through an array of positions, thus increasing their range of encounters and abilities at work.

Table 7.20:   Training programmes for women

Training programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Professional	47	35.34
Leadership	67	50.38
On the job	16	12.03
No response	3	2.26
Total	133	100

As regards the question on the type of training programme in which women should participate in order to advance their career advancement, 47 (35.34%) respondents reported that they believed that professional training assisted their career advancement in the workplace, 67 (50.38%) stated that leadership training was of assistance, while 16 (12.03%) were of the opinion that on-the-job learning aided their career development.

These findings suggest that the respondents had the opportunity to participate in the various training programmes which were available in the communication organisation. It is clear that the majority of the respondents had access to training programmes in the organisation and that such training may play a role in advancing their careers. In other words, the findings above reinforce the data presented in Table 7.18, which revealed that the respondents had opportunities to attend training programmes and that training was, indeed, an important factor in helping them to build their careers in the corporate world.

Table 7.21:   Factors enhancing the career advancement of the respondents

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Hard work	52	39.1
Willingness to take risks	19	14.29
Educational qualifications	16	12.03
Continuous learning	42	31.58
No response	4	3
Total	133	100

Table 7.21 reveals that 52 (39.1%) respondents believed that hard work promoted their career advancement in the communication organisation, 19 (14.29%) respondents indicated that a willingness to take risks had enhanced their careers, 16 (12.03%) were of the opinion that educational qualifications influenced their career advancement in the telecommunications organisation, while 42 (31.58%) of the respondents stated that continuous learning and

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training played a significant role in enhancing their career progress in the communication organisation.

It is clear from the findings discussed above that two factors in particular are significant in this context, namely, hard work and continuous learning, thus suggesting the role of personal effort and training in the career development of the respondents.

Table 7.22:   Career development of respondents

Career development	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	106	79.7
No	24	18.05
No response	3	2.26
Total	133	100

In response to the question as to whether the respondents engaged in career development, 106 (79.7%) of the respondents indicated that they did indeed engage in career development in the communication organisation, while 24 (18.05%) disagreed with the notion. The data above reinforces the data presented in Table 7.20, which revealed that the respondents exerted personal efforts to engage in career development in order to develop their careers in the communication organisation. In other words, it is clear that the majority believed in career growth.

Table 7.23:   Career development plans of respondents

Respondents career development plans	Frequency	Percentage
Personal development	81	60.9
Peer influence	15	11.28
Parental influence	2	1.5
Spousal support	5	3.76
No response	30	22.56
Total	133	100

In response to the question on the career development plans of the women working for MTN, five (11.28%) of the respondents believed that peer influence was a major factor determining their career development in the communication organisation, 81 (60.9%) reported that their personal efforts determined their career plans, two (1.5%) were of the opinion that parental influence determined their career plans, while five (3.76%) believed that spousal support influence their career plans. These findings, in turn, suggest that the respondents were self-

motivated and personally responsible for their own career development in the communication organisation. In other words, the respondents believed that their career progress was largely in their own hands and that event in their personal lives played a major role in their career development. Thus, despite their organisational experiences the respondents appeared to hold themselves responsible for their career progress.

Table 7.24:   No plans for career development

No plans for career development	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of a mentor	4	3.01
No leadership programme	4	3.01
Lack of motivation	12	9.02
Work flexibility	1	0.75

Table 7.24 reveals that four (3.01%) respondents were of the opinion that the absence of coaching influenced their professional advancement in the workplace, 12 (9.02%) cited the absence of motivation (inspiration) as a factor influencing their career improvement plans, while one (0.75%) mentioned that work flexibility affected the progress of her career in the communication organisation. Meanwhile, four respondents (3.01%) were of the opinion that a lack of personal initiative influenced their professional advancement in the corporate environment. The information presented in the table above checks the information presented in Tables 7.21 and 7.22, which showed that the vast majority of respondents revealed that they had formulated plans for their career advancement in the communication organisation and, thus, that they considered that they themselves were in charge of their professional advancement in the corporate world.

7.3   Conclusion

The data discussed in this chapter reveals that the respondents were of the opinion that the communication industry was a rapidly developing industry which offered them opportunities to establish and advance in their careers in the future. It was mainly for this reason that the respondents had decided to work in the telecommunications sector because of the high probability that they would be able to attain their profession objectives of advancing to the top levels of the corporate world.

It emerged from the findings that continuous learning at work played a key role in the career progress of the respondents, while internal motivation was also vital in the professional

advancement of the respondents. The findings showed that the communication organisation offered opportunities to attend training programmes and expert courses which, in turn, enhanced the professional success of the respondents. The findings revealed a link between ongoing learning and the professional advancement of the respondents, thus demonstrating that the more opportunities there are available for women to participate in learning projects the greater the chance that their careers in the corporate world will progress. The study showed that the overwhelming majority of the respondents were still young and, thus, probably enthusiastic and eager to make use of their abilities in order to avail themselves of all the opportunities offered to advance in their careers.

It emerged from the findings that the respondents were experiencing job satisfaction. It appeared that this job satisfaction stemmed primarily from the high salaries, good working conditions and occupational flexibility that the communication organisation offered. On the other hand, while the respondents noted the presence of gender orientation separation in the organisation they cited their personal aspirations, individual life variables and persistent adapting as the strongest components in their career advancement.

CHAPTER 8

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (SOUTH AFRICA)

8.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the interviews which were conducted with three senior women managers at MTN in South Africa. Each of these senior managers had over 10 years' experience. Three broad themes emerged from an analysis of the interviews, namely, career choice, continuous learning and job satisfaction. For the purposes of this study career choice refers to the preferences of the participants in terms of a career and involves the pursuit and attainment of a specific career goal. In this context career choice may be seen to be determined by factors such as parents' occupations, social status and environmental factors such as role models. On the other hand, in the context of this study, continuous learning may be described as regular engagement in a learning process in terms of training, formal education and short courses, while job satisfaction refers to the level of satisfaction participants derive from a particular job. Job satisfaction may arise from career growth, promotion, working conditions and other benefits included in the participants' conditions of employment.

Themes were identified by collating the findings into conceptual themes. Findings were determined through close analysis of the empirical data. Repeated ideas, comments and perceptions were collated to form themes. Ideas for these themes were derived from the analysis of the literature. The themes of career choice, continuous learning and learning on the job were linked to the external environment, namely, the workplace.

Table 8.1:   Themes that emerged from the analysis of the data (South Africa)

Themes	Findings
Career choice	Company profile and corporate identity Parental influence Career plans
Continuous learning	Learning on the job and training same as organisation opportunities?) Experience on the job
Job satisfaction	Job flexibility Remuneration and benefits

Essentially, the purpose of the interviews conducted was to ascertain the reasons why the women had chosen to work in the mobile industry and to discover how continuous learning

influenced their career paths. The experiences of women managers working at a mobile telecommunications network in South Africa are discussed below by means of a qualitative data analysis and using a thematic guide.

8.2   The women managers

This section establishes the context of the interviews which were conducted with the women by providing a brief background description of the participants in order to obtain an understanding of their views and career progress.

8.2.1   Catherine

In the interview conducted with Catherine the researcher observed that Catherine was comfortable talking about her career path in the communications sector as she willingly responded to all the questions and freely shared details of her work experience. She was observed to be a pleasant, friendly woman who regularly made jokes during the discussion.

Catherine is a single mother and has one son. She started her career in a dairy in 2003 as a regional marketing manager. Her interest in pursuing a career in the corporate world prompted her to join a mobile telecommunications organisation which operates throughout Africa. Catherine regarded this change as an excellent opportunity to grow her career in the industry while continuing to develop her interest in marketing. She believed that this career change would enable her maximise her potential and attain her goals. Marketing has been her target area since she started her career in the corporate world. She values her career and takes it very seriously. At the time of the study she held a senior management position at MTN in South Africa.

8.2.2   Lebo

The interview conducted with Lebo was impressive. She was extremely interested in the discussion and she made a point of switching off her cell phone when the interview was about to start as she did not want anyone to disturb the discussion. She made every effort to ensure that she provided the researcher with the data required and even asked for the discussion to be replayed so that she could listen to her responses. She made every effort to ensure that she had included everything she wanted to say and that she had answered the questions fully. She also repeatedly asked whether the researcher was satisfied with her responses. She was

friendly throughout the interview and appeared very comfortable with all the questions asked regarding her career experiences.

Lebo is married to an engineer who works for Eskom in South Africa and she has two children – one boy and one girl. She had started her career in a diamond company fourteen years previously. She had worked for the diamond company for two years before joining the telecommunications industry. Lebo would have enjoyed building her career in the field of business analysis in any corporate multinational company but had chosen the mobile telecommunications network in order to further a career that suited her preferred interest, namely, business analysis.

Although Lebo believed that it was difficult to balance family and career simultaneously, she was of the opinion that planning and making choices was important in order to accommodate both her job and her family. She maintained that family and work were separate entities entirely and that they should not impact on one another. She has developed in her career in that she had held various senior positions in the corporate world. At the time of the study, she was a general manger with the mobile telecommunications organisation.

8.2.3   Nair

Nair is extremely busy at work and has very little spare time during working hours because she follows a tight schedule attending to organisational issues. Accordingly, the interview was held in her office lounge after official office hours. Nair wanted a quiet time for the interview without being disturbed or distracted during the discussion by co-workers. She was observed to be a jovial and friendly person who was happy to discuss her corporate experience.

Nair is married to an architect who runs a private firm and she has two children, both girls. Her career had started eleven years previously with a health care emergency and retail services company. She believed that taking advantage of the opportunities offered in the corporate world would enable her to build a career for herself. The mobile industry had always attracted her as she felt it offered opportunities for her to progress in her career.

Nair was inspired by her father who had once worked for a telecommunications company. The stories he had told had led to her belief in the potential offered by such an organisation for growth and development on the job and, thus, to her desire to join such a company that

could offer her job fulfilment as well as the opportunity to realise her life's desire to starting to build her career early in life in order to be successful. Nair is a proactive person who believes that hard work guarantees future career development in the corporate world. At the time of the study she was a senior manager with the mobile telecommunications organisation and she was in charge of large groups of workers.

8.3 Theme 1: Career choices of women

This theme includes issues related to the career choices of women in the corporate sector, including how women are influenced in their choice of career pathways by a company profile and corporate identity; how parental influences assist women to choose their careers; and how women plan their career pathways in the corporate world.

Catherine, Lebo and Nair all consented to participate in, and give their full support to, the interviews and to narrate their career experiences in a corporate environment.

8.3.1 Company profile and corporate identity as factors determining the career choice of women

Catherine reported that it had always been her dream to work in the telecommunications sector and thus she had made a personal and purposeful decision to choose a career in the communication company. However, before she had accepted work in the industry, she had acquainted herself with communication company profiles in order to learn about the organisations and to discover what opportunities they offered for employee career development. Sources of information, such as company annual reports, tend to highlight the progress of women employees in the company in question. She had specifically looked for a company that facilitated the career progression of women in the corporate environment. The mobile company had been one such company. In particular, she had been impressed by the fact that a woman financial director had progressed to the position of director. Catherine had been convinced that she, too, would be able to use the opportunities offered by the company to build her career, as the profile of the mobile company had reflected the company's support for the career development of women. Catherine stated: "*I am convinced through the company profile that the mobile telecommunications is a company I can work for and build my career and I believe that the possibilities for me to develop in my career are high.*" She added: "*I found the company to be a very robust organisation and I was eager to work with*

the mobile industry." She was also of the opinion that the company offered future job security.

Catherine indicated that she had found the company corporate identity, as reflected in advertisements, newspapers, magazines and the media, extremely attractive and that this had prompted her to choose a career in the industry. She maintained that, apart from the company profile, she had liked the corporate look of the company. Catherine maintained that the mobile telecommunications company has a very good branding image, its customer retail outlets are attractive and a good talking point, while the shops in malls around the country are attractive and well run. She likes the logo and the yellow colour which the company uses to project its corporate image. Catherine admitted that all these facets of the company had fascinated her and had prompted her to choose a career in the mobile company. She concluded by saying: *"I have made a right career choice for myself in a company in which I believe my career will develop rapidly in future."*

Lebo and Nair both felt that the communication organisation was a promising company for their future career development. Nair indicated that her choice of career in the industry had been based primarily on a report on the organisation's profile which she had read in the company's bulletin and which had detailed the company's succession planning programmes for its staff in terms of career growth and which included training opportunities. In addition, her interest in joining the industry had been prompted by the company's historical achievements in terms of which large numbers of women had been absorbed into the company as part of its organisational policy, while the company made opportunities available for job shifts within the company to other regions. Nair had read about the company's achievements, both past and present, while she had also had the opportunity to visit the organisation during her final year at university. This visit had been made possible by one of her aunt's friends who had been on the staff of the organisation at the time. She had learnt that the company had started in South Africa as M-cell before changing its name to the Mobile Telecommunications Network (MTN). Although she had been given the outline of company's history only, after she had graduated, she had had the opportunity to visit the company for a second time through a friend of her uncle who was a customer care services centre manager. She had then heard a full account of how the company had started its operation with a small group of people and expanded significantly within a few years. She had read the organisation's profile in a booklet on the history of the company since its

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inception as a business organisation dealing with mobile and network services and which had been given to her by her uncle's friend. All these factors stimulated Nair's interest in joining the organisation as she had seen the potential in the company based on its past achievements and also its business expansion into other countries, such as Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Lesotho.

Nair was of the opinion that there are greater opportunities in this robust organisation compared to other industries both in South Africa and on the rest of the African continent. She believed that the company offered a future with possibilities of developing on the job and, when she had been given an opportunity to pursue her career in the mobile industry twelve years previously she accepted it.

Lebo had chosen to work in the communication organisation because the company's branding had attracted her. She decided she wanted to build a career in a company that projected a positive image in terms of its products and services. She related how she had learnt about the brand fourteen years previously by reading the company's annual reports which she had been given by a friend who had done her internship in the company. In addition, before joining the company she had also read about the company in the media. According to Lebo, the company profile is underpinned by the support the company offers to its staff in terms of career development. The company's annual reports testified to the fact that young women in their early thirties aspired to senior levels within the company and this had both impressed her and inspired her to join the organisation. She was of the opinion that the company is well branded and has a strong public profile.

The three participants all believed that the company is a well-grounded organisation in which to pursue a career. They reported that the well-publicised profile of the company had been instrumental in helping them make the decision to join the company, while it had also guided them on the direction they should take to build their careers. The participants agreed that the communication industry was an industry in which they felt they could pursue their careers and realise their career plans to occupy higher positions in the corporate world.

Catherine described her career choice of the communication sector as follows:

> *My career choice in the communication organisation is my preferred career in the corporate sector, My wish is to build my future career in a telecommunications sector, because I felt that I will grow in my career in future*

and be able to achieve my goal to become a senior marketing manager in the industry.

The participants all wanted to work for a company which would enable them to develop their careers and achieve their ambitions to become senior managers in the industry. Their career goals were extremely important to them as they aspired to greater heights in their speciality areas, as well as to leadership positions in the mobile industry. The participants believed that their dreams would be made possible in a company which offered developmental planning programmes supporting the career development of women.

Lebo had the following to say about her career choice in the corporate world:

> *My choice of career in the telecommunications industry is what I have always wanted in my life ... I so much like the industry and I purposefully choose to pursue my career in the communication sector. The reason for my decision is because I believe I am on the right path towards my career success in the corporate world and my belief is that I can build my career to the top level in the company.*

The participants all regarded their career development as extremely important and believed that building a career in the corporate world was a priority. In addition, they were all of the opinion that the only way in which they could realise their dreams and attain their goals was to join an organisation in which they would have the opportunity to advance on their career paths.

8.3.2   Parental influence

Catherine, Lebo and Nair all spoke about how their parents had also played a key role in their choice of careers in the corporate world. Nair reported that her father, who had retired from one of the largest telecommunications companies in the world, had encouraged her to work in the corporate, multinational, telecommunications industry. Nair's father had worked in the industry for many years in the United States and he had spent more than fifteen years as a manager in the technical department before he had retired. His experience in a communication company had influenced her career choice to join the mobile industry as the stories her father had related to her about the communication company for which he had worked had convinced her that the industry offered opportunities to build and develop a

career. After her father's retirement the family had returned to South Africa and she worked for an emergency services company. However, after a year the opportunity had presented itself for her to join MTN. That had been twelve years previously and, as already stated, just one year after she had started her career with the emergency services company. According to her, the advice and support she had received from her father had enabled her dream to become a reality.

Catherine reported that her parents had played an important role in shaping her career. Her mother had been a career woman and she had worked in the banking industry for eighteen years, while her father had also worked in the banking sector. Her parents had retired four years previously. Catherine saw her parents as her role models and they had both served as her mentors. They had tutored her when she was in high school and, while she had been at university; they had encouraged her to choose a career in corporate, private organisations. Her parent's career experiences in the banking sector also influenced her to work in the corporate private sector after she had finished university. She reported that her father, in particular, had constantly encouraged her to work in a highly competitive organisation such a telecommunications organisation. She was adamant that "*my parents assisted me in my career choice*".

Although she had been extremely keen to follow a career in show business, Catherine's parents had guided her towards the corporate world. As someone who loved her parents and, therefore, valued the advice they gave her concerning her career, she had never regretted choosing the corporate world. Although she had started her career in a dairy, she had soon moved to the telecommunications industry where she felt more comfortable.

Lebo's source of inspiration for her choice of the corporate world had been her mother who had influenced her career choice to join the communication industry. Her father had died when she was young and, since then, her mother had always encouraged her in her pursuit of a career and in life. Lebo related that her mother had once worked for Telkom in South Africa as a clerk, although she had been retired a long time. She had shared her career experiences with Lebo and had advised her that telecommunications was a good place to work as there were career development opportunities in the industry for women, as well as possibilities of career shifts from one area of speciality to another. Lebo admitted that her personal interest and dream had always been to develop her career in a robust, corporate, private industry in the corporate world.

It was clear from the stories related by Catherine, Nair and Lebo that their parents had all played a powerful role in guiding them towards a career in the corporate world. Their parents' influence had been extremely strong in ensuring that their daughters chose careers in a telecommunications organisation which would help their future advancement in their careers.

This finding regarding the important role that their parents had played in the lives of the three South African women is corroborated by Hewitt (2010) who suggests that some career choices of women are influenced by their desire to win parental favour while others follow career paths that their educational choices have opened for them. Hewitt believes that parents may play a supportive role in the career choices of their daughters and that they are, in fact, able to exert a strong positive influence on the career choices of women.

8.3.3   Career plans of the interviewees

Catherine, Lebo and Nair all admitted to having had a career plan that included promotion to the top hierarchy when they had joined the communication organisation. Catherine stated: "*My career plan when I joined the communication industry was to aspire higher in my career and become a marketing director in the telecommunications organisation.*" Thus, her career aspiration in the corporate world was to attain a high management position and she had built her career around this aspiration, starting as a retail marketing manager in a dairy. Catherine had seen potential in marketing and she believed that she could continue with her pursuit of a career in the area of marketing in the mobile company. However, her aspirations went beyond being a manager to becoming a senior manager and even a director. According to Catherine, although planning a career may be important, it is even more important to work towards realising one's dreams. She maintained that her dream of reaching the top would become reality for her because she had recognised the opportunities offered to her by the communication organisation as the company's past record indicated its support for the career development of women. Catherine had faith in the company's development programmes which included employee development succession planning for women in the industry and this had assisted her to pursue her career in her preferred area of interest, namely, marketing.

Catherine further believed that the planning programmes of the company were aligned with her own personal focus of building a career to management level in the corporate environment. She reported that she was already a senior marketing manager in charge of a

regional mobile telecommunications network office in South Africa and that this made her feel confident that she would realise her career dream of becoming a manager in the mobile industry. As far as she was concerned, her greatest achievement to date in her career was her upward mobility to the position of a senior manager overseeing a whole region. In addition to being the head of marketing she was also responsible for managing a large group of subordinates who were working under her supervision. Catherine was fulfilling the leadership role that was exactly what she had wanted for herself – the position of a top manager who occupied a senior managerial position. She was really enjoying her leadership role in the organisation and, in particular, assisting other workers in the marketing department to perform their tasks effectively and ensuring that they worked as a team to achieve the organisational goals. Catherine concluded by stating that she was, indeed, on the correct career path and that she still aspired to even greater heights in her career in the mobile industry.

Lebo and Nair also aspired to senior positions in the company. Nair stated: *"My career plan in the communication industry is to become a senior manager in strategic analysis."* She believed that she possessed the capabilities and the potential to develop in her career. Her career plans in the corporate environment included holding a strategic position in the corporate world, for example the position of investment cost analyst, which had always been her career dream. She reported that, from the beginning of her career, she had never changed or shifted from her original career plans to become a strategic analyst. She had started her career as a trainee analyst, then progressed to trainer supervisor in the training department and, after some years, she had been promoted to an even more senior position. She was still functioning in the area of her speciality and she felt that her career plans to become a senior manager in the company were succeeding. She was anticipating moving to the MTN Group to assume a more senior position than the position she occupied.

Lebo indicated that she had clear career plans for the corporate world. She reported that, when she had started her career in the communication sector, her plan had been to become a general manager in the area of internal investments. Although her career had started in a diamond company, her initial plan had been to embark on a career in a corporate organisation in which she felt she would be able to build her career. She had been offered a good opportunity in the communication organisation and she believed that her career plans to become a manager in the corporate world, especially in the area of business analysis which

falls within the ambit of internal investment, would be realised. Lebo was of the opinion that the mobile industry offered her good opportunities to develop in her career because the organisation had in place succession plans which enabled its employees to grow. She had been privy to such information through her access to the company annual reports before she had decided to join the industry.

Lebo had discovered that the mobile company has a policy which encourages women in particular to build their careers within the organisation and she believed in pursuing her career in a company that supports women to advance on their career paths. According to Lebo, her plans to become a senior manager in the mobile company had been fully supported by the company since she had started her career with the organisation. She further maintained that the company staff development policy fostered the career development of women and that, in particular, the policy supported her career plans of aspiring to a managerial position. In addition, such development programmes assisted women to network among themselves both within and outside the company and it even enabled them to find a mentor in order to progress in their careers. Hillman, Shropshire and Connella (2007) argue that the promotion of women to top positions in an organisation is encouraged nowadays. They explain that factors such as industry type, firm diversification, organisation size and networks effects (linkages to other women in management) have a significant impact on the career development of women. They further suggest that women's aspirations in their career progress in the corporate world are being encouraged by organisational support and include opportunities to explore and shadow senior colleagues in the communication organisation order to help them to achieve their career goals.

It is worth noting that all three of the participants had strong aspirations to be promoted senior positions and that none of them doubted herself. The value that the company places on building women's careers, family support and their strong belief in themselves – no doubt nurtured by family support – had helped and continued to help them to formulate and realise clear career goals.

8.4   Theme 2: Continuous learning on the part of the respondents

The discussion of this theme includes how the on-the-job learning and professional courses the women had attended had influenced their career development; how continuous training

had assisted them to develop their careers; and how the experience they had gained on the job had assisted their career development in the corporate environment.

The participants revealed how learning on the job and the other training they had attended on the job in terms of the professional courses which they had taken had assisted them to develop their careers in the telecommunications sector.

8.4.1 Learning on the job and training

Nair likes to learn on the job. She revealed that she had learnt much on the job since she had joined the communication organisation. She had started her career in the mobile industry twelve years previously and had been given opportunities to learn on the job. On joining the company she had immediately undergone an orientation learning programme which was organised by the company to induct new staff members. Nair reported that the programme had taught her about the organisation's culture and policies, particularly the conditions of employment; what employees were entitled to in terms of their job designation; the regulations governing applying for leave; the functional roles of the employees; and the chain of leadership in the company – who to report to in each department and section. Regarding the company culture she had learnt about formality within the organisation and how to interact with, and relate to, colleagues within the company. Nair maintained that her first learning programme on the job had enabled her to understand her role in the company although it only three years after she had joined the mobile industry that she had fully understood the organisational policy and culture. After several years she had been promoted to the position of manager in charge of risk management. Her promotion to management had been the outcome of applying for a vacant higher position in her area of interest than the one she had held at the time. After attending a set of interviews she had been promoted to the position of risk manager. She reported that she had occupied the position for four years and that she had learnt on the job how to determine the importance of which risks to address in the organisation; how to be proactive in decision-making, how to continuously assess what could go wrong; and how to implement strategies to deal with risks. Nair's opinions are corroborated by Desjardins and Rubenson (2011), who argue that any form of learning on the job within the workplace prepares the individual to perform well on the job and, thus, continuous learning and development within an organisation is important in furthering the careers of employees.

Nair believed that everything she had learnt on the job had enabled her to understand her job better and that the knowledge she had gained in the years she had been a manager had assisted her in carrying out her functions as a manager and, at the same time, developing her career. She was convinced that her participation in organisational learning programmes on the job enhanced the way in which she performed her roles and her tasks.

After more than four years as a risk manager Nair had had the opportunity – when a new department, the Enablement and Service Optimisation Department, had been created within the organisation – to be promoted to the position of senior strategic analyst manager with greater responsibilities and more important managerial roles than previously. Her duties had included advising the company on company products in terms of how the company could successfully reach their targeted customers in the competitive market. Her greater responsibilities had meant that Nair had learnt to formulate policy for the organisation while her role as a more senior manager had made her one of the top decision-makers in the company. Nair was afforded the opportunity to learn through the work designated to her and to make decisions on issues related to company services and products. According to Nair, learning on the job enabled her to be efficient on the job. She stated: "*I have been fortunate through my job to acquire skills.*" She believed that she had learnt on the job how to think analytically and that this skill helped her recognise the implications of problems as well as how to deal with the more ambiguous problems that had long–term consequences within the organisation, for example, corporate restructuring when an organisational restructure in terms of policy may affect the attitude of the employees and this may impact negatively on the company in terms of service delivery. Nair was convinced that some of the techniques and skills she had acquired through learning on the job over the years guided her in her leadership roles and, at the same time, assisted her career development in the corporate world.

Catherine and Lebo also felt that on the job learning had played a crucial role in their career development in the communication organisation, suggesting that some of their career success in the industry could be attributed to the knowledge they had gained on the job. Catherine stated: "I *have learnt new ideas concerning my job over the years.*"

According to Catherine, her career in the mobile industry has enabled her to realise the impact of learning on the job on the organisation itself. She reported that the company had ensured that she performed at her best on the job as she had learnt continuously since joining the organisation. Various avenues for learning on the job are provided to make sure that

employees have a sound understanding of their job roles. For example, Catherine reported that when she joined the company she immediately underwent a learning programme which the company offered. Two years after joining the company she and three other colleagues were nominated by the company to attend an internal marketing short course because the company needed staff members in marketing with a few years' work experience for positions as marketing supervisors at its regional offices. This provided employees in the Marketing Department with the opportunity to move to a regional office. The training they underwent in the form of a short course in marketing broadened their knowledge of marketing strategies and also how to promote the company products in a global, competitive market.

Catherine maintained that the skills she had acquired both when she started her job and also through the organised learning programmes that the company offered her on the job had taught her certain skills and techniques in, for example public relations marketing in working with the media to create an awareness of the company's products; content marketing which entailed educating potential customers and publishing information about specific products and services; and promotional marketing which involves inducing a customer to make a decision about buying a product. In support of what Catherine had to say, Farag and Allen (2007) suggest that work-related learning enables women to acquire knowledge and skills while instilling a desire to learn new things on the job. These enable the individuals concerned to become more competent and bring about a greater understanding of the details of the job than was previously the case. Catherine believed that the skills she had acquired through learning on the job had assisted her to come to a thorough understanding of the nature of her job and that over the years she had developed in terms of her career. She reported that she had been a public relations officer for the first three months of her career in the mobile organisation but that she had subsequently continued her career in marketing which had become her area of interest as she pursued her career in the communication industry.

Catherine's move to marketing was the result of opportunities in that field within the company as company policy supported women in moving across regions. For the past eleven years in the mobile company Catherine has being building her career in marketing, moving from supervisor to senior manager because of the skills she has acquired and her learning on the job.

Lebo spoke about how, in the years since she had started her career in the communication organisation, learning on the job had assisted her career and how she had acquired knowledge through her job. When she had entered the industry thirteen years previously as a trainee she had had to undergo a short learning programme offered by the Talent and Organisational Learning Department of MTN. This is a staff orientation programme during which the ethics of the company are outlined and which is especially organised for newly appointed staff members. The programme covers what the company is all about; the services the company offers to the public; the goals of the company; its rules and regulations; and its products. Lebo believed that the programme had prepared her for her job in the organisation as she was able to understand the policy of the company in terms of how employees should perform their respective tasks and functions according to their job designations. She became a manager four years after joining the mobile industry. She was assisted by the learning programmes that had increased her understanding of the organisational rules, regulations and patterns of interaction with people in the corporate setting. The organisational rules had promoted her progress in her career on the job. The company periodically organises professional learning courses, such as job efficiency courses, in order to acquaint staff with the organisational culture of proficiency and proactivity on the job. Such courses had assisted Lebo to fulfil her duties; to become self-reliant in her job and to become competent in her area of speciality within the company.

In her role as a portfolio general manager she managed the affairs of a programme manager in charge of the company's grouping of projects for the business. Lebo had aspired to the position of general manager in the company after she had held several managerial positions, such as project manager and portfolio manager. The positions she had held had helped her to manage subordinates in such a way as to ensure that the organisational goals were attained as well as in her career path to becoming a top manager in the corporate world. She believed on-the-job learning played an important role in her career development in the communication organisation.

The views of the participants are reinforced by Maurer and Weiss (2010), who argue that learning on the job assists women to develop their careers in corporate settings. They further suggest that job-related experiences support women to continuously learn more on the job and to recognise learning as an effective way of promoting their understanding of their jobs while, at the same time, creating opportunities for them to advance in their careers.

The participants believe that the more they learnt on the job in the organisation, the better their chances to continue to make career progress. Nair indicated how learning on the job had influenced her career progress as follows:

> *My career development in the communication organisation was as result of the opportunities I had to learn on the job ... I have learnt so much on the job and I have vast knowledge about the job. In other words, learning through the job gave me opportunities to understand the job nature and, by virtue of the skills I have acquired on the job, assisted me on my career path in the corporate sector.*

It is clear that the communication organisation encourages the participants on the job by offering learning opportunities to enable them to understand their job and, at the same time, assist them to develop their careers. The organisation regularly offers employees learning opportunities, such as the proficient skills programme. All the participants agreed that continuously learning on the job had helped their career advancement in the communication organisation. They believed that the skills they had acquired, including how to manage people in the organisation in such a way that they carried out their tasks successfully, had assisted them and created opportunities for them to further their career success in the corporate world.

The participants considered continuous learning on the job to be vital to their remaining competitive and to enabling them to add worth to the organisation and to their own progress. This acknowledgement of the value of learning at work on the part of the participants is indicative of the advantages of learning on the job and the capacity which it had built to enable them access better positions over the course of their careers.

Catherine, Lebo and Nair had attended numerous training programmes and courses since joining the organisation. They agreed that these training sessions had played a key role in the development of their careers. Catherine emphasised training as a key factor that had assisted her most in her career path in the communication industry. She maintained that attending training courses is a way of building a career path and that being nominated to attend a training programme was, in itself, an acknowledgement of her value to the organisation as well as her potential within the organisation. The orientation programme had taught her a great deal about the organisation, including employee working relationships; the duties of employees; organisational goals in terms of marketing products and services; and company

policy as it related to promotion and staff welfare development. In addition, the orientation programme had taught her how to interact with, and relate to, colleagues and superiors within the organisation, as well as acquainting her with organisational rules, regulations and conditions of employment. Her employment offer clearly stated that employees should adhere strictly to the organisational rules which guided staff behaviour within the organisation. Examples of such rules include the following: staff are not permitted to form a union within the organisation; they are expected to perform their jobs diligently; there is a chain of leadership from superiors to subordinates in terms of formal ways of interacting between staff members; and staff are granted casual, study and maternity leave as well as three months leave to study anywhere overseas.

The training programmes had also helped her to be proactive, to perform her tasks efficiently on the job and to plan ahead for completing organisational tasks in the future. She had also attended e-learning courses; leadership training; time management programmes; project management training; a mini MBA training programme; skills acquisition training as well as customer relations and events management training. Catherine stated: *"I have learnt how to coordinate subordinate staff through leadership training programmes."* She added: *"Through the mini MBA training I attended I learnt about how to strategise for the organisational growth and, at the same time, learn how to take effective decisions at an appropriate time."* The training had assisted her in her role as a regional manager to plan effectively in terms of promoting the organisation's products and services in the global markets. Catherine's training had provided her with an avenue to acquire the skills of the "human manager" of different people from diverse cultures and who had to perform particular tasks. She had apparently enjoyed the training she had received in the company over the years and had found the leadership training programme especially valuable. She attributed her rise in the organisation to the training she had received. Fourage et al. (2010) argue that training is essential for women to enable them to perform their job efficiently and is, thus, useful to them in their development on the job in the workplace while, at the same time, assisting them to carry out their organisational tasks effectively.

Lebo and Nair both expressed the view that training had been extremely helpful to their career development in the communication organisation. Lebo reported that, in addition to the initial training she had received, she had also participated in other programmes as well on the job training which included leadership excellence programmes; project management; advance

consultative training and change management training. These training opportunities were assisting her to grow in her career within the organisation as the skills she had acquired, especially through the leadership training, had given her an understanding of how she could attain promotion in the organisation. The organisation trains its staff in terms of job efficiency while training for managers is compulsory to enable to support the career development of the staff members ender them and to assist them to perform effectively on the job. Project management training had prepared Lebo for her planning functions within the company. When she had been a portfolio manager her task had been to oversee the company project supervisors in charge of product launches while it was her responsibility to ensure that new products were properly launched. Lebo concluded by indicating that she had learnt a great deal through the training programmes in which she had participated while on the job and that these programmes had helped to understand her job and to engage vigorously in the functioning of the communication organisation.

Lebo described the importance of training in her career as follows:

> *I have attended more than thirty training courses in the communication organisation, to mention a few, leadership integrated programmes for managers, advance consultative management training course and project management. These training courses exposed me on the job and, through this training, I have gained enough organisational skills which make me understand the job nature very well. I have learnt through this training to be efficient and competent on the job in the communication industry. I must confess that these training courses assisted me a lot in my career development in the telecommunications sector.*

Nair had started her career in the Manpower Development Department where she was involved in organising training and learning programmes for staff members related to their line of work, as well as an online tutorial programme to prepare them for their jobs. She also often attended training during which an externally sourced person trained the trainers in the company. One such programme had been a manager's coach training programme. She had been nominated to attend this programme about seven years after joining the company. During the programme she had learnt, as a person in a senior management position, when to act as a coach and manage, develop and build the career paths of subordinates.

At the time of the study Lebo was conducting training for all junior employees once a quarter. The training includes career development and ensuring that the participants understand that the company supports their development and growth in their future careers. Nair was of the opinion that the training activities to which she referred above had assisted her to perform her job tasks while they also enabled her to develop her own career path. Approximately six years after she had joined the company she had attended an advanced literature course which she had chosen to attend in order to develop on the job. The course had been fully sponsored by the company as part of company policy. Through this course Lebo learnt to understand people operating in a multicultural environment and to deal with their diverse ways and manners. She had also an opportunity to attend an argumentative reasoning course which she had found interesting. The course had been important to her because she had learnt to use argumentative reasoning in decision-making in critical situations involving staff members and the organisation as a whole.

According to Nair, as a senior manager she had had the opportunity to attend a legacy development training programme which is targeted at individuals who fulfil mission practical roles at MTN (South Africa). The course had taught her how impart knowledge to subordinates in her function as a senior manager. The training had been an extension of the leadership evaluation advanced training programme which she had attended and at which she had learnt how to prepare herself for her roles and functions as a senior manager in terms of planning and decision-making. In addition, she had also learnt how she could partner with subordinates in terms of developing them in a succession process should she leave the company, thus ensuring continuity in the business.

The most recent training Nair had attended as a senior manager had involved how to assist the mobile telecommunications network on the way in which a culture operating model could be changed to accelerate vital proliferation smartly in order to help staff work through conflict situations. Nair believed that these training programmes assisted her to function well on the job. This belief is supported by Storen (2013), who contends that work-related training for women within the organisation is an innovative way of encouraging them to function very well in their jobs and to assist them to better understand the nature of their jobs. According to Nair, she had learnt through the training and courses she had attended to function extremely effectively in several organisational segments, including training and strategic management.

According to the participants, training is crucial and, indeed, extremely important to them. They believe that training on the job had taught them how to deal with organisational issues. In addition, they continuously gained new skills and improved existing skills – an essential component of their career successes. Thus, training had played a positive role in developing their careers paths in the corporate sector. This assertion confirms Maurer and Weiss's (2010) notion that, for women to continue to experience career progression in the corporate sector, it is useful and important for them to continuously have access to learning programmes which increase their efficiency on the job and create opportunities for career development.

8.4.2   Experience on the job

Catherine, Lebo and Nair all agreed that their experience in terms of the years they had spent on the job was a factor in their career development in the communication organisation. At the time of the study Catherine had been working for the mobile organisation for over twelve years and had occupied different positions within the organisation, including supervisor, departmental head and team leader. Thus, since she had started her career in the industry some years back she had accumulated vast experience on the job. As a supervisor she had worked in different sections where she had designated job specifications to subordinates to ensure that they performed the tasks assigned to them and achieved results. Her experience of managing others assisted her to perform extremely effectively in her job; to develop on the job; and to learn more about the job in a leadership role of co-ordinating staff to perform efficiently according to their job designations. Based on her supervisory role and long-term experience on the job, Catherine had exploited other opportunities with the support of the company to move up the corporate ladder to a managerial level where she performed efficiently, thus ensuring that, for several years of her career, she had promoted the company services and products in marketing. Her success had inspired her to continue to pursue her career further and to build a career path within the organisation.

Catherine added that, throughout her years with the mobile organisation, she was successful in her career because of what she had gained in the leadership roles she performed in terms of decisions in the interest of both the company and the employees. However, this was possible after her many years of experience on the job and in the corporate world.

Lebo and Nair were also of the opinion that their many years of work and the experience they had gained on the job were major factors in their career development in the corporate world.

During her years with the mobile company Nair had learnt through her experience on the job and she believed that this had assisted her in her roles and functions in the area of strategic management within the organisation and in terms of which she partnered subordinates to become future managers for the purpose of continuity. In addition, she had performed a strategic role within the company in terms of decisions relating to company growth. Nair was of the opinion that the time she had spent on the job in the various positions she had held, including training officer and coach manager with the responsibility of training staff and assigning appropriate training programmes, had added value to her career in that she had become better acquainted with her job. According to Nair, her more than thirteen years with the company had exposed her to wide experience in the corporate world in terms of acquiring skills on the job, including proper reasoning in making decisions that would move the company forward in a positive direction. Since the time when she had been a training officer in the training department and where she had organised training for staff and, later as a senior manager in charge of strategic planning programmes for the organisation, she had accumulated experience on the job which had created opportunities for her to progress in her career and supported by the encouragement the company offers its employees. She stated: "*With my long-term experiences on the job I had learnt much about the job and, at the same time, progressed in my career in the communication organisation.*"

Lebo spoke about how her career in the mobile organisation had developed through the experience she had gained on the job for the more than ten years since she had started her career with the mobile organisation. Her moves from one position to the other had enabled her to accumulate experience on the job and to understand the nature of work which needed to be done and at the appropriate time. She had gained experience as a business analyst on the job from the time she had joined the company when she had completed a cost analysis of a project the company wished to embark upon in order to expand the business. Over the years because of her experience on the job she had become a project manager; gained further experience; and designed projects and events for the company. As a project manager she had learnt how multinational communication organisations, such as mobile telecommunications, could disseminate their products beyond their locality to foreign countries. Several projects had been successfully completed when she was a project manager. Part of her function was to travel to foreign countries, such as Uganda, Ghana and Liberia, to negotiate how the company could partner in order to expand of their network into those countries. After more than four years with the company and because of her experience as a project manager, Lebo

had been promoted to the more senior position of portfolio manager where she was responsible for a programme manager who oversaw all the company projects, both locally and internationally. Her role included obtaining reports on the ongoing company projects and overseeing the progress of projects embarked upon by the company. Lebo's experience and performance in her position as business analyst had opened up opportunities for her to be promoted to project manager; portfolio senior manager and, later, to her present position as general manager in charge of internal investments, negotiating large projects on behalf of the company and in which the company intended investing.

All the participants agreed that their experiences on the job in the communication organisation had assisted them to gain a more extensive knowledge than would otherwise have been the case as they progressed in their career. It is significant that they believed that their long term work experience on the job in various positions as team leaders and managers had enabled them to learn more on the job and had created opportunities for them to develop their careers in the corporate world.

8.5 Theme 3: Respondents' job satisfaction

Under this theme some of the factors that determine the job satisfaction of women in the corporate sector are discussed. These factors include how job flexibility determines the job satisfaction of women on the job and also how income and benefits determine their job satisfaction within the mobile organisation.

The participants mentioned how their job satisfaction derived, inter alia, from the substantial income and benefits they received in terms of their salaries and welfare benefits as well as the flexibility of their jobs in the communication organisation.

8.5.1 Job flexibility

The participants confirmed that company policy allows staff members to rotate careers in various fields, such as marketing, sales, customer care services and talent and development. According to the participants, they have benefitted from the opportunities the company offers its staff. For example, they had all worked at the both regional offices and at the company's corporate head office. They had been prompted them to move to various departments in order to experience new learning challenges; different environments; and different job skills. The participants were clearly passionate about their jobs which had created opportunities for them

to progress in their career and to understand organisational issues, such as how to manage people within the organisation as well as enabling the job rotation provided the flexibility for staff members, particularly women, to explore the opportunities available at any time. Hill et al. (2008) support the views of the participants by arguing that individuals in an organisation enjoy work-flexibility in that such a work environment creates an avenue for workers to explore organisation opportunities in different areas of their choice and within the same organisation.

According to the participants, their work life had been positive in terms of career development but that their careers had not affected their family life because of their flexible working hours which enabled them to attend to private family life issues and, thus, that their jobs did not intrude on the time they spent attending to their families. Since they had joined the company the participants had all enjoyed their hours at work while the company also gave them time in which to engage in other activities. Galinsky, Bond and Hill (2004) contend that workers should be given opportunities through organisational flexibility to meet all their personal needs both on and away from the job to enable them to balance their work-life and their family-life.

All the participants spoke extensively about their career development and agreed that their jobs were fulfilling in terms of the job satisfaction they experienced in the communication organisation. They appreciated the flexibility of their jobs which encouraged them to move across regions in the same company and within the same career areas in order to explore new opportunities in terms of their career paths.

8.5.2   Remuneration and benefits

Other factors which determined the participants' job satisfaction in the telecommunications industry, they confirmed that they were happy with their remuneration because they all received generous salary packages. The organisation offers a package which includes various allowances, such as medical, housing, excess workload, hazard and meal and travel allowances. The allowances are included in the packages they receive every month. These allowances are extensive and often exceed their basic salary. For example, the car allowance is sufficient to buy two cars of their choice while the housing allowance allows them to buy a comfortable apartment. In addition, their salaries increased as they were promoted to managerial positions in the company while the allowances also increased. Mercer (2008)

argues that higher salaries and extra incentives are motivational factors that may help to make women to feel more comfortable and happy in an organisation as they are more likely to feel extremely satisfied with their jobs.

The organisation also offers an offshore travel opportunity to senior staff. The participants confirmed that women at managerial level enjoy the benefits of general travel allowances. For example, employees may be sent on international assignments to other regions throughout Africa with the benefits including a travel allowance, tickets and accommodation. In addition to the travel opportunities the organisation also offers medical benefits for women with such benefits also covering their families. Wong (2005) believes that organisations provide certain benefits, such as extra work allowances, to enable individuals within the organisation to feel satisfied and comfortable on the job.

According to the participants these benefits made it easier for them to achieve some of their personal goals while enabling them to enjoy their work, feel happy about their jobs and continue to pursue their careers in a company which offers outstanding opportunities for career development and benefits, such as generous incomes. They maintained that, throughout their careers with the organisation, they had always felt happy and satisfied with the company welfare packages in terms of the value offered to the staff.

8.6   Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that the participants had had deliberate expectations when they had decided to work in the communication industry. In addition, they had all discovered learning at work to be a strong factor in their professional success. The study found that the women had chosen to join the organisation on the basis of the organisation's profile and because the organisation supported the career advancement of women. It was also found that the support of senior managers was critical to career progression. Parental backing had also impacted on the participants' choice to seek a career in the telecommunications industry. The participants were all confident that they had chosen a good profession in an organisation that they perceived as superior and also one which would open doors for them in the corporate world.

The findings revealed that the organisation contributes to the training of women through the identification of learning projects related to their occupations. Women have opportunities to learn continuously at work and this facilitates their progress on their career paths. This

constant learning in the corporate world encourages them to aspire to top management positions in the organisation. The participants had acquired skills and abilities at work from courses and continuous training which enabled them to succeed as managers with regard to realising the objectives of the organisation, while also supervising employees from diverse socioeconomic sectors and assisting them to accomplish their set assignments.

It was clear from the participants' responses that the company encouraged harmony between the work life and family life of its employees.

The participants all agreed that their jobs in the organisation would promote their careers and that the organisation consistently empowered them by helping them to create opportunities to advance in their careers and by providing continuous learning opportunities that assisted their professional progression.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY, ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

9.1   Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine and analyse lifelong learning and the career development of women in a selected mobile telecommunication company in Nigeria and South Africa. This study was premised on the assumption that lifelong learning creates opportunities for women to progress on their career. In the previous chapters – five, six, seven and eight – I analysed both the qualitative and quantitative data in relation to the two countries. In this chapter I discuss the main findings. In synthesising these findings I identify three core ideas that emerged from the data. These include the ambitions of the participants; continuous learning and training as a critical factor for women's career development; and job satisfaction. I then discuss these in the context of the conceptual framework of human capital development (HCD) and lifelong learning as described in Chapter 2. I offer some ideas on the significance of the study, including the limitations of the research and the recommendations that emanate from it. In conclusion, I suggest further education and regular organisational training for women as a way forward to overcome challenges in their career development in the corporate world.

9.1.1   Ambition

Perhaps the most abiding idea that emerges from the data is that the women in this study have a strong sense of ambition (Barsh & Yee, 2012). Contrary to popular belief that women are not ambitious, the women in this study show that they have strong career aspirations. They did not perceive the fact of being a woman to be a determinant in their ambitions. While they spoke of limitations and restrictions outside of themselves, for example organisational structural factors and cultural beliefs, they did not reveal personal internal factors that limited their options. Bola from Nigeria, a married woman participant, was unequivocal that she wanted to become a senior manager from the outset. Despite this, she still aspires to rise further in her career because she believes that she has not yet attained the authority position she is capable of in her job in the organisation. This is her primary target for the future. I suggest that Bola sees the communication organisation as a place where she has certain opportunities that she can explore in terms of her pursuit of a career in the corporate world.

These beliefs could possibly have emerged on the basis of her belief that the industry is a fast-growing one in which she can develop in her career in the future.

In a similar vein, Catherine, a married woman in South Africa, said that, "my career plan when I joined the communication industry is to aspire higher in my career and become a marketing director in the telecommunication organisation". Catherine had full confidence in herself and believed she would be a valuable asset to the marketing arm of the company. She was aware that the organisation was large enough to give her an opportunity for growth. Another interviewee, Sandra, had also set her goals high and had planned to become part of management decision-making. Lebo echoed a similar sentiment and was clear that she had strong ambitions and was willing to work hard to get to her chosen goal. All three indicated a conscious decision to be in the mobile communications industry and had chosen an organisation that they believed would support their career goals. Sandberg's (2013) finding concurs with the above finding, especially as it resonates with the participants' narratives. Sandberg asserts that women in the corporate environment plan strategically when aspiring to senior management levels in the organisation. She stresses further that women are self-aware with regard to their career development and thus they build a kind of self-confidence for themselves to ensure that they achieve their career goals; in other words, in the quest to occupy a senior management position in the corporate world. Two sets of factors often influence their choice of career. These are social factors such as parental influence and structural factors such as teachers/counsellors. This finding concurs with Ahuja (2002), who argues that social factors such as peers, role models and parents are considered to have an influence on women's choice of career.

Sandberg mentions particularly that for women to achieve their career goals successfully in the corporate environment there is a need for them to break through invisible subconscious barriers. According to the participants in this study, their goal was to aspire to the executive levels in the mobile organisation. This prompted them to explore their careers further in the communications organisation and they subsequently felt that there was the potential for them to achieve career success in the communications sector. It is arguable, therefore, that this study confirms Sandberg's (2013) view that the career aspirations of women are a necessary and important issue for women in the corporate environment.

While all the women sought actively to build their careers, some differences are worth mentioning. It seemed that the women in Nigeria connect themselves in the workforce

through other women in the corporate world. The women participants from Nigeria found networking in the workforce as being a helpful mechanism for them to join a company of their choice in the corporate world. Bola pointed out that her colleagues at MTN had assisted her to enter the industry and it was her friends who had encouraged her to pursue her career goals. Aisha, too, had support from her friend who had told her when vacancies in the company had arisen.

The South African participants appeared to have paid conscious attention to the corporate identity and reputation of the company in the public arena. Both Catherine and Nair spoke of the profile of the company and that they were impressed by the history of the organisation and, in Nair's case, by the fact that women were seen to be occupying senior positions in the organisation. The South African women also seemed to pay attention to parental advice and guidance and this factor appeared to be influential in their choice of organisation and their determination to build their careers. While the women in South Africa were drawn to the organisation's established historical reputation, their Nigerian counterparts were more enthused by the newness of the organisation in the country and that this meant they had the potential to become part of a large and growing organisation. They perceived that a newly established organisation offered greater opportunity for them to build their careers.

Factors influencing the career choices of respondents

In Nigeria, some 19.46% of the respondents believed telecommunications was an interesting career and 15.14% believed job opportunities determined their career choices. Therefore, telecommunications is a good job and has market value according to 16.22%, because it attracts high salaries (13.5%) – thus these factors influenced career choice in the communications industry (18.38%). Hence, some 18.38% was prompted for these reasons to explore and pursue a career in the sector. These findings imply that the career choices of women workers are influenced by a multiplicity of factors, including personality, interests and social support.

In South Africa, 15.79% of the respondents considered job opportunities as influencing their career choice, while 17.79% see the telecommunications industry as challenging place of work; ironically this is a motivating factor for women in South Africa to work in this industry. Other factors are interesting job (11.28%), high salaries (27.82%), the job market (18.05%) and no other options (8.27%) than the one they had chosen. This suggests that the

respondents perceived the telecommunications organisation to be an industry that is growing rapidly in the corporate environment and which offers possible opportunities for them to explore and to build their careers. In other words, the respondents clearly regarded the communications organisation is an attractive prospect as they believed it appeared to offer them opportunities to develop on their career paths and, at the same time, it offered them job security.

Put another way the quantitative and qualitative data speak to the perception that the telecommunications sector was a viable sector for career advancement because it paid good salaries, was an interesting place to work and because it offered opportunities to be personally challenging and fulfilling.

9.1.2   Education and training

In both countries, on-the-job training was critical to their career plans and ambitions. Indeed the willingness and eagerness to learn both on the job and informally and through formal external education was one of the most striking findings of this study. Bola said that she had been lucky to have the opportunity to learn new ideas on the job through the training she had attended. Indeed, all the participants in this study felt that training would help them on the job and would also help to make them useful to the organisation. They also felt that the training would be useful for them personally. The participants mentioned that training would advance them so that they could make a meaningful contribution to the development of the organisation. The reasons for this which were given by the participants can be linked to the assertions of Fakhar and Anwar (2008), who argue that training is considered very useful in the corporate world because it is believed that training increases the effectiveness and efficiency of women to perform on the job. They explain further that the performance of women in an organisation is dependent on various factors, but training is considered to be a key factor for them on the job. Fakhar and Anwar (2008) explain that women who have opportunities for training have a better chance of improving their performance because training tends to increase their skills and competencies on the job. Similarly, Donald (2009) asserts that women need training for their career development because training on the job is seen as being valuable for women's career development and thus encourages self-fulfilled skills which become useful for them on the job.

Maurer and Weiss (2010) note that training on the job allows women to continuously increase their skills and also helps them to improve existing skills. Training has thus become an essential apparatus for women's career success in a corporate setting. The knowledge women gain on the job through training assists them in their career and thus creates better opportunities for career development for women in the corporate world. It is evident that the more access women have to training on the job the better the chances of them adapting to the organisational structure and culture. Training on the job is thus seen as a suitable device for assisting women to understand the nature of their job in the corporate setting. It assists women to further develop their skills on the job and also increases their levels of technical know-how. Women's career development in a corporate setting increases as they attend training that is related to the nature of their job. While both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are critical for women's motivation to build their career, the Nigerian participants spoke about the extremely competitive nature of the job market in the country and that "getting in" was difficult. It was critical therefore to build a strong network of friends and colleagues who would be able to assist with getting in. The "closed" nature of the Nigerian job market (see Adeyemi, Ojo, Aina & Olanipekun, 2006) is contrasted with the seeming openness of the South African job market. Research has shown that women's participation in professional paid jobs in South Africa is gradually on the increase (Ndhlovu & Spring, 2009), and this may be linked to South Africa's goal for gender equality as enshrined in its Constitution.

A related finding was the value of furthering women's education through formal external institutions. There was a strong view among the participants that higher qualifications secured them better jobs and was a key factor in obtaining promotion and meeting their ambitions. Sandra had enrolled for a postgraduate degree programme in business administration as soon as she had joined the company and followed this with a master's degree as she believed the qualification would improve her chances of attaining a senior position. Bola had two postgraduate qualifications – a master's in information technology and a master's in business administration. She had begun the second master's with mainly because it offered her better career advancement in the company. Aisha too made a similar decision and suggested that her career had advanced because she had made a conscious choice to improve her qualifications. Of course all acknowledged too that increased qualifications did not mean putting in less effort in the workplace. On the contrary, they found that commitment to the job and hard work were key factors in achieving their ambitions. While there was a strong reliance on qualifications as a factor for achieving

success in Nigeria, their South African counterparts appeared to give credit to their experience in the industry as a central factor in their pursuance of their career goals. Catherine from South Africa made the point that she had been in the organisation for more than twelve years and had worked in various departments. It was this experience, she argued, that held her in good stead to become one of the senior executives in the organisation. Lebo and Nair too spoke of their extensive experience across departments that had helped them understand the nature of their work and the organisation better. It was this, they argued, that put them in a favourable position as they built their careers.

Participants also made reference to the value of mentors within and outside the organisation as useful learning mechanisms. Although this was informal learning, it was evident that mentors played a key role in building confidence and helping them make career decisions.

Factors encouraging continuous learning and the career progress of women

In response to the question as to the factors that encourage continuous learning, 39.35% of the respondents argued that motivation determines the career advancement of women, 25.16% believed it is a learning culture, while 6.45% said institutional support assisted their career development. On the basis of the data presented above it is feasible that internal motivation is a key factor in career advancement.

Likewise, only 7.74% of the women maintained that the time allocated for development had assisted them to learn more on the job and that this, in turn, had influenced their career development. However, 19.35% recognised family support while 7.74% believed financial resources gave them continuous learning opportunities that helped them advance in the career paths. These findings revealed that the telecommunications organisation had given the women opportunities to progress on their career paths.

Some women (34.59%) in South Africa believed that motivation encourages continuous learning in the workplace. 24.81% of the population sampled agreed that a learning culture encouraged women in the workplace and a few (7.52%) believed that continuous learning depends on whether the organisation allocates time for it or encourages the development of staff especially women. Other factors include financial resources (9.02%), family support (2.26%), and institutional support (16.54%). Thus, the findings suggest that, while internal motivation plays a significant role in the career advancement of women, external support plays a minimal role.

Both the respondents from Nigeria and South Africa want to advance their career through continuous learning, although Nigerian women showed more readiness to take on challenges and more willingness to work in the telecommunications industry compared to their South African counterparts. This may be largely cultural, however respondents from both countries would work in the telecommunications industry because, among other reasons, of the good salaries. The motivation for women to continue their studies and advance their career in the telecommunications industry was motivated by several factors, but women in both countries would want their organisation to provide them with institutional support.

In sum, the senior managers who were interviewed as well as the junior workers who responded to the questionnaire suggested that the opportunity to develop their careers through on the job training and other forms of learning was extremely valuable for their career advancement. While the 'strength' of factors that influenced learning differed across both countries, the value of lifelong learning by respondents to the quantitative survey as well as the qualitative interviews was not in dispute.

9.1.3   Job satisfaction

The third finding refers to the job satisfaction women participants in the communications organisation enjoyed on the job. The women's belief is that the job is suitable for them and it is satisfying for them. The participants revealed that they liked the nature of their job and thus it is confirmed by the participants that their commitment to the job is as a result of the satisfaction they experience on the job in the communications organisation. Although the participants attributed their job satisfaction to the benefits in terms of incentives, both the personal satisfaction they experience in the workplace and the remuneration are factors that determine their satisfaction in the workplace. Data collected from this study confirms Handel's (2005) statement that women's job satisfaction in corporate settings can be attributed to the opportunities they enjoy on the job in terms of promotion and good pay. Handel ascribes the influence of real welfare and opportunities for extra benefits on the job as a motivation for the women participants to enjoy their job in a corporate setting. Similarly, all the participants in this study confirmed that the mobile communications organisation supports them with their needs on the job.

The work environment was also an important factor in achieving job satisfaction. Aisha spoke of an environment that was free of hostility. Almost all the women talked of the value

of a supportive environment in which they did not feel threatened. This included an accepting environment where their promotion was not seen as a threat, what Handel (2005) refers to as the sense of comfort women feel in the workplace. Of course this was an ideal that they identified as being key for women to achieve their ambitions and they acknowledged that such an ideal was rarely available. As Alekho-Oje (2008) points out, there are few women in senior positions in the corporate environment in Nigeria. Another common factor mentioned by the participants was the importance of a technologically supportive environment that allowed them to keep up with technological changes. A supportive policy environment was also critical for women to build their place in the corporate world. There was a strong view that without conscious policy to promote women to senior positions, it would not happen automatically, even if the women were qualified and able. The South African women had benefited from a policy environment that encouraged the promotion of women to senior positions. The South African participants noted flexibility and job security and safety as key factors for job satisfaction. Both Catherine and Nair spoke of flexibility to move within the organisation and they believed it was this kind of internal movement and flexibility that allowed them to become senior managers. They suggested that a policy environment that encouraged such flexibility would serve women well.

The data collected through the quantitative survey reinforces the qualitative data. In the case of South Africa, high salaries (27.82%) and the job market (18.05%) are the major factors that influenced career choice, while the organisational culture (50.38%) influenced their access to senior position in the organisation. Therefore job satisfaction was linked to factors such as the comfortable incomes especially. Meanwhile, the two most significant barriers to the career progress of women include discrimination against women and a lack of mentoring. However, it is interesting to note that 95.49% of the respondents in South Africa agreed that continuous learning did influence their careers.

Similar to South Africa, respondents (13.5%) in Nigeria indicated that the high salaries had influenced their career choice and job satisfaction. Unlike in South Africa, 3.24% respondents mentioned that the opportunities available to study further determined their career progress. It emerged that the two most significant barriers to career progress in Nigeria were discrimination against women (48.11%) and sexual harassment (21.08%). Despite this, Nigerian respondents (94.05%) strongly agreed that continuous learning does, indeed, enhance the career progress of women.

These findings point to the importance of lifelong learning for women as it assists in bridging the gap in income, entering a strong organisational culture, accessing senior management positions and, thus, achieving their goals as women. It is also possible that continuous learning in the form of opportunities to improve qualifications and skills may offer some buffer against gender discrimination and may create pathways for women to build their careers. In sum, access to promotion, a supportive environment and good remuneration were key factors for job satisfaction.

9.2   Human capital development and lifelong learning

The HCD approach takes the view that people are the core assets of any organisation and that developing the individual is also of benefit for the organisation (Martinez, 2013). That the women in this study demonstrate a strong sense of ambition, and are eager to learn both formally and informally bears testimony to the argument that HCD is critical for organisational and individual growth.

The finding in this study confirms that learning on the job is a significant supportive action for women participants to succeed in their careers. On-the-job learning is seen as a driving force, creating opportunities for women in corporate settings to overcome any challenges that may likely serve as hindrances to their career development (Marcus & Waters, 2002:91; Stockley, 2008:49). In other words, it is suggested in this study that learning through the organisation in any form helped the women participants to improve themselves on the job and in the workplace in general. In this context the use of skills in the corporate setting is seen as way of creating an avenue through which the women may explore their careers further (Alley, 1999:189, Drucker, 2001:305). As a result, additional qualifications are a factor that supports the participants to move up the career ladder in the corporate sector. I subsequently linked the findings of this study with a situation-centred perspective which emphasises the importance of qualifications and learning through the job being used by women managers to pursue promotion and thus to rely on it as a means to climb the organisational ladder (Canning & Montmarquette 1991; Powell & Butterfield, 1994). Within the organisational work environment, the Traditional Career Development Model emphasises that organisational support systems should be offered to employees, in this case women, at the initial stage of their career in the organisation in order to acquire the organisational skills that will be useful in pursuing their careers. This clearly shows that organisational culture as a component plays an important role in the career development of the women. Reichers (1987)

and Wanous (1992) argue that organisational orientation and socialisation programmes are used as a means to assist newcomers in the early career stages of their careers to become quickly acclimated to the work environment by increasing their understanding of the organisational culture and norms. In essence, the women participants confirmed that the orientation process they were fortunate enough to have attended when they joined the mobile organisation had assisted them to understand the organisational environment. In addition, such training opportunities had helped them to become acquainted with the organisational culture.

Similarly, Power (2006), Power and Rothausen (2003) and Sullivan, Martin, Carden and Maniero (2004) argue that programmes offered by organisations assist individuals already in the job to refresh skills and enhance their career paths, as well as supporting career aspirations in the organisation. The understanding of organisational learning from the outset of the women participants' careers in the mobile organisation served them well because they found that the learning process they went through in the organisation assisted them in their career development in the corporate world. Lifelong learning in this context of the study is regarded as a very influential factor for the women in the corporate world to continue to pursue their careers (Roelof & Adeline, 2011:89).

It has been argued that training and ongoing learning will build a woman's social standing, choice-making power and capacity to be more autonomous, expand their insight into the outside world and help to secure organisational abilities (Preece, 2009). What this study shows is that HCD is not a "top down" action undertaken by heads of organisations. Indeed, the women in this study actively sought their own development through on-the-job training, studying further and building networks that were valuable to them. They created opportunities for themselves and seized opportunities when they presented themselves. This suggests that HCD can be initiated and continued with the individuals who may benefit from it. In this instance, HCD served the ambitions and aspirations of women, who historically have had little presence as senior managers in the corporate world. What is required is a work environment that is open to HCD and to making lifelong learning a core principle of an organisation's policy; this, in turn, may set women on the path to building their careers.

One of the core purposes of HCD is to break down the boundaries that obstruct women's entry to such career paths and open up opportunities for women to explore their fullest potential in all sectors. Therefore, HCD must be actively planned and should, ideally, be

aimed at creating opportunities for people, often women, who have potential but, for historical and social reasons, do not have the opportunity to develop their careers. Therefore, HCD cannot be overemphasised for the survival of modern organisations. From the foregoing, I suggest that lifelong learning is a key factor for women to stay focused on their goal and develop their self-esteem and, ultimately, their standing of the organisation. The acknowledgement of lifelong learning by the participants is demonstrative of the value they place on learning throughout their careers. I argue that lifelong learning gives women the capacity to obtain access to better positions during their careers. Therefore, it is argued in this study that continuous learning and improved qualifications have the potential to assist women in their careers. Accordingly, the findings provide evidence that the women participants regard lifelong learning on the job as a way for them to develop their careers further in the corporate world.

There is no doubt that women experience challenges in the process of building their careers in organisations where the upper management levels are occupied largely by men. However, the fact is that some of women in the corporate environment are able to break through the glass ceiling to reach the top positions in the organisation. The women participants in this research had achieved success in the organisation through their "self-generated efforts" to create opportunities for advancing their careers in the communications organisation. Consequently, they explored such opportunities that came their way in order to develop their careers. The finding in this study suggests that on-the-job learning through experience and further education had opened up extensive opportunities for the women participants in the mobile organisation to develop in their careers. For example, the job-related courses the women participants had attended facilitated their understanding of the situation and created avenues for career development. In addition, access to training opportunities were considered by the women to be part of what improved their chances of success and enabled them to overcome any challenges that might have affected their progress in the workplace.

The discussion above indicates that if women are to achieve career success in a corporate setting there must be ongoing organisational support vis-à-vis learning on the job. I argue that women achieve success in their careers through a lifelong learning process on the job and through the opportunities for training provided by the organisation. Thus, I suggest that a good organisational structure that recognises women encourages effort to achieve their career goals. In other words, management of the communications organisation in this context should

consider the important role played by women and thus pave the way for job mobility for women so that they may aspire to the top positions in the corporate world.

9.3 Significance of the study

In this part of the thesis I explain the significance and the benefits that will be derived from the study. Importantly, the research helped me to establish the relevance of education and the opportunities that derive from it and I hope to transfer this awareness to future research for the benefit of my country, Nigeria, in both the academic and corporate environment.

This study makes a significant contribution to the sparse literature that is currently available on lifelong learning and women's career development in the corporate sector, especially in Nigeria. The study also adds to the understanding of the way women in an African context build their career paths in the corporate environment, and the benefit that the South African and Nigerian economies can derive from lifelong learning for women, as demonstrated by this research. In other words, the findings will be useful to the academic community in both countries. In a nutshell, this study may help to bring a new perspective to the South African and Nigerian academic community by viewing the challenges with respect to the development of women's careers in Nigeria and South Africa against the broader challenges experienced in the African continent.

9.4 Limitations to the study

Since the study was located in two different countries it was challenging to design questionnaires and interviews that would address concerns in both countries in the same way. For the purposes of validity and trustworthiness, the same questionnaire had to given to both sets of participants and the same core interview questions had to be asked. I realise this may have had some limitations as I may have missed what may be most important to some of the respondents. However, Coolican (2004) and Vaus (2004) argue that in research there is no one method or design that is free from the critique of a lack of generalisation. In this context, the mixed methods research design that was used in this study is believed to increase internal and external validity because it relates to reality and it is thus considered that the approach is practical for the purposes of research (Moon & Moon, 2004).

In research of this nature, male researchers are few if not absent, because the study focuses on married and single women. In view of the fact that, in this study, I was a male doing research

in South Africa and Nigeria on women's career development I faced certain challenges in terms of working with women and getting their time and attention. However, the topic of the study generated much interest and helped to overcome the challenges of being a man researching women.

9.5   Recommendations

The recommendations that emanate from this study are based on the empirical data analysis in chapters five and seven; the stories narrated in chapters six and eight, the reviewed literature and the themes that emerged in this thesis.

This study points to the value of corporate organisations setting up a career unit in the organisation to support women's career aspirations. Such units should for instance be headed by the topmost woman manager with a background in human resource management. Such structures would motivate younger or less senior women to advance in their careers. This kind of support system would encourage women and increase their confidence in developing their careers in the corporate world. I propose that such a unit should be established within the human resource department of corporate organisations. The primary responsibility for this unit would be to guide women in developing their career paths. Moreover, setting up this unit would assist women workers to aspire to progress in their careers. Of course this suggestion would be strengthened if cultural beliefs about the lower status of women, which are barriers to women becoming being fully functional leaders in society, are changed. In addition, government should provide a supportive policy environment that would benefit women wanting to build their careers.

The recommendations of this study are classified into two sub-sections; organisational level; policy initiatives by government.

Organisational level

Aisha revealed that there is a limit to women's progress in their careers in the corporate sector and thus that seems to be a challenge for women in the corporate world. There is a possibility that other women in the communications organisation face the same challenges. Based on this I recommend that corporate organisations should set up a career unit in the organisation to support women's career aspirations. These units should be headed by a top woman manager with a background in Human Resources Management. Such a structure

would motivate upcoming women to advance in their careers. This kind of support system would also encourage and increase the confidence of women in developing their careers in the corporate world. I propose that this unit should be established within the Human Resources Department. The primary task of this unit would be to guide women's career paths. Setting up this unit would assist women workers' career aspirations. In this it is feasible that the cultural norms evident in African societies and which may hinder women's career advancement may be mitigated by such structures in a supportive work environment.

Policy initiatives by government

Government needs to support and encourage women to develop their career ambitions. This is supported by McGregor-Smith (2013), who challenges government at all levels to increase support for women's career advancement by investing in IT and technology areas in order to increase opportunities for women both to obtain jobs and remain in the workplace. It is noted too that a supportive policy environment in South Africa has contributed to the increasing number of women in senior management positions (See Chapter 1).

Government should endeavour to formulate policy that will give women a chance to have equal opportunities in the job market. Government should create opportunities for women to make up 40% of any workforce, be it private or public. Such a system should create a law for all government agencies, ministries and departments, as well as private organisations, to employ at least 40 to 45% of women in the workforce. This would help to further increase the representation of women in the workforce. Therefore, it is recommended that gender-based initiatives should be launched that would empower women. It would be valuable if the Department/Federal Ministry of Labour and Department/Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in Nigeria were to develop policies that would enhance women's employment opportunities and career progression in both countries. It is recommended that the government should establish Women Empowerment Centres (WECs) in regions and provinces in a bid to further empower women. While there is a strong national and provincial policy approach to encourage women in leadership in South Africa, there is limited evidence of this at regional and local levels. Such WEC's may offer the necessary support for women at local level. This would develop an innovative approach to gender and develop the potential and earning power of women in the private and public sector. These services may impact positively on the lives of women. Therefore, work that enhances key aspects of business, skills and career

development in organisations with support for women in particular are encouraged (McGregor-Smith, 2013).

9.6   Suggestions for further research

Future research may select more than two organisations or different countries in Africa. The study may be extended beyond Africa. In this study, lifelong learning was defined to include continuous learning on-the-job; organisational learning; professional courses and formal learning through further education. As a result further research may investigate knowledge and preparedness of women in corporate sectors towards continuous learning on-the-job.

9.7   Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the three main findings that emerged in this study. These were, firstly, the presence of ambition among the participants and that the choice of career of the participants is usually influenced by internal and external factors. Secondly, the participants pointed to the importance of continuous learning and training of and on the job as being critical for women to achieve their career goals. Thirdly, the importance of job satisfaction as a factor in women's advancement in their careers was highlighted. The study showed that HCD through lifelong learning may be a key way forward for women to realise their career ambitions. In addition, HCD was shown to be a tool that women can choose to use themselves but that a supportive work environment is necessary for the concept of HCD and lifelong learning to benefit women in the corporate sector. HCD and lifelong learning are not about being developed but rather about choosing to create opportunities for advancement. The driving force among the participants was shown to be the opportunities they had created for themselves in order to progress in their careers. The participants in this study identified the element of self-generated effort, which assisted in the creation of a road map for achieving success in the corporate world. On-the-job training and continuous learning combined with the women's own ambitions to succeed are thus the key elements for career success.

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

June 7, 2012

General Manager,

Organization and Talent Development,

MTN Nigeria Communication Ltd,

Ikoyi Lagos,

Nigeria.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN YOUR ORGANISATION.

I am a Ph D student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management and Policy studies. I am working on the study title ''Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector''. The study intends to establish how lifelong learning can shape and influence the career opportunities and advancement of women professionals in the corporate sector.

The purpose of the study will be to investigate how lifelong learning can influence career advancement of women in MTN. I kindly request permission to distribute and administer questionnaires to 227 (two hundred and twenty seven) junior staff [women], which is envisaged to be done during working hours. I will also be conducting interviews with any 3[three] senior women managers in your organization. Interview session will be flexible to accommodate participants working schedule. In accordance with the university research guidelines, all information provided will be treated confidentially and anonymously.

Furthermore, any participants will be free to withdraw from the study any time she wishes to do so. With this, you are kindly requested to confirm your acceptance through a written feedback.

Your co-operation in this regards will be highly appreciated.

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Yours sincerely,

_____

Akinola G.Dosunmu

Ph D student (Department of Education Management and policy Studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria 0002

Republic of South Africa

Mobile:+27730029240

akinolageorge@gmail.com

………………………….

Professor Venitha Pillay

Supervisor

Department of Education Management and policy studies

University of Pretoria

Pretoria 002.

Republic of South Africa

Mobile: +27824624400

Mail:venitha.pillay@up.ac.za.

Appendix 1b: Letter to mobile telecommunication network

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

June 7, 2012

General Manager,
Organization and Talent Development,
MTN South Africa,
14th Avenue, Fairland,
Roodepoort,
South Africa.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN YOUR ORGANISATION

I am a Ph D student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management and Policy studies. I am working on the study title ''Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector". The study intends to establish how lifelong learning can shape and influence the career opportunities and advancement of women professionals in the corporate sector.

The purpose of the study will be to investigate how lifelong learning can influence career advancement of women in MTN. I kindly request permission to distribute and administer questionnaires to 234 (two hundred and thirty four) junior staff [women], which is envisaged to be done during working hours. I will also be conducting interviews with any 3[three] senior women managers in your organization. Interview session will be flexible to accommodate participants working schedule. In accordance with the university research guidelines, all information provided will be treated confidentially and anonymously.

Furthermore, any participants will be free to withdraw from the study any time she wishes to do so. With this, you are kindly requested to confirm your acceptance through a written feedback.

Your co-operation in this regards will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Akinola G.Dosunmu

Ph D student (Department of Education Management and policy Studies)

University of Pretoria

Pretoria 0002

Republic of South Africa

Mobile:+27730029240

akinolageorge@gmail.com

………………………….

Professor Venitha Pillay

Supervisor

Department of Education Management and policy studies

University of Pretoria

Pretoria 002.

Republic of South Africa

Mobile: +27824624400

Mail:venitha.pillay@up.ac.za.

Appendix 2: Consent letter to participant

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

June 7, 2012

Dear participant,

My name is Dosunmu, Akinola George. I am currently a registered PhD student of the University of Pretoria in South Africa. My research topic is: ''Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector''. The purpose of the study is to understand how lifelong learning may influence the career advancement of women in MTN. I would like to invite you to participate in a one on one interview with the aim of building data for this study. If willing we could arrange a time and place that will be most convenient for you. The interview will cover the following areas:

a) What factors have assisted your career advancement?
b) What are the barriers that hindered you career development in MTN?
c) What kind of training/career advancement programs did you experience in MTN.? How useful are this?

Kindly note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any point. In addition your confidentiality is guaranteed. No details that could identify you will be used in the final thesis. If you are willing to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached consent form and return to me.

Yours sincerely,

Akinola G. Dosunmu

Researcher signature…………………………….   Date…………………………………..

Supervisor

Professor Venitha Pillay

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Consent form

I am willing to participate / not participate in your studies. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any point.

……………………………..   ………………………………………
        Participant name   Participant signature

………………………………….
        Date.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Dear Respondent

I am a doctoral student of the above named institution I am carrying out a study on lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector. The questionnaire is strictly to provide vital information regarding this research work. I assure full confidentiality of all information given. No name will be attached to the data collected. You are free not to answer a question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

SECTION A

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Please Tick (x) in the boxes as appropriate unless otherwise indicated.

1. Age:

a   Below 30 years   ( )

b   30- 39 years   ( )

c   40- 49years   ( )

d   50 and above   ( )

2.   Marital Status:

a   Married   ( )

b   Single   ( )

c   Separated   ( )

d   Divorced   ( )

e   Widowed   ( )

3.   Educational Qualification

a   Bachelors   ( )

b   Master   ( )

c   Doctorate   ( )

d   Diploma Certificate   ( )

e   Other (Specify) ....

4.   What is your length of Service? ………………

5.   Who lives in your home with you?

a   Only my husband and I   ( )

b   My husband and his family   ( )

c   My husband and my family   ( )

d   My family and I   ( )

f   Other specify………………..…

6. Number of children……………

7.   What is the age of your children?

a   0-5   ( )

b   6-10   ( )

c   10-15   ( )

d   15-20   ( )

e   20-25   ( )

f   25-30   ( )

g   30-35   ( )

8.   Do you have other dependants (besides children) living at home with you

a   Yes   ( )   b   No   ( )

Section B: Factors influencing Career Choice.

9.   Did you have a career GOAL when you started your career?
a   yes ( )   b   No   ( )

10.   If your answer to question 9 is yes, who influenced your career in telecommunication sector?

a   Self generated   ( )
b   Assistant from parents   ( )
c   Assistance from male colleagues   ( )
d   Assistance from female colleagues   ( )
e   Assistance from friends   ( )
f   Assistance from manager   ( )

11.   If your answer to question 11 is No what is the major reason for not having a career goal in telecommunication sector?

a   Not aware of my career options   ( )
b   Did not think of a future career   ( )
c   Did not know career planning was important   ( )
d   Lack of role models   ( )
e   Had no context for career planning in the business world( )
f   Other specify………….

12. Which of the following factors influenced your choice to enter a career in telecommunication sector?

a	Many different job opportunities	( )
b	Challenging field	( )
c	Interesting and fun field	( )
d	Good job market	( )
e	High salary field	( )
f	Did not have other options	( )

Section C: Determinants of women's workforce, job satisfaction and career progression in corporate organizations

13. In your opinion, what determines your career path in the workforce?

a	Interest on the job	( )
b	Training on the job	( )
c	Organisational learning	( )
d	Experience	( )
e	Friends	( )
f	Male colleagues	( )
g	Female colleagues	( )

14. How satisfied are you in your career?

a	satisfied	( )
b	Not satisfied	( )
c	Indifferent	( )
d	others specify …………………….	

15. Which among the following determines your job satisfaction in telecommunication sector?

a	Opportunity to study	( )
b	Income/benefits	( )
c	Mentoring	( )
d	Promotion	( )
e	Good working condition	( )
f	Friends	( )

16   Do you feel you are progressing in your career job?

a   Yes ( )   b   No   ( )

17   If your answer to question 16 is yes, what factors determines your progression?

a   Organisational policy   ( )
b   Personal Development   ( )
c   Job Nature   ( )
d   Individual career plan   ( )
e   Friends at work   ( )
f   Other colleagues at work   ( )
g   Opportunities to study   ( )

18   If your answer to question 17 is no, what are the factors responsible for your lack of progress in your career?

a   Work Environment   ( )
b   Being a woman   ( )
c   Personal circumstances   ( )
d   Lack of opportunities to study further   ( )

Section D: Factors that determine women's placement and location in the hierarchical order of corporate organizations

19   Do you think women have access to senior position at MTN?

a   Yes   ( )   b   No   ( )

20   If your answer to question 19 is no, what are the reasons?

a   Workplace challenges   ( )
b   Qualification   ( )
c   Role model   ( )

21   If you answered yes to the above question 19, then what are the factors?

a   Organisational culture   ( )
b   Job competition   ( )
c   Women don't like senior management position   ( )

Section E: Barriers and impediments to women career progressions in corporate organizations

22   What are the personal barriers affecting women's career advancement?

a   Lack of career aspiration   ( )

b   Lack of education   ( )

c   Poor self esteem   ( )

d   Leadership style   ( )

23   What are the institutional barriers affecting women's career advancement?

a   Belief what women cannot   ( )

b   Sexual harassment   ( )

c   Discriminationagainst women   ( )

d   Lack of mentoring   ( )

e   Prevented by senior male colleagues   ( )

f   Not enough formal qualifications   ( )

Section F: Implications of education and lifelong learning on career aspirations of women in corporate organizations

24   In your own opinion, do you think continuous learning on the job may enhance women's career progression?

a   Yes   ( )   b   No   ( )

25   If you answer yes to question 24, what are the factors that encourage continuous learning on the job for women?

a   Motivation   ( )

b   Learning culture   ( )

c   Time allocated for development   ( )

d   Financial resources   ( )

e   Supportive family   ( )

f   Institutional   ( )

26   How many training programmes have you participated in?

a   1 – 2   ( )

b   3 – 5   ( )

c   6 – 8   ( )

d   9 – 10   ( )

e   none   ( )

27   What kind of training programme do you think women should participate in that will aid their advancement?

a   Professional training   ( )

b   Leadership training   ( )

c   On the job training   ( )

28   How often have you attended professional meeting and conferences in the last five years?

a   5 or more time   ( )

b   3 to 4 times   ( )

c   1 to 2 times   ( )

d   none   ( )

29   What are your reasons for not attending?

a   Lack of opportunity   ( )

b   Lack of interest   ( )

c   Sex discrimination   ( )

d   Domestic affairs   ( )

e   Family support   ( )

Section G: Strategies to enhance women career advancement in corporate organisations

30   What are the factors enhancing women career advancement?

a   Hard work   ( )

b   Willingness to take risk   ( )

c   Educational credentials   ( )

d   Continuous learning/training   ( )

e   Family support   ( )

31.   In your opinion, do you think women engage in career development?

A   Yes   ( )   No   ( )

32.   If your answer to question 31 is yes, what are the career development plans women engage in at MTN?

a   Personal life events   ( )

b   Peer influence   ( )

c   Parental influence   ( )

d   Spouse support   ( )

33.   If your answer to question 31 is no, what are the reasons?

a   Lack of mentorship   ( )

b   Inadequate leadership   ( )

c   Lack of motivation   ( )

d   Work flexibility   ( )

Appendix 4: Interview guide questions

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Faculty of Education

1. Why did you choose to enter a carrier in mobile communication network? {MTN}

2. Did you have a career plan when you started your career with MTN mobile telecommunication network?

3. Are you happy working here?

4. What factors have assisted your career progress in MTN

5. Is there a person {s} In particular who mentioned you / assisted you / advised you in your career development?

6. How has your current educational qualification assisted / hampered your career development?{ need to indicate qualification}

7. Do you think any other additional qualification would give you an increased opportunity for career development?

8. What educational improvement opportunities are offered in your company?

9. What In your opinion, are the strategies for advancing women employee in to senior managerial position?

10. What are the obstacles/ advantage you encountered in your personal / family life that have hindered / helpful to your career development?

Appendix 5: Clearance certificate

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**CLEARANCE NUMBER :** EM 12/06/01
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Akinola George Dosunmu
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
DATE CONSIDERED	1 April 2015
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPROVED

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years
For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE	Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
DATE	1 April 2015
CC	Jeannie Beukes Liesel Ebersöhn Prof V Pillay

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following condition:

1. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

E.A. ADESINA & CO
LEGAL PRACTITIONERS
& NOTARIES PUBLIC

31/01/2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

IN THE MATTER OF MR. AKINOLA GEORGE DOSUNMU- A DOCTORAL STUDENT.

The above named doctoral student undertakes to keep the standard ethical practice regarding his on-going doctoral research in MTN (Nigeria) and MTN (South Africa).

He undertakes further to use any materials gathered in the course of this research purely for research purpose and not for public consumption and or publication to keep the rule of job secrecy and confidentially.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully.

E. A. Adesina Esq

31/01/2012
E.A. ADESINA
Notary Public
203, Igbosere Road, Lagos

203, Igbosere Road, by Lagos High Court, Hanley Bus/Stop, Lagos.
Tel: 0802 316 4341, 0803 359 1700, E-mail:eniolayebo@yahoo.com

E.A. ADESINA Esq., LL.B, B.L., LL.M – Principal Partner
SUNDAY ODEYEMI, LL.B, B.L.
O.S. NWOGU, LL.B, B.L.
O. FASHOLA Esq., LL.B, B.L. M.I.L.R

Appendix 6: Letter certifying language editing

Alexa Barnby

Language Specialist

Editing, copywriting, indexing, formatting, translation
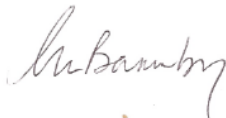
Mobile: 071 872 1334
Tel: 012 361 6347

barnbak@unisa.ac.za
alexabarnby@gmail.com

32 Camellia Avenue
Lynnwood Ridge
0081 Pretoria

1 April 2014

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, ID No. 5106090097080, a fulltime language practitioner with the University of South Africa and member of the South African Translators Institute, have edited Dosunmu Akinola George's doctoral thesis, "Lifelong learning and the advancement of career opportunities for women in the corporate sector". The onus is, however, on the student to bring about the changes suggested and address the comments made.

AK Barnby