

**Personal resilience strategies women leaders use to navigate gender
discrimination in South African manufacturing organisations.**

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Abstract

The country has made significant progress with women entering STEM fields. However, women who choose male-dominated occupations in industries such as manufacturing soon change to more inclusive and gender-balanced fields, making female retention and attraction difficult for the sector. This leads to a brain drain that plays a pivotal role in an already declining industry. Cultural expectations and gender stereotypes are among some of the challenges women grapple with in the industry, delaying progress towards a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector.

The purpose of the narrative inquiry was to understand the resilience strategies women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in the manufacturing sector in South Africa, to help bridge the disconnect between government policies and current organisational practices in the industry. This was achieved through a qualitative research methodology examining the lived experiences of 15 women leaders within the industry.

The findings indicated that that women are still subjected to systemic barriers preventing their progression within the industry. Due to lack of organisational support women develop different adaptive strategies such of Ubuntu leadership style, seeking a strong community of support, which is enabled by a healthy workplace culture. The intersectionality between race and gender highlighted the severity of gender discrimination for previously marginalised groups. Creating the urgency needed for manufacturing organisations to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their organisational policies and procedures to bridge the gap to deliver robust programs to ensure manufacturing environments that are diverse, equitable and inclusive to all.

Key words

Gender discrimination, Intersectionality, Resilience, Women in leadership, Organisational support

Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem

This chapter discusses the background of the research study and further elaborates on its business and academic significance. The research purpose and delimitations are included, followed by a summary of the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Contextual background to the research

The South African manufacturing sector plays a crucial role in the economic growth of the country. The value added as a percentage contribution on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from the manufacturing industry was 15% for Quarter three 2023, making it the third largest industry contributing towards economic growth (Statistics South Africa, 2023). However, the country has failed to grow the industrial base and has seen a decline in manufacturing sector, including employment (Francis & Webster, 2019; Statistics South Africa, 2023). Categorised as the prime manufacturing hub on the African continent, the industry employed over above 1.09 million people in 2021, contributing a share of 11% to South Africa's total workforce (PwC, 2023; Statistics South Africa, 2021; Trade and Industry, 2019). However, women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupations make up 24.4% of the workforce in the manufacturing sector in South Africa (Trade and Industry, 2019). Statistics show that there are more women than men graduating with engineering qualifications, however women remain a minority in STEM fields required in the manufacturing sector (Trade and Industry, 2019). The picture of female representation gets bleak the higher one views manufacturing organisational structures. The share of men in the manufacturing industry outnumbers women in senior leadership positions, with only 19% of women represented at C-suite level within the manufacturing industry (WEF, 2023). This can be attributed to current manufacturing processes and cultures that do not attract or retain women in the industry, hence the great need for the advocacy for an inclusive and more equitable manufacturing sector (Halliday et al., 2022; Mugenyi et al., 2020; O'Brien et al., 2022).

According to Mugenyi et al. (2020) cultural and societal stereotypes on the perception of gender roles have created barriers for women accessing opportunities for participating in historically male-dominated industries such as manufacturing. This is supported by a research review conducted by UNESCO (2020) and Cheryan & Markus (2020) which validated that cultural expectations and stereotypes can affect the participation of women in STEM careers. The sociocultural norms which were highlighted that excluded women

from pursuing STEM fields were the perception that STEM subjects were an inappropriate choice for women, the societal expectation that women are solely responsible for the care economy and the assumption that they have unreliable support structures and lack flexibility (Castaño et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020).

Although there has been significant increase with women taking on leadership roles, unfortunately this has largely been in women-dominated industries, while industries such as energy, manufacturing and infrastructure had the slowest uptake (Castaño et al., 2019; Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018; WEF, 2022). It has been reported that women are subjected to increased gender harassment and discrimination in male-dominated environments, driven by harmful stereotypes diminishing the capabilities of women (Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Zhavoronkova et al., 2022). Studies have shown that women working in male-dominated environment have higher probability of experiencing sexual harassment than those working in different industries (Burczycka, 2021; Folke et al., 2022; Zhavoronkova et al., 2022).

Furthermore, South Africa has one of the most advanced constitutions in the world, including the bill of rights that foreground the right to equality and human dignity, with Employment Equity Act of 1998 prohibiting discrimination whether explicitly or implicitly, however it has not helped with the exclusion of women in the industry (Francis & Webster, 2019; Mugenyi et al., 2020; South African Government, 2014). South African manufacturing organisations have failed to meaningfully address systemic gender discrimination challenges, that continue to perpetuate gender inequality within the industry. This was argued by Francis & Webster (2019) that the country's historical inability to meaningful address inequality, has been attributed to insufficient attention being paid to how power continues to produce and reproduce conditions that foster growing inequality. The same holds true for manufacturing organisations, the lack of women representation in decision making processes perpetuates the traditional perception on gender roles and hinders the advocacy for advancement for gender equality, therefore continuing the current decline of critical skills within the sector (Galea et al., 2020; O'Brien et al., 2022).

1.2 Research Purpose

The country has made significant progress with women entering STEM fields. However, women who choose male-dominated occupations in industries such as manufacturing soon change to more inclusive and gender-balanced fields, making female retention and

attraction difficult for the sector. This leads to a brain drain that plays a pivotal role in an already declining industry. Cultural expectations and gender stereotypes are among some of the challenges women grapple with in the manufacturing industry, delaying progress towards a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector. The purpose of the narrative inquiry was to understand the resilience strategies women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in the manufacturing sector in South Africa, through a narration of their lived experiences, to help bridge the disconnect between government policies and current organisational practices in the industry.

1.3 Academic and Scholastic Significance of the Study

The following sections will provide insight into the research problem and consequently elaborate the scholastic significance of the study:

1.3.1 Women in leadership in South Africa

Women in South Africa continue to face challenges with regards to getting into leadership positions and most importantly representation at board level. This is despite South Africa emerging as the leader amongst the G20 countries through its policy and legislative interventions to promote gender diversity (Kapur, 2023). The continued challenge on gender disparities in leadership roles and corporate boards are not only a challenge for South Africa but remains a cause for concern globally according to the S&P 500 list only 8.2% of women were in CEO positions in 2023 and only a 20% share of women were represented on corporate boards in 2022 (Green, 2023). The BoardEx report, a platform that gives insights on corporate leadership, revealed that South Africa was one of the top ten countries in 2023 that had made a significant improvement regarding women representation on the boards to rectify the imbalances of the past (Imberg, 2023). The country was also ranked among top four countries that have made significant progress with respect to representation of women in senior civil positions (Hunt, 2022). Although the government has made strides towards ensuring women's voices are heard on the decision-making tables, South Africa still has a long way until gender equality is reached, as women leaders continue to grapple with enjoying the same influence and respect received by their male counterparts (Bishu & Headley, 2020; Evans, 2022). Women's tenure in senior positions are often short-lived because of institutional cultures that are

patriarchal and chauvinistic in nature exposing women to gender discrimination in many forms (Evans, 2022).

As it stands the South African legislation does not prescribe the minimum requirements for women representation in boardrooms, the government has however implemented initiatives aimed at driving gender diversity, equity, and inclusion for organisations to adopt (Kapur, 2023). The programs include a national gender policy framework including a ministry for women, children and people with disabilities, King IV which prescribes for organisational governing body to have the correct composition from a gender diversity to encourage women participation in the boardroom, it is a requirement for listed companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to disclose targets for both gender and race at a board level (Kapur, 2023; Toerien et al., 2023). Others include the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality bill of 2013, a legal framework aimed at women's empowerment to ensure appointment and representation in decision-making positions (Kapur, 2023; Struckmann, 2018). Despite this, there has been little progress made, South Africa organisations continue to undervalue the participation of women in key decision-making levels. It is therefore important to understand the key drivers of the continued underrepresentation of women and the lack of proactive measures by organisations to enable inclusive environments that will attract and retain female talent (Kapur, 2023).

1.3.2 Women in leadership in South African manufacturing organisations

In South Africa women made up 51.1% of the population according to Statistics South Africa (2022), however only 45,5% are economically active, 29.4% are represented in executive management, 27.7% at directorship level and 17.3% is a share of women holding CEO and Chairman positions at board level in 2021 (Kapur, 2023). The share representation of men in manufacturing organisations continue to outnumber women in senior leadership positions. Women representation in the manufacturing was at 24.6% for senior leadership positions, while the entry level was at 34% and fell to 19% for C-suite positions, based on Global Gender Gap Report 2023 report emphasizing the drop to the top (WEF, 2023). The South African manufacturing industry employed over 1.09 million people by 2021, and women represented only a share of 32%, with women only predominately present in the textile and clothing sector, occupying 65% of the jobs (de-Beer, 2023; Wood & Bischoff, 2019). The share of women engineers required in other sectors within the industry such as heavy manufacturing are reported to have fell between

2002 and 2017, as women are more likely to leave STEM industries, due to discrimination deeming them incompetent and incapable to lead effectively (Barkhuizen et al., 2022; Eagly & Sczesny, 2019; Trade and Industry, 2019).

Despite this, amongst other industries the manufacturing sector had only a share of 28% investment in DEI programmes to close the gender gaps, and with DEI programmes particularly focused on women was at 7.07% (WEF, 2023), highlighting the difficulty of gender equality advancement in the industry. This highlights the significance that the academic field can play in providing evidence-based recommendations to bridge the gap between government policy and the practicality of it in manufacturing organisations for advancement of more inclusive and diverse industry. Supported by Barkhuizen et al. (2022) there exists literature detailing barriers that impact women's career advancement to leadership positions, however this is scarce for the African continent. Therefore, there is need for academic focus on the factors hindering the progression of women and retention within the manufacturing industry given the different dynamics and cultural contexts in South Africa.

1.3.3 Gender discrimination and resilience of women leaders in manufacturing

South African women in manufacturing continue to be marginalised despite efforts from the government to redress the injustices of the past. A study conducted by Netnou & Strydom (2022) studied factors impacting the career advancement of women within the industry and confirmed it needed to be a collaboration between the employee and employer, whereas currently it is an individual pursuit. Women in male-dominated environments like manufacturing face a myriad of issues apart from sexual harassment and gender stereotypes, they are subjected to gender discrimination including lack of access to opportunities for career growth and progression, are also subjected to high levels of stress, anxiety and depression which leads to feelings of imposter syndrome and existing the industry ((Bridges et al., 2020; Crawford, 2021). The cultural expectation and societal stereotypes are often targeted at undermining and undervaluing women's leadership and management capabilities (Crawford, 2021; Sturgeon, 2022). The study by Netnou & Strydom (2020) also noted that employment equity measures meant to promote equal opportunities and equal treatment have not yielded significant results for the manufacturing industry in South Africa, there seems to be a disconnect between the practical application of the act and the current practices in the industry. Women in

manufacturing have often been stereotypically labelled as technically incompetent, which has over the years excluded women from networks of power and influence. According to Khilji & Pumroy (2018), over the years women in the previously historical male-dominated environments developed various coping strategies from confirming to play by the “men rules”, finding a way to navigate through either negotiating the rules or resorting to early resignation. However, this has not shielded the women from gender discriminatory practices such as gender biases, sexual harassment, and unequal pay (Fouad et al., 2017; Khilji & Pumroy, 2018). Women must contend with fighting for professional acceptance, respect from men in the sector, development and career opportunities, lack of support from line organisational leadership, which has over the years led to women leaving the male-dominated industries (Khilji & Pumroy, 2018; Powell et al., 2009; Seron et al., 2018). Organisational support in a form of commitment from top management which is essential for enabling a culture that values women in the workplace was found lacking, and it is necessary for creating networks for women to have access to opportunities, recruitment processes that enable promotion based on merit and where both genders are equally encouraged to pursue career growth (Netnou & Strydom, 2020). There is existence of a body of work focusing on provision of support and creating motivation and job satisfaction for women in female-dominated occupations, however little has been done to understand this from a context of women in previously male-dominated environments such as manufacturing and coping mechanisms used to build resilience necessary to overcome the gender discriminatory experiences (Cohen & Duberley, 2021; Fernando et al., 2018; Mozahem et al., 2019).

The following section will elaborate on the business significance of the study:

1.4 Business Significance of the Study

1.4.1 State of Manufacturing

The manufacturing industry continues to be a catalyst for economic growth in South Africa and it is amongst the most resilient sectors for its ability to absorb economic shocks and continue contributing positively towards the GDP (Loewald, 2020). The industry has seen a significant decline in employment across all the different divisions in the sector, within a 16-year period spanning 2005 -2021 almost 309 000 jobs were lost, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gouzoulis et al., 2023; Statistics South Africa, 2021). Manufacturing capacity utilisation was at a peak of 86% just before the global financial crisis between 2007 - 2008, which brought about dampened investment resulting in

stranded assets, coupled with a weak demand both locally and globally, unstable political climate and electricity has seen sector de-industrialise (Loewald, 2020). To revert to the right levels of productivity and increase employment the industry requires the right level of competitiveness. In addition, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF) report South Africa was amongst the countries that have seen a downward trend with regards to having the adequate skill sets of graduates (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020). The last world competitiveness report, under business efficiency the country was ranked 56th out of the 63 countries that participated in the world rankings, this emphasized the need to attract and retain the right talent within the manufacturing industry to drive productivity, innovation, and economic growth, to improve the national competitiveness (Employment & Labour, 2022; Montiel et al., 2021). Thus, investment in human capital, for the right skills and capabilities is a key driver for economic prosperity and productivity especially in sectors such manufacturing, and the retention of women within the sector could be an enabler (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020). Therefore, seeing the significant role played by manufacturing for the South African economy and providing employment, given the context of the country of high unemployment, poverty, and inequality (Francis & Webster, 2019; Loewald, 2020), it is important that there is talent retention and attraction to halt the continued decline and de-industrialisation of the sector.

1.4.2 Skills shortage in the sector caused by gender inequality.

Despite governmental efforts to address inequalities and barriers faced by historically marginalised groups through the Employment Equity Act, women engineers are reported to enter the workforce but soon leave faster their male colleagues (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015; Rubi et al., 2019). Studies have revealed that the barriers include gender stereotypes and gender discrimination, sexual harassment, pay disparities, lack of networking and mentorship opportunities and a poor balance between personal and professional life (April & Singh, 2018; Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015; Dzombak & Mehta, 2017; Liyanagamage & Fernando, 2022; Zehr & Korte, 2020). The other barriers driven by cultural expectations and societal perception on gender roles include lack of perseverance, self-efficacy, and self-confidence (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015). Even though the South African employment equity has made a provision for talented women in male-dominated industries to advance into the upper echelons of management, but the historical underrepresentation is further exacerbated by women who leave the industry (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015; Bridges et al., 2020; O'Brien et al., 2023). The underrepresentation of women within the industry according to Froehlich et al. (2020) and

Mhlanga (2022) is attributed to gender prejudices and stereotypes women are continually subjected to. Furthermore, studies conducted into the retention of women highlight that women who work in previously male dominated industries continues to face multiple barriers that result in poor work experience and result early resignation (Bridges et al., 2020; Chong et al., 2020; Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018). This has been worsened by increased voluntary exit of skilled talent workforce post COVID-19 leading to the shortage of a talented workforce that consequently has had a direct negative impact on operational efficiencies and margins (Anderson et al., 2018; Deloitte 2022).

1.5 Delimitations

- Geographic limitation, the study is only focused on South African manufacturing organisations.
- The research study only focused on women leaders within the manufacturing sector with more than 10 years of experience.
- The study only sampled women leaders from large corporations.
- The construct of leadership was not a focus for the study, although it does play a crucial role in the building of resilience.
- A boundary was place on gender and therefore the intersectionality between race and gender was not explored in greater length, however the study did acknowledge its impact on the lived experiences with regards to gender discrimination.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the South African manufacturing sector plays a crucial role in the economic growth of the country. However, the country has failed to grow the industrial base and has seen a decline in manufacturing sector, including employment (Francis & Webster, 2019; Statistics South Africa, 2023). Statistics show that there are more women than men graduating with engineering qualifications, however women remain a minority in STEM fields required in the manufacturing sector (Trade and Industry, 2019). This is because women's tenure in senior positions are often short-lived because of institutional cultures that are patriarchal and chauvinistic in nature exposing women to gender discrimination in many forms (Evans, 2022). The share of women engineers required in other sectors within the industry such as heavy manufacturing are reported to have fell between 2002 and 2017, as women are more likely to leave STEM industries, due to discrimination deeming

them incompetent and incapable to lead effectively (Barkhuizen et al., 2022; Eagly & Sczesny, 2019; Trade and Industry, 2019). Women must contend with fighting for professional acceptance, respect from men in the sector, development and career opportunities, lack of support from line organisational leadership, which has over the years led to women leaving the male-dominated industries (Khilji & Pumroy, 2018; Powell et al., 2009; Seron et al., 2018). Therefore there is existence of a body of work focusing on provision of support and creating motivation and job satisfaction for women in female-dominated occupations, however little has been done to understand this from a context of women in previously male-dominated environments such a manufacturing and coping mechanisms used to build resilience necessary to overcome the gender discriminatory experiences (Cohen & Duberley, 2021; Fernando et al., 2018; Mozahem et al., 2019). Therefore, seeing the significant role played by manufacturing for the South African economy and providing employment, given the context of the country of high unemployment, poverty, and inequality (Francis & Webster, 2019; Loewald, 2020), it is important that there is talent retention and attraction to halt the continued decline and de-industrialisation of the sector.

1.8 Organisation of the study

Chapter 1 presents the contextual background on the research study, the objective, including the academic and business significance need for the study. Chapter 2 provides a discussion on the different constructs of the research study, gender discrimination, resilience and it explores the organisational support provided for women leaders in navigating the phenomenon. Chapter 3 structures the research study overarching research questions informed by gaps established in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 provides an insight into the research methodology and design, including the philosophy and strategy, further discussed is the sampling methodology, data collection and analysis. The chapter also highlights how quality control was ensured and briefly discusses the research study limitations. Chapter 5 presents the research study findings, which are discussed in detailed in Chapter 6 doing a comparison and contrast with literature discussed in Chapter 2. A conceptual framework is shared in the chapter based on the findings from the research study. In conclusion, the research report provided a conclusion and provides recommendations based on the findings from the study including future advances of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The challenges that women leaders face to launch their careers successfully in manufacturing environments emanate from traditional gender hierarchies normalised in society (Martin & Barnard, 2013). These stereotypical gendered roles expectations are deeply entrenched in organisational practices and cultures which continue to exacerbate the marginalisation of women in the sector. Stemming from a society driven by patriarchy that grant men the privilege and power on the detriment of the marginalisation of women, which perpetuates gender discrimination and inequality (Prothero, 2023). The gender-biased culture of the manufacturing industry has been driven by men dominating policy development, and institutional positions of leadership where women do not have access to the decision-making forums (Martin & Barnard, 2013; Taylor, 1997; Goyal et al., 2021). The historical male-dominated industries like manufacturing continue to fail to integrate and support women leaders as critical contributors to the sector (Cha, 2013; Padavic et al., 2020).

There is a growing, yet modest, body of work to showcase the experiences of women leaders in male-dominated occupations and why retention continues to be a challenge (Bolzani et al., 2021; Martin & Barnard, 2013; Raghuram, 2008). Most studies in the field are of a quantitative nature (Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2012; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011) which provides a different level of insight into woman's experiences. Qualitative studies, such as Franks et al. (2007) and van Vuuren et al. (2021), shed light on the importance of understanding the lived experiences of women working in previously male dominated fields and how this contributes to understanding their resilience in climbing the career ladder despite the systemic challenges (Martin & Barnard, 2013).

One of the greatest psychological barriers to women advancing in their careers highlighted by international research is gender discrimination (de Leon & Rosette, 2022; Bridges et al., 2021; Khilji & Pumroy, 2018; Martin & Barnard, 2013). Negative gender discrimination and stereotyping experiences have led to women leaders migrating from the historically male-dominated occupations to occupations that have more female representation due to under-utilisation of their skills set and the systemic barriers they encounter (Damaske, 2011; Keister et al., 2022). Apart from explicit and implicit gender discrimination and stereotyping barriers, previous research shows that women in male dominated fields continue to encounter discriminatory practices regarding pay inequity; insufficient support

towards development for promotional opportunities; sexual harassment; lack of mentorship, networking and sponsorship opportunities; and poor work-life balance (April & Singh, 2018; Barrett, 2011; Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015; Shantz & Wrights, 2011; Zehr & Korte, 2020).

Du Plessis & Barkhuizen (2015) and Yates & Skinner (2021) highlighted that there were barriers outside of gender discrimination that impacted the attrition of women in the industry. These included internal barriers such as lack of self-efficacy and self-confidence; lack of grit; and lack of compatibility mainly driven by societal influences. Wolfram et al. (2009) conducted a study that demonstrated that women dropped out of engineering streams in academic studies due to lack of confidence, demonstrating the impact of cultural expectations and gendered stereotypes. In addition, Power et al. (2009) studied women who were successful in remaining in male-dominated fields, however the behavior of these women was discovered to be detrimental to other women succeeding, as it assimilated them into being “one of the boys”. This resulted in women in these positions of leadership accepting gender discrimination and adopting an anti-women approach to gain social acceptance from their male colleagues. The lack of self-efficacy and self-confidence documented as being prevalent in women plays a crucial role in women’s ability to form strategic networks. In the paper exploring the role of structural exclusion and personal hesitation, Greguletz et al. (2019) contended that women build fewer effective networks due to being systemically and structurally disadvantaged.

2.2 Role Congruity and Glass Cliff Theories

The barriers and challenges faced by women leaders in the manufacturing industry are systemic, this is further exacerbated by the underrepresentation of women and the dominance of white men in executive positions (Chance, 2022). The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions has been better described throughout the years through the glass ceiling metaphor, which refers to the invisible barrier within an organization preventing women rising through the ranks (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2013; Groeneveld et al., 2020). The institutional theory presented by Blum et al. (1994), proposed that sociocultural patterns may have an impact on the women getting placement in leadership positions and, recent research by Groeneveld et al. (2020) argues that societal norms about gender roles and stereotypical leadership characteristics impact the advocacy of women into management. The incongruity between perceived female stereotypes and leadership

characteristics can foster gender bias which mainly impacts women and their advancement into managerial positions (Groeneveld et al., 2020).

The theory of role congruity further expands how the perceived gender stereotypes of managerial roles encourage bias against women in leadership positions due to the inherent contradictions of societal expectations of women's roles and what is considered as effective leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Groeneveld et al., 2020). Male stereotypes are often associated with leadership from a cultural, religious, and organisational point of view (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). This inherently places men at a better position to be in leadership positions than women and further exacerbates discrimination against women. The stereotypical feminine leadership qualities such as mentoring and collaboration have been perceived as effective leadership during circumstantial periods of crisis in an organization (Groeneveld et al., 2020) but not necessarily as leadership in steady state or growing organisations. Glass cliff theory further explains the phenomenon of women getting promoted into leadership positions only during periods of a crisis or during unfavourable conditions (Sabharwal 2013; Obenauer & Langer, 2019; Reinwald et al., 2022). This is because of the stereotypical association of women with attributed such as "soft, kind, open" and potentially offering support to teams in crisis. These inherent characteristics associated with gender stereotypes expose women to many forms of gender discrimination, which is unpacked in the next section.

2.3 Gender Discrimination

A comprehensive definition of gender discrimination describes members of a specific gender being adversely affected by procedures that influence workplace decisions and practices in the work environment (Dipboye & Colella, 2013; Ramos et al., 2021). The first evidence of gender discrimination pertains to individuals intentionally receiving a different treatment by virtue of their gender on joining or moving position in an organisation (Dipboye & Colella, 2013). Examples of this include intentional exclusion of women from the hiring process based on their gender, reluctance to promote women for specific positions, assessing women on different interview questions than those asked of men and offering women a lower starting salary based on their gender (Dipboye & Colella, 2013, Kräft, 2022). Secondly, although without an intent to discriminate between men and women certain workplace practices have provided more opportunities to men than women. Examples of this include inflexible work arrangements forcing women leaders to choose between work and family life, as women are often the ones that bear majority of the responsibilities of the care economy (Power, 2020). The third evidence of gender

discrimination relates to the perception that women hold regarding being denied work opportunities and exposed to unpleasant work conditions than those of their male counterparts, these include inadequate restroom facilities for women, ill-fitting and uncomfortable personal protective gear leading to a discomfort for women (Dipboye & Colella, 2013; Palumbo & Manna, 2020).

As highlighted studies have shown that gender discrimination in the work environment continues to be one of the barriers towards gender equality (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2020; Gorman, 2005; Gorman & Mosseri, 2019). This phenomenon is associated with societal cultural beliefs regarding men and women, and workplace related institutional practices and policies which continue to favour men for career progression (Braddy et al., 2020; Carboni et al., 2019; Castaño et al., 2019; Glick & Fiske, 2007; Moskos, 2020; Ridgeway and England, 2007). Various studies have documented gender discriminatory practices include hiring processes (Bosquet et al., 2019; Gorman 2005; Gorman & Mosseri, 2019; Goldin and Rouse 2000); pay disparity (Exley & Kessler, 2022); career advancement and promotions (Ramos et al., 2022); performance evaluation (Correll et al., 2020; Ramos et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2019); and sexual harassment (Brown & Battle, 2020; Cortina & Areguin, 2021). While these studies demonstrate that gender discrimination continues to persist, there are limited studies aimed at understanding how women leaders navigate these discriminatory practices, particularly in manufacturing environments (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

Within the manufacturing context Syster et al. (2023) conducted a study to understand factors that affect the continued marginalization and discrimination of women in senior leadership in the South African manufacturing industry. The research utilized qualitative techniques, carrying out thirteen in-depth interviews with male and female executives and senior managers from seven manufacturing firms to further understand the discrimination and underrepresentation of black women in high level leadership (Syster et al., 2023). Based on the results, it appears that industry and organization specific factors including selective hiring and promotion procedures, resistance to implementing new procedures, and the prevalence of a patriarchal, "old boys' club" mentality are to blame for the low number of women in leadership positions (Syster et al., 2023). Moreover, the findings emphasized that black women continue to experience prejudice in these domains to an even greater extent relative to other groups (Syster et al., 2023). The study had a limited sample size due to the sensitivity of the topic which affects the generalizability of the

results, re-emphasizing the need for more research to investigate the experiences of women leaders within the manufacturing industry.

This has led to many conversations regarding gender inequality, not only as a subject of interest in academia, but also at government and policy level, and within the private sector focusing on increasing women workforce participation by addressing gender pay disparities (Blau & Kahn, 1994; Field et al., 2020; Ginther & Hayes, 1999; Maasoumi & Wang, 2019), promotability (Field et al., 2020) and access to opportunities particularly in previously male-dominated industries such as manufacturing (Gobillion et al., 2015; Greguletz et al., 2019).

The following section will discuss examples of gender discrimination that are more implicit in nature:

2.3.1 Gender Bias

Ruiz-Cantero et al. (2007) defined gender bias in research as “a systematically erroneous gender dependent approach related to social constructs which incorrectly regards women and men as similar/different.” (p. ii46). Gender bias has been attributed to androcentrism, whereby the interests of men have more privileges over those of women. This bias runs the risk of being misogynistic in supporting derogatory attitudes towards women and rendering women invisible and insignificant to receive any attention (Upchurch, 2020). Although gender bias playing a role in the underrepresentation of women in previously male dominated fields has been a controversial topic, Régner et al. (2019) and Uhlmann & Cohen (2007) argue that gender discrimination is increased when decision-makers, whom are typically men, endorse gender stereotypes but assume their approach to be objective and rational. This phenomenon and its impact on the underrepresentation of women in previously male-dominated industries such as manufacturing and its influence on gender discrimination is under researched (Cislak et al., 2018).

In their synthesis of scholarly literature on gender bias spanning from 2000 to 2020, Ceci et al. (2023) noted that gender bias was ubiquitously stated as the main factor limiting women’s career progression. The American Economics Review (Kahn, 1993) and Journal of Economic Perspectives (Kahn, 1995) was the first literature to highlight gender inequality as a cause for concern in the field of economics. Subsequent studies in the field of economics pertaining to women have been conducted but the paper by Ginther & Kahn (2021) found that little progress has been made to address the gender inequalities (Ceci et al., 2020) cited in the early works of Kahn (1995). The point of the economic

acknowledgment of women's role in the workplace and gender discrimination, was to understand and address the different difficulties and issues that women come across in the labour market as it continues to perpetuate gender inequality.

2.3.2 Gendered stereotypes and gendered expectations

Gender bias as a key contributor to gender inequality has been explained widely in terms of gender stereotypes which describe women as nurturers, emotional, empathetic, and emphasis placed on their physical attractiveness (Panerati et al., 2023). On the other hand, research highlights terms such as competence and dominance being used to describe men (Panerati et al., 2023). The role of gender stereotypes in society in perpetuating gender discrimination has been categorised into different dimensions to perpetuate social exclusion of women, and those dimensions are: goals and relations, which are labelled as competence and warmth (Fiske et al., 2002; Hanel et al., 2019), the dimension of communion and agency (Abele et al., 2016; Abele et al., 2021), and competence and morality (Wojciszke, 2005; Han & Laurent, 2022). Agency dimension which normally gets associated with men relates to being goal-oriented, which often gets displayed through strength, efficiency, capability, and strength (Panerati et al., 2023). While the communion dimension associated with women, refers to benevolence in social relations, which displays qualities such as trustworthiness, kindness, friendliness and being co-operative (Panerati et al., 2023; Abele et al., 2021). Lack of adherence to gender expectations leads to adverse outcomes. The backlash effects primarily emerge when women exhibit competence attributes which are against the gender prescriptions set by society as this decreases the likelihood of acceptance of women into the prevailing culture (Cortina et al., 2021; Panerati et al., 2023).

Perceived relevant behaviour for each gender prescribes the way women are judged and assessed. For example, there is natural tendency for men to be evaluated through their work performance but women on how they demonstrate care towards others (Ellemers, 2018). The general assumption is women leaders should have the affinity to be family orientated, whereas men are expected to be ambitious, and goal orientated (Ellemers, 2018; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The perceived qualities include the expectation for women leaders to display warmth but men aggressively to show competence (Ellemers, 2018; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The opposite holds, in that it is frowned upon for women to demonstrate aspiration towards professional achievement or career progression. The

gender stereotypes continue to be a barrier in the progression of a woman's career as many of them continue to assimilate to the expected leader behaviour and occupational outlook, narrated through the lens of patriarchy (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The stereotypes continue to persist despite in most historically male-dominated workplaces having institutionalised equal opportunities and furthermore they exist irrespective of the position held by women within the organisation (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

According to Goff et al. (2008) women experience stereotype threat when an individual predicts mistreatment or being judged based on the negatively held perception regarding their gender group. Women are often subjected to disparate treatment based on their gender, and this impacts both job and career opportunities. For example, when a woman becomes a parent, unlike a man, the common assumption is that childcare will take precedence over their commitment to work, therefore limiting their career progression (Ellemers, 2018). These stereotypes subject women to constant prejudice in the workplace, as the perceptions of incongruity between women's characteristics and those associated with leadership, results in lower expectations regarding their potential and influences their evaluation at a leadership and individual level (Tabassum & Nayak, 2018). Another stereotype threat faced by women, particularly once they are in managerial positions, is the perception that they have been promoted to positions as a token for gender representation (Tabassum & Nayak, 2018). Gatrell & Copper (2007) conducted a study to understand the relationship between tokenism and gender stereotypes, and it revealed that as women progress in senior positions, they experience tokenism which is linked to discrimination, and stereotyping. Amongst other stereotype threats women face is continually being regarded as emotionally unstable and weak. Since men are classified as strong, assertive, and high achievers (Heilman, 2001; Wu et al., 2021), expressions of anger by men in professional settings is regarded as appropriate, while women's expression of the same emotion is regarded as irrational and unprofessional (Tabassum & Nayak, 2018).

There are often severe consequences when women do not conform to the covert and overt gender stereotypes. It results in the devaluation of the women's work performance, in instances whereby the work delivered is of good quality (Tabassum & Nayak, 2018). It leads to women continuing to be viewed as incapable of working in male dominated occupations and those that succeed are often personally derogated and considered unfeminine (Heilman, 2001; Tabassum & Nayak, 2018). Consequently, stereotype threat

can have a negative impact on the mental well-being of women, and their potential career advancement (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

While gender bias and stereotyping might be less explicit forms of gender discrimination than institutionalised practice, gender harassment is a discriminatory practice which can manifest more discretely or overtly. The following section explores gender harassment which another form of gender discrimination that women in male-dominated environments are subjected to:

2.3.3 Gender Harassment

To fully understanding gender harassment, one first needs to understand the phenomenon of sexual harassment and its distinction from and connection to gender harassment. Sexual harassment studies have mainly focused on the experiences of women employees showing concerning statistics that one out of every two women will experience some form of sexual harassment whether it be gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, or sexual coercion during her career span whereas the number of sexual harassment incidents are much lower for the working lives of men (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). A study conducted by USMSPB (2018) revealed that harassment is typically conducted by men as opposed to women, with 82% of incidents reported the harasser was a man. Street et al. (2007) added to the evidence by highlighting that in events where men are victims, the perpetrator is predominantly male. Normally male sexual harassment of other men is conducted with the intention of humiliating men who deviate from heterosexual roles and norms set by society to re-enforce that the victim is not man enough (Burn, 2019; Cortina et al., 2020).

Historically sexual harassment was defined within the confines of coercive sexual advances, stemming from emotions of sexual desire or intimacy (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). Studies have shown that sexual harassment manifests itself through gender harassment, with lack of respect at the core, the aim is to put people down and then push them out but not necessarily pursue sexual activity (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). The first definition of sexual harassment adapted from Fitzgerald et al. (1997b): “unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being” (p. 15). The most recent definition from Berdahl (2007a) accommodates any gender and the domain of sexual harassment is broadened: “behavior that derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual’s sex”

(p.644). In the latter definition sexual harassment is theorized as an expression of power and dominance and a technique of protecting one's social status (Cortina & Areguin, 2021; Sapiro, 2018). This further supports the existing gender hierarchy that privileges men, it also supports the data of why men are more likely to conduct sexual harassment (Burn, 2019; Cortina & Areguin, 2021).

Social scientists use sexual harassment as an overarching term to better explain the different facets of behaviour and the Fitzgerald's Tripartite Model of Sexual Harassment has been widely accepted for its classification system and the most validated (Cortina & Areguin, 2021; Fitzgerald et al. 1995, 1997b; Gelfand et al, 1995). The model has been used on various studies that differ by gender, ethnicity, occupation, and nation, has three categories of conducts namely: sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and gender harassment (Cortina et al., 2001; Fitzgerald et al. 1988; Gelfand et al. 1995, Waldo et al. 1998). However, most of the research into sexual harassment has a narrow view of only white women's experiences and lack inclusion of the perspective of women of colour (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). This emphasizes the need to incorporate the experiences of women from diverse backgrounds to also acknowledge the complex nature of intersecting identities especially for women from previously marginalised groups.

Cortina recreated Figure 1 the Fitzgerald's Tripartite Model of Sexual Harassment to demonstrate that unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion (come-ons) represents only a small portion of the sexual harassment that occurs in organizations (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). Meanwhile gender harassment examples (put-downs) are displayed under the water to represent how deeply rooted it is within organisational structures and culture, and seldom breaks into organisational awareness particularly in previously male dominated environments. As displayed on the iceberg, gender harassment provides a breeding ground for sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention as both, cannot exist without a firm foundation of gendered contempt. Gender harassment practices as demonstrated in Figure 1, tends to be more covert unlike the obvious forms of sexual harassment, this is unpacked in the following sub-section.

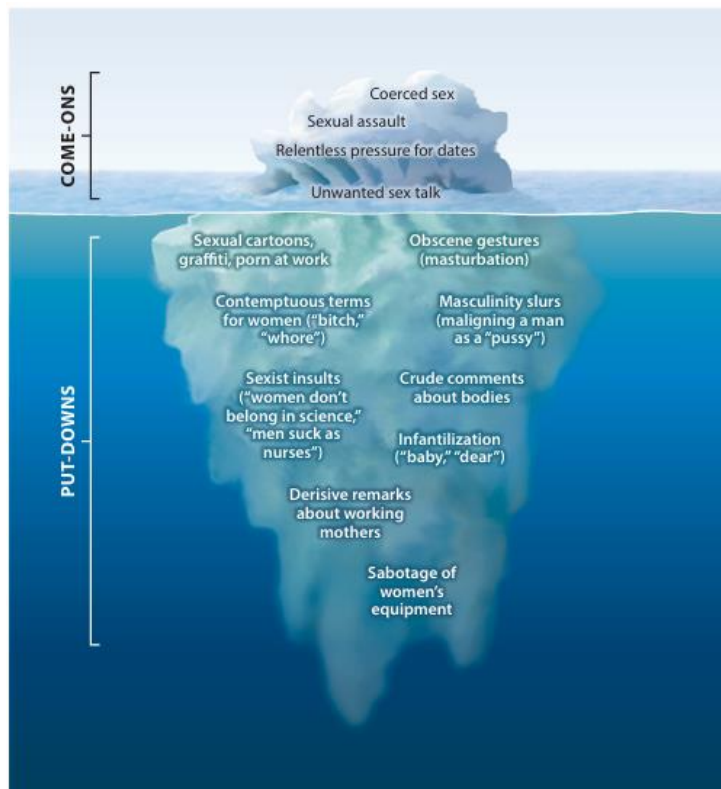


Figure 1: Cortina's iceberg of sexual harassment (Cortina & Areguin, 2021)

2.3.3.1 Sexual coercion Practices

Sexual coercion can either be implicit or explicit, with the intention of making conditions of employment dependent on the victim consenting to sexual advances (Burn, 2019; Cortina & Areguin, 2021). In a workplace environment this includes the promise of a professional rewards in return for sexual favours, such as making a job offer conditional to the candidate agreeing to sexual acts (Acquadro Maran et al., 2022; Burn, 2019; Cortina & Areguin, 2021). This also includes threats of professional harm such as getting fired or being demoted if the demands from the perpetrator are not met; such a manager telling an employee "Sleep with me or you are fired" (p. 287) (Cortina & Areguin, 2021).

2.3.3.2 Unwanted sexual attention Practices

This type of harassment typically involves expressions of sexual interest that are often unwelcomed, unreciprocated, unpleasant, and most often providing a traumatic experience to the victim (Cortina & Areguin, 2021; Taylor et al., 2018). Unwanted sexual attention examples may arise through unsolicited sexual conversations, touching that is not consensual, forcible kissing, relentless pursuit to take the target to dates or sex and sexual assault (Burn, 2019; Cortina & Areguin, 2021; Fitzgerald, 2019; Taylor et al., 2018).

2.3.3.3 Gender harassment Practices

MacKinnon (1979) was the first feminist legal scholar to highlight that sexual harassment amounts to gender discrimination in the work environment as it severely impacts working conditions for many women but fewer men. Overtime scholars increasingly ensured that attention was given to the role gender played in gender harassment. Schultz (1998, 2018) highlighted cases whereby women were discriminatorily harassed on the job and emphasised the acts had little to do with sexual acts but gender, iterating that sexual harassment has always been about sexism. A study by Franke (1997) had explained sexual harassment as:

a kind of sex discrimination not because the conduct would not have been undertaken if the victim had been a different sex, not because it is sexual, and not because men do it to women, but precisely because it is a technology of sexism. That is, it perpetuates, enforces, and polices a set of gender norms at work that seek to feminize women and masculinize men.
(p.693)

Furthermore, gender harassment phenomenon was also studied by (Dresden et al., 2018; Leskinen et al. 2011; Leskinen & Cortina, 2014) and was understood not have sexual cooperation as the main goal, but to oppress another gender through demeaning commentary and hostile attitudes (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). Examples include derogatory remarks such as “women do not belong in manufacturing”, “you are a man, stop being a sissy” (de la Torre-Pérez et al., 2022; Dresden et al., 2018). Gender harassment is inclusive of obscene gestures and using profanity as means of addressing the target, as revealed in the studies by Fitzgerald et al., (1995) and Berdahl (2007a). The aim is not to lead to sexual activities but to put the person of the other gender down and eventually move them out. This form of harassment due to its covert nature, it is often difficult to detect or prove, as it lacks clarity or overt actions (Taylor et al., 2018).

The covert reality of gender harassment has a significant impact on the psychology of the victim, as the subtle behaviour or microaggressions accumulate over time and leads to internalization of the harassment. This results in feelings of self-doubt, self-blame, and depression (Perez, 2022). The perpetrator of gender harassment usually ‘gaslights’ the victim, which is defined in literature as a form of mind-manipulation and an abusive power tactic to undermine the victim by making them doubt their current reality and lived experience (Sweet, 2019). This phenomenon which fuels self-doubt and lack of self-

efficacy amongst victims result in limited documentation and evidence when it comes to gender harassment cases. This in turn continues to perpetuate the culture of silence and discrimination, which becomes an acceptable norm in society and workplaces (Fernando & Prasad, 2019; Hershcovis et al., 2021). Without the necessary support, victims do not report incidents of harassment, making it difficult to hold the perpetrators accountable and having long term impact on the victim's overall well-being (Gómez-González et al., 2023)

2.3.4 Intersectionality

Rosette et al. (2018) defined intersectionality as “overlapping social categories, such as race and gender, that are relevant to a specified individual or group’s identity and create a unique experience that is separate and apart from its originating categories.” (p. 3). Better described by Crenshaw (1989) in her essay, intersectionality was explained as follows “Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p. 140). So, in organisational settings the identity of being a black woman as an individual far exceeds the experience of being black and being a woman, and this intersectionality changes how society perceives the individual, and it brings a unique set of experiences and stereotypes in organisational environments (Rosette et al., 2018). Increasingly there is a call from studies into gender and organisations to recognise intersectionality across a range of social identities, outside of the prevailing ‘norm’. As there currently exist a shortage of research on female managers who are members of marginalized groups, including female managers who are black, disabled, LGBTQI+, single-parent, or members of religious minorities (Davidson and Burke, 2016).

Given the context of South Africa’s history marked by colonialism and apartheid, systems that promoted racial and gender segregation, the research cannot ignore the role played by the intersection of race and gender in shaping the gender discrimination experiences particularly for previously marginalised groups such as Black, Indian, and Coloured women. Nor should the research overlook other intersecting identities within the sample group. Due to time limitations, the scope of the research and the complexity of intersectionality as a construct, the research study focused on gender as the key identity. However, studies in the navigation of discrimination amongst marginalised groups within workplace settings should be expanded to consider the effects of intersectionality.

To better understand how women leaders challenge, adapt and recover from the lived experiences the next section will unpack resilience as a critical tool used for navigating gender discrimination in manufacturing.

2.4 Resilience

This section will discuss the resilience theory development over the years, while sharing insights on the different perspectives on resilience. In addition to this the section will introduce the Multidimensional Taxonomy of Individual Resilience (MTIR) model and conclude how with the development of personal resilience strategies.

2.4.1 Theory Development

Resilience has been defined as the ability of an individual or a complex system to constructively adapt and adjust in the face of difficulties and disruptions that impair their development and functioning (Métais et al., 2022). A common finding in academic literature is the diversity of definitions and ideas surrounding the concept of resilience, and this lack of agreement on understanding makes a coherent theoretical framework necessary which supports the need for further academic research on this construct (Métais et al., 2022). Although resilience is a widely researched topic in psychology, there is still a lack of consensus due to the multitude of definitions, approaches and theoretical orientations that indicates the complexity of the phenomenon (Ayed et al., 2019; Christmas & Khanlou, 2019; Masten, 2018; Métais et al., 2022; Vella & Pai, 2019).

The study of resilience began in the 1950s and 1960s within the mental health field, where researchers predominately focused on disease-based models to understand mental health issues and significant developmental threats (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2007; Wright et al., 2013). According to Luthar et al. (2000) and Wright et al. (2013) it was during this period the term resilience replaced invulnerability to describe children that were not affected by adversity. Over and above that, researchers began to define and understand resilience through observations by noting the difference in how individuals adapted to both to negative and positive circumstances because of their internal psychological resources such as strengths and personal abilities (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2007; Métais et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2013)

The theory development shifted focus to an ecological perspective from the late 1970s and 1980s, recognizing the significant role of external factors (Métais et al., 2022). This allowed for the framing of the understanding of resilience not just as a trait but as a process influenced by both internal and external factors (Métais et al., 2022). The period emphasized the transition from descriptive "what" questions to the explorative "how" questions concerning the underlying processes of adaptation (Masten & Best, 1990, p. 439; Masten et al., 2021). This led to the third era (1990s, 2000s), where advancements in theoretical understanding of resilience functioned as a basis for developing interventions aimed at promoting well-being, such as resilience-based preventive interventions (Masten et al., 2021; Métais et al., 2022). The current era of resilience theory development has mainly focused on the integration of understandings of internal and external resources using the knowledge that have been studied from different disciplines to bring further understanding into the construct of resilience (Liu et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2019; Shrivastava et al., 2019; Christmas & Khanlou, 2019; Vella & Pai, 2019).

2.4.2 Perspectives of Resilience

The next section will cover the three key questions that have fuelled discussions on the construct of resilience during theory development, namely the external as opposed to internal nature of resilience, the dynamic nature of the construct, and the characterising of resilience as a recovery or future focused response.

Resilience explored as an external or internal factor.

As discussed in the previous section, resilience was initially considered to be a binary trait, it was either believed that an individual had resilience or lacked the psychological capacity to survive adversity driven by the perception that lack of resilience was a pre-indicator of mental disorders (Halliday et al., 2022; Métais et al., 2022). This approach allowed for acknowledgement that human beings have the inherent mental capability to overcome challenging circumstances. This led to Prince-Embury (2014) identifying characteristics of resilient individuals, these were: independence, agreeable temperament, intellectual capability, strong communication skills, and effective coping strategies. However, this perspective was viewed as limiting as it failed to acknowledge the influence of the environment and external factors on the how the individual builds resilience in the face of

adversity (Fritz et al., 2018; Métais et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2013). Ungar and Liebenberg (2013) argued that while focusing on internal factors such as personal strengths can be valuable, the environment plays a more significant role in the developmental progress of at-risk populations. Recognising the need to move beyond just focusing on individual traits, researchers have categorized resilience factors into three main groups, including ecological perspectives (Métais et al., 2022). These groups include the individual's personal attributes; family traits like secure and nurturing relationships; and social influences from peers, and the community (Anaut, 2015; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2014; Métais et al., 2022). Thus, personal resilience is influenced by internal and external factors, an individual's personal traits and the influence of the environment that the individual exists in. This highlights that the burden of overcoming gender discrimination in manufacturing environments should not solely fall on the individual, but the environment, society and organisations have a crucial role to building the resilience of women leaders.

The next section will analyse resilience as a static and dynamic construct to enable the understanding on how the women leaders have coped with the trauma and stress associated with gender discrimination experiences in the manufacturing environment through time.

Resilience explored as a static or dynamic construct.

In addition to understanding the influence of internal and external factors on the resilience of an individual, the phenomenon of resilience has been further explored whether resilience was a fixed attribute or it evolved with time, this remains a topic of debate as the question remains unanswered and an area for focus (Leys et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Rolin et al., 2018; Shrivastava et al., 2019; Sisto et al., 2019). This advocates for the scholarly work to be done particularly in under-researched domains such as manufacturing. Scholars such as Infurna & Luthar, 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Malhi et al., 2019 and Masten & Barnes, 2018 argued that resilience is static and a constant trait while Fisher et al., 2019; Kalisch et al., 2019; Stainton et al., 2019 and Yates et al., 2015 contested this viewing of resilience as a dynamic capacity trait that evolves over time. This study intends on understanding how women have navigated gender discrimination in manufacturing environments using their personal resilience which assumes the dynamic nature of the phenomenon as argued in the resilience literature.

To understand resilience as a dynamic construct, Métais et al. (2022) explained that there are two underlying processes identified related to resilience; compensatory processes

which work on counteracting the effects of adversity and, moderating processes often associated with factors whose effects will depend on the severity of the adversity. Compensatory processes use resources such as assets or protective factors; these include intellectual ability and extraversion, and risk factors under compensatory include the individual mistreating other or resorting to neglect which works as counter effect to the positive adjustment of resilience (Métais et al., 2022). For moderating processes, protective factors often act as moderators to mitigate the effects of adversity particularly under high stress environment; for example, psychological support from a line manager being effective when an employee goes through trauma (Prince-Embury, 2014; Métais et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2013; Yates et al., 2015). While vulnerability factors aggravate the negative effects of adversity, this would be lack of access to organisational support when an employee experiences discrimination in the workplace (Métais et al., 2022).

In essence resilience can be understood as a dynamic process, in which the individual uses personal traits or skills and external resources to overcome adversity. In the paper of resilience, as a multimodal process Stainton et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of acknowledging that resilience fluctuates through the different domains of life as an individual develops. The study by Stainton et al. (2018), highlighted that since resilience varies, it is important for individuals to develop different techniques and strategies for when problems arise. In this the researchers recognised that resilience is not finite and that excessive risk factors can lead to mental health issues. Authors agree that future research should be aimed at further understanding how strengthening protective factors as strategy for building into personal resilience (Métais et al., 2022; Stainton et al. 2018). This study heeds this call in understanding how women leaders in manufacturing organisations have navigated the adverse experiences of gender discrimination through the protective factors associated with personal resilience.

Resilience explored as bouncing back or bouncing forward.

As explored earlier in earlier section resilience is associated with the overcoming challenges and adapting positively to adverse situations. Yates et al. (2015) explains resilience as “the process by which individuals achieve positive developmental outcomes despite exposure to known threats to adaptation” (p. 773). This brings into focus debates in the literature which question whether the positive adaptation of resilience means bouncing back to pre-adversity functioning well-being levels, or whether it create room for an individual to thrive and see the adversity as a bouncing forward opportunity for growth, (Bryngeirsdottir & Halldorsdottir, 2022; Henson et al., 2021; Métais et al., 2022; Tedeschi

et al., 2018). These studies, mainly conducted on post-traumatic growth, which emphasise wellbeing and progress amid difficulty have had a substantial impact on how resilience is perceived. This study aims at understanding how women leaders in the manufacturing sector have not only bounced back from, but also grown and circumvented, the systemic barriers that have historically led to women leave the industry or avoid positions of senior management.

The following section will discuss the multidimensional taxonomy of individual resilience model as a framework to be used to understand the different strategies women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination, considering the different perspectives of resilience.

2.4.3 The Multidimensional Taxonomy of Individual Resilience Model

In environments where women are underrepresented in positions of decision making, it is reported that women are more likely to face circumstances that require a demonstration of resilience (Branicki et al., 202; Goyal et al., 2021). Recent literature has defined resilience within the workplace as learned behaviours combined with organisational support and networks that develop the individual's skills to be adaptive and thrive (Bridges et al., 2021; Kuntz et al., 2017). Witmer (2019) and Jones (2019) have argued that the resilience theory construct is presented as gender neutral but was built on masculine values and principles. In manufacturing environments where women are in the minority and are reported to be socially excluded and marginalized (Ng & McGowan, 2023), resilience becomes an individual pursuit. Bridges et al. (2021) argued that in hostile and toxic environments, the expectation of individual resilience often takes responsibility away from leadership and the organization, making it the duty of the individual to transform the culture. Another argument that challenges resilience theory suggests that high exposure to stress, experienced in environments like manufacturing, or trauma from experiences such as discrimination, do not necessarily create resilient employees but rather leads to negative impact on their mental and emotional well-being, often resulting in resignation (Bridges et al., 2021). Considering the arguments presented in literature, the aim of the research is to explore a model that would incorporate a women's perspective on personal resilience strategies, as opposed to the traditional 'masculine' attributes of strength and bravery associated with resilience. There is therefore a need to contribute to the body of work presenting a theoretical perspective from women leaders particularly in gender discriminatory environments (Goyal et.al., 2021; Witmer, 2019).

The selected resilience model to explore the personal strategies that women leaders use to navigate the gender discrimination in their respective manufacturing work environment is the MTIR (multidimensional taxonomy of individual resilience) model. The objective of the MTIR model seeks to integrate already existing theoretical work on individual resilience but also integrates the empirical work such as the interpretivist inductive nature of this research study to further advance resilience theory. In line with other studies previously discussed, the MTIR categorizes the construct of resilience into two: manifested resilience and generative resilience (Miller-Graff, 2022). The two categories are further divided into subdomains as illustrated in Figure 2 and this backed by the wide range of research on resilience (Masten, 2016; Miller-Graff, 2022; Ungar, 2018).

Outcomes of resilience are referred to as manifested resilience, as defined by Masten (2016): “observable success in adapting to challenges” (p. 298). On the contrary, Ungar (2018) builds on the model of resilience as a process, building the term of generative resilience on the MTIR model. The commonality between the domains is that resilience is transactional, dynamic, and multisystemic (Miller-Graff, 2022).

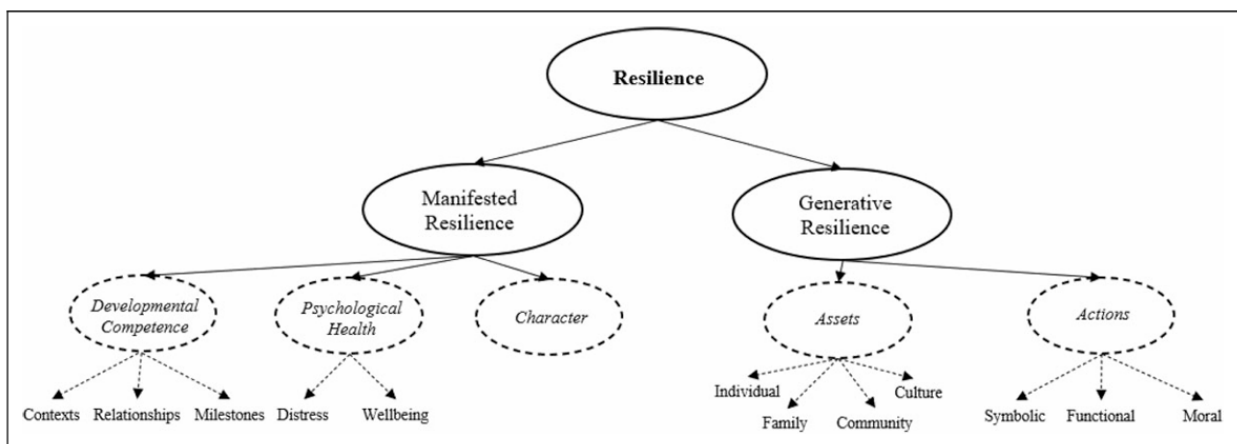


Figure 2: The multidimensional taxonomy of individual resilience (Miller-Graff, 2022)

Scholars such as Ungar (2012) and Fletcher & Sarkar (2013) highlighted the need for understanding how the two aspects of resilience are interrelated. At times the success of the manifested resilience can be impacted by trauma, on-going adversity and structural inequity and thus generative resilience should be considered as a form of resilience not just a precursor to manifested resilience (Miller-Graff, 2022). Given the reason that the relationship between the two constructs might fail to exist due to other external factors, it

is important to understand the extent of the interrelatedness (Hamby et al., 2018; Miller-Graff, 2022).

2.4.4 Development of Personal Resilience Strategies

This section will explore how personal resilience strategies can be developed using the MTIR model:

Manifested Resilience

This sub-domain of the MTIR model assumes that adaptation from adversity will be positive and assumes that the manifested resilience will be meaningful in all given contexts (Miller-Graff, 2022). Manifested Resilience is further broken down into three subdomains, namely developmental competence; psychological health; and character demonstrating the dynamic and multisystemic nature of this form of resilience (Chopik et al., 2020; Hamby et al., 2018; Miller-Graff, 2022). The subdomains are explored below:

Developmental competence is the ability to acquire developmental relevant skills for different contexts, this would include competence in school and work (for example achieving good grades or getting a promotion), interpersonal skills in relationships (for example, learning how to be assertive and improving communication skills) and achievement on individual developmental milestones (for example, artistry) (Miller-Graff, 2022). Additionally, mindset theory has proven that a growth mindset can improve an individual's resilience towards challenging circumstances or setbacks (Tabibnia & Radecki, 2018; Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

Psychological health from the MTIR model was applied using the dual factor model of mental health, that describes mental health not just as the absence of psychological distress or disorders but experiencing a sense of well-being and positive mental state (Miller-Graff, 2022). Smith et al. (2020) found well-being was closely tied to the social functioning with peers, while Huta & Waterman (2014) studied hedonic well-being where individuals pursue happiness, satisfaction, and pleasures in life and, eudemonic well-being that pursues a purposeful and meaningful life, driven by personal growth and creating a greater good for society.

Miller-Graff (2022) shared that character was defined by Aristotle and translated by Gellera (2017) as a state of being, formed by both nature, habit, and ecological forces that represents a propensity for 'right action' in reference to a particular context or circumstance (p. 673). Additionally, Toner et al. (2012) studied the interpersonal character

strengths that were not only associated with subjective well-being and happiness but positively contributed to society as whole, the traits included: modesty and humility, fairness and justice, teamwork and citizenship, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, and mercy. Given the character traits mentioned by Toner et al. (2012), another scholar Netshitangani (2019) highlighted the importance of collective leadership in the world of management which is a value espoused by the philosophy of Ubuntu leadership. A philosophy that can resonate with people from different gender, races, cultures, and traditions, due to its ability to recognize all human beings and their interconnectedness through the phrase “I am because you are” (Netshitangani, 2019). With extant literature showing that leadership imitated the traditional bias and stereotypical view of leadership only associated with the male domain, women have had to develop different strategies to build character and identify effective leadership styles to overcome gender discrimination (Sharma & Kaur, 2014), the research aims to study women leaders have developed the traits overtime.

The section highlighted the development of the manifested resilience domain through acquiring development competency such as growth mindset, prioritising psychological health through a positive sense of well-being and positive mental state, lastly developing a character that contributes to society. The next section will elaborate on the second domain of the MTIR model which is generative resilience.

Generative Resilience

This form of resilience as described by the MTIR model is a combination of assets that are available and can be accessed by an individual in their context inclusive of the actions to redress the impact of adversity on the individual (Miller-Graff, 2022).

Assets refer to the resources and opportunity structures that an individual has access to within their social ecological systems, this includes but not limited to family, community, and culture (Miller-Graff, 2022). Gayatri et al. (2022) did a study that highlighted the crucial role that family plays regarding building resilience. The family has been found to create a sense of community that enables adaptation to challenges, collective coping under adversity, and the communal recovery from crisis and stresses (Gayatri et al., 2022; Theiss, 2018). The family functions were noted to closely relate to wellbeing and this support has proven to reduce worries associated with anxiety and depression (Gayatri et al., 2022). A study conducted by Sher (2019) highlighted the fundamental role played by the family and supportive community in an individual building resilience. The network of

relationships and resources offered by the community and family provides the necessary support for an individual to overcome challenges such as gender discrimination. The sense of belong and community, contributes to their confidence and competence (Rainey et al., 2018).

Actions on the MTIR model are defined as the conscious and agentic behaviours taken by the individual to rectify the impact of adversity (Miller-Graff, 2022). The first element which is functional action describes external actions and internal process the individual takes in response to adversity, this includes coping mechanisms, sense making of the situation, self-management, growth mindset, and mastery of the environment (Grych et al., 2015; Miller-Graff, 2022; Mrazek et al., 2018; Ryff, 2014). The second element touches on moral action, which refers to purpose and value driven response for the greater good by an individual towards adversity (Miller-Graff, 2022). Moral actions are fostered for a collective welfare, the contribution of the individual towards the common good, unifies the society and in the long run impacts their adaptability (Miller-Graff, 2022). This highlights that moral identity is linked to a broader sense of caring for others, meaning that commitment to moral values plays a significant role in an individual's interpersonal relationships, it also touches on the philosophy of Ubuntu which promotes group unity and collectivism (Ellemers et al., 2019; Motswaledi & Marumo, 2022). Finally, symbolic actions refer to the activities that are targeted at influencing societal and cultural stories to create meaningful conversations about the adversity and resilience (Miller-Graff, 2022).

2.5 Organisational Support

The following section will touch on the different elements organisational support, including what organisational responses towards discriminatory practices, how organisations deal with gender harassment, and the type of support women receive from organisations in manufacturing.

2.5.1 Organisational response to gender discriminatory practices

2.5.1.1 Employment Equity and Affirmative Action

Women, and especially black and coloured women, continue to be underrepresented in high-skilled professions and management levels (Espinoza et al., 2019). Despite enforcement of legislation aimed at addressing inequalities in the workplace, women and in particular

black South African women continue to be paid less than men (Espí et al., 2019; Mosomi, 2019). Post-Apartheid, South Africa implemented the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) to rectify the racial and gender injustices of the past (Ebrahim, 2018). The act was legislated to ensure organisations in South Africa promote equal opportunities and fair treatment by prohibiting unfair discrimination. Through the act, affirmative action measures are required by the government to ensure that organisations are rectifying discrimination experienced by previously marginalised groups namely black people, women, and persons with disabilities (Ebrahim, 2018). The strategic objective behind the legislative frameworks by the government is ensuring that organizations are proactive with the eradication of past discriminatory and exclusionary policies and practices, and that transformation is representative of the new democracy (Ebrahim, 2018).

Employment Equity

Employment equity is a policy in place to address gender discrimination in many organisations. Section 6(4) of the act employment equity act deals directly with equal pay claims prohibits unfair discrimination, to make certain that the terms and condition of employment of employees conducting the same work receive the same pay, while section 27 of the act requires South Africa organisations to disclose their employee demographics and remuneration by gender and racial group (Ebrahim, 2018; Espí et al., 2019).

Affirmative Action

Section 15 (1) of the EEA defines AA as “measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace of a designated employer.” (p. 18) (Republic of South Africa, 2014). However there has been a negative belief system towards the EEA policies that has prevented progress in the organisations due to threatened self – image (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Hideg & Ferris (2014) studied how the effectiveness of gender-based EE policies have been hindered by threats on the self-image for both men and women. This is driven by fear of tokenism and marginalisation when appointed to historically male or white dominated positions (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Professionals who are beneficiaries and are appointed in such positions dislike the stigma associated with EE policies such as incompetence and being regarded as less qualified (Leslie, 2019). While white male employees fear the reverse discrimination and retribution as well as limited career opportunities (Oosthuizen et al., 2019). There are other contributing factors to the slow progress of the benefits of EEA

within organisations. Booyesen (2007) found several major obstacles to the successful implementation within South African organisation these included poor communication, historically white male culture, lack of commitment from leadership at executive level, challenges with the retention of black professionals, apprehension, and insufficient involvement of white male employees. Furthermore, Mayer (2017) points out that black women leaders frequently encounter dual discrimination on the grounds of both gender and race, becoming embroiled in ongoing postcolonial disputes and narratives about dominance, power, and feelings of superiority and inferiority.

2.5.2 How organisations deal with gender harassment.

Common organisational practices for workplace harassment have typically been sexual harassment grievance procedures and training, however the efficacy of the programs have been proven difficult to measure as the victims typically quit their jobs after the harassment incident (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Sexual harassment procedure where the individual victim files for a formal complaint is a form of support given by organisations; however, this has been proven ineffective as it incites retaliations leading to the victim quitting their job (Cortina & Areguin, 2021; Dobbin & Kalev, 2019). There are organisations that are proactive in their approach in that, training is provided for the line managers, to encourage the managers to actively look for signs of trouble and intervene where possible (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019). Lastly, general employee training to create awareness for signs to look out to spot perpetrators (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019). The effectiveness of the programs in place are difficult to measure as gender harassment has been notoriously known to be hard to measure, as the grievance system is known to backfire against the victims, promoting a culture of silence (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019). This supports the findings by Gómez-González et al. (2023) alluding to the reasons why there is under-reporting and lack of monitoring systems.

However this has been ineffective for most organisations, hence why the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration and Hypatia Foundation Promoting Equality (2020) proposed an eight-point framework for bringing transformative change in an organisation regarding workplace sexual harassment, it recommended the following practices to ensure organisations are providing sufficient support against gender harassment: organisational leadership to proactively challenging organisation gender inequalities and stereotypical norms; ensuring robust human resource policies, procedures as well as practices aimed

at protecting the victim, effective grievance processes, adequate support and remedial actions for victims and survivors, accountability for the perpetrator, continuous awareness trainings, guidance and campaigns, and risk assessment to test for efficacy (Gómez-González et al. 2023).

Gender harassment has a major psychological impact on the victim which often takes a toll on the work life of the individual, leading to organisational withdrawal, one of the common consequences of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). This leads to disengaged employees, either through neglected work assignments, tardiness, high absenteeism, and high employee turnover impacting business productivity and performance (Au et al., 2023; Bongiorno et al., 2020; Raver & Gelfand, 2005). The organisational withdrawal has been observed as a method of escaping abusive environments and situations, although highly effective it has significant impact on business performance (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018).

Despite the severity of gender harassment in workplaces, many of the victims never report and the restraint is understood as if the situation never happened or interpreted as it not being too bad (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). It has been discovered that victims manage the situation or find alternative coping mechanisms rather than reporting the case tends to be the last resort (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). The victims suffer in silence, hardly reporting any abusers to authority as it often leads to retaliation that severely impacts careers progression. The retaliation includes not being considered for promotions, being socially ostracized and being labelled as the troublemaker (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Spencer et al., 2017). Although many organisations have implemented affirmation actions programs, there has been little progress on individual training and treatment for offenders to ensure workplaces are conducive for women (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Organisations have made little progress to protect women and provide an environment of psychological safety that will alleviate the fears associated with reporting cases of harassment in the workplace (Halliday et al., 2022). Unfortunately, even after decades of reform, gender harassment remains alive and well in historically male-dominated industries such as manufacturing.

2.5.3 Organisational support for women in manufacturing

The current disposition around advocacy for DEI is that when women are in top management, organisations generate more profits, and they make organisations more socially responsible and provide consumers high quality experiences (Post et al., 2022).

Ely & Thomas (2020) disputed the popular idea that an organisation's performance will automatically improve when the staff complement becomes more diverse through inclusion of women and those previously marginalized and disadvantaged. The authors also argued that it has been a norm to frequently highlight the financial benefits of employing more women and black people, but little has been done to substantiate how diversity on its own improves business performance (Ely & Thomas, 2020). The article defends the need for organisations to embrace a learning mindset and be willing to work on their culture and power dynamics to genuinely reap the benefits of greater racial and gender diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2020). Fostering a culture of trust and allowing people to express themselves freely, fighting systematic oppression and bias directly, using employees' identity-related knowledge and experiences for organizational learning as well as being inclusive to different voices was recommended as means of harnessing diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2020). In essence there needs no business case or substantiation as to why previously marginalized groups, to be treated fairly and included in society. Some elements noted by Sull et al. (2022) promoting a toxic culture include failure to drive efficient programs aimed at diversity, equity and inclusion, the environments lead to employees feeling disrespected and it promotes unethical behaviour evidently increasing the attrition rates.

The same applies to gender equality and diversity in manufacturing except for studies that focused on the participation of women to increase productivity and profitability. Examples include the work conducted by Abbey and Adu-Danso (2022), focusing on 1082 manufacturing firms within Sub-Saharan African countries to understand the relationship between gender diversity and firm productivity as means of addressing the decline of manufacturing in Africa (Abbey & Adu-Danso, 2022). The findings supported affirmative action efforts undertaken to increase gender diversity in manufacturing organisations in Sub-Saharan (Abbey & Adu-Danso, 2022; Moodley et al., 2019). Another study within the African context was conducted by Garba and Kraemer-Mbula (2018) exploring gender diversity to improve firm innovative capabilities in Nigeria. This study emphasized the importance of women having access to an education to fully utilize the advantages of gender diversity for innovation, and it suggests that policymakers prioritize gender equality and education to promote economic growth and industrial development and nothing on how organisations are combating gender discrimination to improve female leadership attrition (Garba & Kraemer-Mbula, 2018).

2.6 Conclusion

The purpose of the literature review was to understand theoretical debates and discussions on the role of congruity and glass cliff theories to better understand the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions especially in the manufacturing sector. The chapter also touched on the phenomenon of gender discrimination continues to be one of the barriers towards achieving gender equality within manufacturing organisations. The section also unpacked both explicit and implicit forms of gender discrimination by discussing gender bias, gender stereotypes and gender harassment. Given the historical context of South Africa, the research study could not ignore intersectionality and how it shapes the lived experiences of women within the manufacturing industry.

The chapter consequently shared light on resilience theory development, the different perspectives of resilience, including the MTIR model which was the chosen model to help understand how the women leaders navigated gender discrimination in the manufacturing environment. The chapter concluded with understanding the type of organisational support the women get in coping with the discriminatory experiences.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

This chapter reviews the main research questions driving the study of understanding personal resilience strategies women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in South African manufacturing organisations. It builds on from the literature review relating to resilience theory, gender discrimination, and the support (or lack thereof) offered by manufacturing organisations in dealing with these experiences. Although the selected approach to theory development was inductive, the research questions were guided by the consistency matrix attached Appendix 1, which facilitated the understanding of the current gaps in literature regarding the topic under study. The consistency matrix highlights the golden thread in the report. The research questions detailed below were the overarching questions for the study which were then unpacked into a subset of questions included in the interview guide the researcher used during the data collection process Appendix 2.

3.1 Research Question One

What are the gender discrimination experiences of women leaders within South African manufacturing organisations?

Cortina & Areguin (2021) argued that under gender discrimination studies research into sexual harassment has a narrow view of only white women's experiences and lack inclusion of the perspective of women of colour and other previously marginalised groups. Increasingly there is a call from studies into gender and organisations to recognise intersectionality across a range of social identities, outside of the prevailing 'norm'. As there currently exist a shortage of research on female managers who are members of marginalized groups, including female managers who are black, disabled, LGBTQI+, single-parent, or members of religious minorities (Davidson and Burke, 2016).

Hence the research question was aimed at understanding the lived experiences of women leaders whereby they were discriminated against because of their gender within the manufacturing industry. In addition, the research question sought to understand how women leaders navigated the different gender discrimination experiences and how they dealt with the emotions associated with the mentioned experiences. Furthermore, contribute to the limited work that showcases the experiences of women leaders in male-dominated occupations and why retention continues to be a challenge (Bolzani et al., 2021; Martin & Barnard, 2013; Raghuram, 2008).

3.2 Research Question Two

What personal resilience strategies do women leaders use to navigate their gender discrimination experiences?

Given the broad definition of resilience, research question two was aimed at exploring the different resilience techniques women leaders used to overcome gender discrimination in the South African manufacturing environments. It included understanding the extent in which they received and sought after support to deal with the mentioned experiences in research question one. The significance of the question was to also conceptualise how the women leaders manage their overall well-being while navigating gender discrimination. Importantly, their perception of how they believe they have developed through the discriminatory experiences and learning about the different strategies they have used overtime to build their personal resilience.

The formulation of the question was driven by gaps established in literature covered in Chapter 2. While these studies demonstrate that gender discrimination continues to persist in male-dominated environments, there are limited studies aimed at understanding how women leaders navigate these discriminatory practices, particularly in manufacturing environments (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Although resilience is a widely researched topic in psychology, there is still a lack of consensus due to the multitude of definitions, approaches and theoretical orientations that indicates the complexity of the phenomenon (Ayed et al., 2019; Christmas & Khanlou, 2019; Masten, 2018; Métais et al., 2022; Vella & Pai, 2019). The research study intended on understanding how women have navigated gender discrimination in manufacturing environments using their personal resilience which assumes the dynamic nature of the phenomenon as argued in the resilience literature to further contribute to the existing gap.

Recent literature has defined resilience within the workplace as learned behaviours combined with organisational support and networks that develop the individual's skills to be adaptive and thrive (Bridges et al., 2021; Kuntz et al., 2017). Witmer (2019) and Jones (2019) have argued that the resilience theory construct is presented as gender neutral but was built on masculine values and principles. So, in manufacturing environments where women are in the minority and are reported to be socially excluded and marginalized (Ng & McGowan, 2023), resilience becomes an individual pursuit. Bridges et al. (2021) argued that in hostile and toxic environments, the expectation of individual resilience often takes

responsibility away from leadership and the organization, making it the duty of the individual to transform the culture.

Therefore there is existence of a body of work focusing on provision of support and creating motivation and job satisfaction for women in female-dominated occupations, however little has been done to understand this from a context of women in previously male-dominated environments such a manufacturing and coping mechanisms used to build resilience necessary to overcome the gender discriminatory experiences (Cohen & Duberley, 2021; Fernando et al., 2018; Mozahem et al., 2019).

Considering the arguments presented in literature, the aim of the research was to explore a model that would incorporate a women's perspective on personal resilience strategies, as opposed to the traditional 'masculine' attributes of strength and bravery associated with resilience (Goyal et.al., 2021; Witmer, 2019).

3.3 Research Question Three

How do South African organisations support women in dealing with of gender discrimination experiences within the manufacturing sector?

Although many organisations have implemented affirmation actions programs, there has been little progress on individual training and treatment for offenders to ensure workplaces are conducive for women (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Organisations have made little progress to protect women and provide an environment of psychological safety that will alleviate the fears associated with reporting cases of harassment in the workplace (Halliday et al., 2022). Unfortunately, even after decades of reform, gender harassment remains alive and well in historically male-dominated industries such as manufacturing. Therefore, research question three wanted to explore the kind of support South African organisations offer towards building their personal resilience and gaining insights in how the experiences have had an impact on their career decision within the industry.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided a rationale behind the chosen research study into understanding the resilience strategies used by women leaders within the South African manufacturing industry to navigate gender discrimination. The following chapter will detail the research methodology followed to provided answers to the presented research questions.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the selected research methodology and design to provide answer to the research questions discussed in Chapter 3. A qualitative methodology, with an interpretivist research philosophy was adopted for the research study. A narrative inquiry approach was used for conducting in-depth interviews for understanding the lived experiences of the women leaders with navigating gender discrimination in manufacturing environments. The approach to theory development was inductive in nature. The chapter will outline the selection of the sample and the size, insights on the measurement instrument including the approach to data collection and analysis. Most importantly, how the research study adhered to the quality controls and an elaboration on the research study limitations.

4.2 The Research Methodology and Design

The qualitative methodology was best suited to the study to allow the researcher access to mental world of the participant, to understand the way in which they interpret and see the world particularly the daily experience of gender discrimination in manufacturing environments (McCracken, 1988; Alase, 2017). The qualitative research approach allowed for the deeper understanding of how women leaders define and experience gender discrimination in manufacturing environments, as it is the preferred methodology to better understand “Lived Experiences” of research participants (Alase, 2017). It allowed for insights to be shared without limited boundaries on the different resilience strategies women leaders used to navigate the discrimination experiences in manufacturing environments. In doing this, the qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to map out and organize ideas through different themes that evolved through the interviews to further understand how women viewed the role business could play in bettering their experiences in the manufacturing sector.

A social issue like gender discrimination and the role that business needs to play to transform the industry to enable better experiences for women leaders required intimate understandings of their lived experiences (Argyriadis et al., 2023; McCracken, 1988). With qualitative research the subjective meanings underpinning the lived experiences are often negotiated socially and historically, making it the appropriate approach for understanding

the social and historical navigations of women in male-dominated industries such as manufacturing (Creswell, 2016). Broad and open-ended questioning enabled the participants to narrate the meaning they attached to personal resilience and gender discrimination experiences in the different manufacturing organizations they work for. The role of the researcher was to inductively develop theory and patterns of meaning from the data.

4.2.1 The Research Philosophy and Strategy

Interpretivist Research Philosophy

According to Alse (2017), the interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to critically investigate and shed light on the impact of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants in the study. The interpretivist philosophy values the deep and meaningful insights derived from the data and its analysis and according to Alharahsheh & Pius (2020) provides more sensitivity towards individual experiences, which was mandatory for the purposes of the study which focused on the potentially painful experiences of gender discrimination. Maintaining sensitivity and respect towards individual experiences was crucial and this philosophical paradigm enabled high validity data due to the personal nature of the participant's contribution to the study (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The interpretivist paradigm recognises that the researcher's own background shapes how the data is interpreted and requires that the researcher acknowledges their position in the research, which has been elaborated on in section 4.11 of this chapter. This is an important ethical practice within this philosophy according to Creswell (2016) as the researcher needs to acknowledge the powerful position held, through recognizing the subjectivity of their own lens in the research process.

Narrative Inquiry research Strategy

The qualitative study used the approach of a narrative inquiry where a structured approach of in-depth interviews and storytelling was conducted to understand how female leaders developed resilience in the face of gender discrimination (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). A similar approach was used by Goyal et al. (2021), The research strategy was selected due to its ability to allow participants to recount stories on their own terms without violation of their privacy (McCracken, 1988; Haydon et al., 2018). The method of narrative inquiry was able to capture the detailed stories and experiences

of a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2016) of their past and present experiences of navigating gender discrimination in their workplaces.

Inductive approach to theory development

The inductive methodology in a qualitative study follows the process of building theory from the ground up, rather than testing existing theories or solely using the perspectives of the researcher (Creswell, 2016). With this approach research questions could change in the middle of the study, if needed to best understand the research problem (Creswell 2016). This approach to theory development allowed the researcher to derive constructs pertaining to the resilience strategies of women in navigating gender discrimination from their responses to opened ended research questions in the instrument guide. The research was exploratory in nature to build theory, rather than testing theory against predefined constructs (Azungah, 2018)

4.4 Population

The selected population for the study was women leaders with experience of working in South African manufacturing organisations. The manufacturing organisations represented were large corporations, so the women sampled were from similar sized entities, large corporations are often observed as microcosm of a larger social system. The population comprised of women from the different South African race groups. The women leaders needed to have played an active role in manufacturing, either heading the operations or serving as a support function.

According to Alase (2017) the selection of the research participants should be a reflection and representation of the homogeneity that exists within the participant's pool. This was supported by Creswell (2014) who highlighted the importance of choosing research participants with similar lived experiences to the phenomenon under study. To guarantee the research study had a homogenous mix of research participants, the criteria that was used for the selection of the sample is listed below. Participants had to have:

- 1) A minimum of ten years' experience in management and having led team within the South African manufacturing industry.
- 2) The selected women leaders needed experience of having been part of a factory leadership team.
- 3) The organisation worked needed to be a large corporation (employing more than 250 employees).

4.5 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was individual selected from the defined population, which was the woman leader who met the specified criterion for sample selection.

4.6 Sampling method and size

The researcher used non-probability purposive sampling technique used in qualitative research as a sampling strategy. Individuals were selected according to the criterion mentioned in section 4.4 for the study as it was believed that the sample could purposefully inform a deeper understanding of the research problem. Creswell & Poth (2014) referred to this sampling strategy, particularly for studies whereby individuals are sampled because they meet a prespecified criterion, under the assumption that the participants are information-rich from the rest of the population. The sample was accessed through different networks of the researcher, such as previous colleagues, current colleagues, acquaintances, friends, fellow business school students, and connections on LinkedIn. Only one participant was through a referral, which means that snowballing sampling methodology was also applied in the sampling strategy (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Sample size for qualitative studies has been debated through time; McCracken (1988) suggested no more than eight in the long interview; Creswell & Poth (2014) suggested a sample size that will give a theoretical saturation to be 15; and Alase (2017) recommended between two and 25 participants for semi-structured interviews. While Creswell (2014) argued that the sample size is dependent on the nature of the qualitative study, for narrative inquiry one to two participants was deemed reasonable. The sampled qualitative studies in the literature review touching on the constructs of personal resilience and women leaders navigating systemic challenges such as gender discrimination varied between 15 and 39 participants (Duchek et al., 2022; Goyal et al., 2021; Kim & Meister, 2023; Jogulu & Franken, 2022; O'Brien et al., 2023). For the study the homogenous sample size selected was initially 18, however three of the sampled participants failed to secure time within the specified data collection timeframe and due to time constraints the study concluded with 15 participants. In the selection of the sample, the researcher was deliberate in avoiding underlying bias and assumptions as recommended by McCracken (1988), through ensuring diversity in race, age, job title and number of years the participants worked within the manufacturing industry.

4.6.1 Saturation

Saturation has been used in qualitative research to reduce subjectivity and often a yardstick for estimation of sample size, including assurance for rigour and quality purposes (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). However, Low (2019) found that the definition of saturation as the point where no new information emerges to be problematic and a logical fallacy, as studies have failed to demonstrate how that point gets achieved. Supported by Hale et al. (2007) and Manen et al. (2016) the authors argue that saturation is ideally not an aim for interpretative phenomenological analysis, owing to the concern of fully obtaining “full and rich personal accounts”, highlighting the individualised analytical focus of this research study (Saunders et al., 2018). In addition, theoretical saturation pertains to the practice of building of theoretical models using qualitative data, and this point is referred to as the stage in which the theoretical model developed has stabilised (Guest et al. 2020; Saunders et al. 2018; Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). Therefore, instead of following the traditional method of saturation in terms of no new codes emerging, this research study followed the approach guided by Creswell & Poth (2014), which suggested a sample size that will give a theoretical saturation to be 15 and analysis was conducted on each personalised narrative account from the participants.

4.7 Measurement Instrument

Due to the nature of study following a qualitative research paradigm, the researcher served as the primary instrument, providing a channel of understanding how the participants viewed and experienced gender discrimination in manufacturing organisations. According to McCracken (1988) the objectives of a qualitative study cannot be fulfilled without using the broad range of experience of the investigator.

The interview guide found in Appendix 2 was developed in such a manner that the researcher covered the different objectives for the research study through exploratory inquiry, yet ensuring prompts were carefully situated in the instrument as the channel for direction and scope of discourse (McCracken, 1988). The guide served the purpose of ensuring the researcher gave the attention to the participant, through open-ended questions which enabled the researcher to fully maximize the time spent with the participants. The semi-structured interview questions gave room for the participants to give unstructured responses. The purpose of the guide was to capture the essence of what the study was trying to uncover (Alase, 2017). The effectiveness was tested through

a piloted interview, to test for flow and removal of any underlying ambiguity that arose with the questions.

The interview guide was developed to have key sub-research questions per central question, this was done to narrow the focus of the study while providing room for open-ended questioning as suggested by Creswell (2014) and Alase (2017). While the open-ended questions were generated without any reference to theory or literature, the research questions as elaborated in Chapter 3 from the consistency matrix were mapped against the intended outcomes based on reviewed literature studies. The process was iterative to ensure that the questions were sensitive to how triggering the resharing of gender discrimination experiences might be to the participant. The guide was drafted with the flexibility in mind, in that depending on the flow of the conversation, certain questions may be re-ordered as advised by Newcomer et al. (2015). Questions on demographics were tailored for the end of the conversation, post the interview, as information relating to living circumstances and age raise identity issues and often an intrusion of the participant's privacy, this was done to avoid derailing the interview (Newcomer et al., 2015).

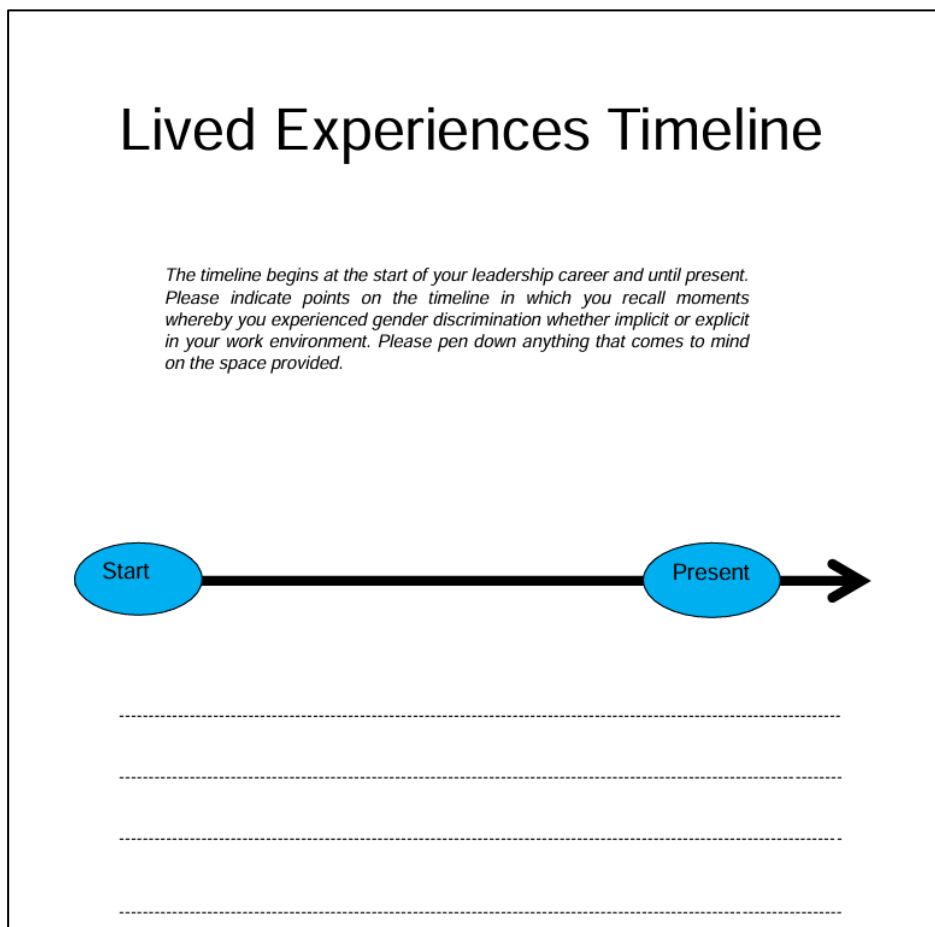


Figure 3: Lived Experiences Timeline (Chance, 2022)

Prior to the interviews the participants were asked to complete an individual reflective exercise, known as The Lived Experiences Timeline Figure 3. The Lived Experiences Timeline was adapted from a qualitative study conducted by Chance (2022), which was used as a data collection tool for the study of resilient leadership, to explore how black women navigated cultural adversity in higher institutions. Contrary to Chance (2022), the researcher did not instruct the research participants to send back the reflection document, due to the sensitivity nature of the study. However, the tool prepared the participants for a sensitive interview and provided a sense of ease, ensuring the interview process was a comfortable environment for the participants.

4.8 Pilot Interview

The pilot was conducted with the sole purpose of pretesting the interview guide. The crucial part of the exercise was ensuring the instrument adhered to the one-hour timeframe that was stipulated on the email invitation to the participants. The pilot interview allowed the researcher to pre-test the questions on the guide, and this provided room for edits if necessary. The participant selected for the testing exercise matched the sampling criterion, which gave the researcher confidence to not make any further adjustments to the interview guide based on the feedback given post the interview. However, the researcher made several observations that assisted with improving the subsequent main interviews for the study. The observations were as follows:

1. The researcher observed that taking long notes during the session took concentration and focus away from the participant. This would be replaced by only writing down themes and ideas picked from the responses of the participant.
2. The researcher had noticed that some of her follow up questions were pre-empting the answers, so the respondent would second-guess what was being said instead of allowing the sharing of their individual experiences on their own terms.
3. The duration of the interview took 39.02 minutes, this was attributed to the researcher wanting to cover all questions on the interview guide. The main lesson learned was to allow the participant to take control of the conversation, as it was a narrative of their lived experiences and only re-direct where necessary.
4. Although the reflection exercise on the Lived Experiences document shared with the participants was for their own use, the researcher realised that it became a useful tool of breaking the ice and setting the tone for the interview conversation.

The mentioned observations were implemented in the main interviews to enable a better interview experience for both the researcher and the participant.

4.9 Data collection

Once ethical clearance was received from the Research Committee the researcher began the data collection process. The initial request for interviews was made through social media platforms such LinkedIn and WhatsApp Messenger. Upon agreement to partake in the study the selected participants were sent consent forms and the Lived Experiences Timeline Figure 3 document.

The interviews were all conducted online by the researcher, depending on the platform best suitable for the research participant, so it varied from Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Zoom with the camera on to create an interpersonal connection with the participants. This method of data collection was not only time and cost efficient, but it provided an environment that was conducive and comfortable for the participants. Online data collection was preferred and recommended by Creswell (2014) and Nicholas et al. (2010), as it provided the participants time and space flexibility for providing a response and most importantly it provided an environment of ease for discussing sensitive issues such as gender discrimination.

The researcher began all interview sessions after exchanging customary pleasantries, giving the background to the selected study. This was followed by iterating consent and confidentiality, as well as emphasizing the freedom granted to the participant for withdrawal from the study. This was followed by asking participants for permission to record the interview session using the researcher's phone and giving the re-assurance that the information will be published with non-identifiers. The Lived Experiences Timeline became a good icebreaker, as majority of the participants opted to narrate their experiences from the beginning of their careers. The researcher discovered the tool made the participants relax as they shared their life journeys, this helped build rapport as encouraged by Alase (2017).

The shared career journeys enabled the interview to be conversational rather than a tick box exercise of getting through the questions on the instrument. The free-flowing dialogue encouraged the modification of some questions based on the participants' experience and responses, and further probing was conducted where necessary as recommended by

Table 1: Participants Profile and interview duration

Participant No.	Age Group	Race	Job Title	Years in Manufacturing	Interview Duration (Minutes)
1	46 - 50	Indian	Category & Channel Director	22	47,46
2	56 - 60	White	Human Resources Director	33	54,34
3	26 -35	Black	E-2-E Operations Director	11	62,01
4	40 -45	White	Operations Executive	11	61,57
5	51 - 55	Coloured	General Manager	29	67,44
6	40 -45	Black	Quality Director Sub-Saharan Africa	20	51,09
7	50 - 56	Black	Sourcing Unit Director	30	96,28
8	36 - 40	Black	Senior Manager	12	50,3
9	26 -35	Black	Supply Chain Director	11	55,08
10	36 - 40	Black	Plant Lead	18	50,13
11	36 - 40	Black	Head of Operations	16	60,53
12	30 - 35	Black	Plant Manager	11	60,32
13	26 - 35	Black	Manufacturing Manager	10	49,08
14	36 - 40	Black	Site Operations Manager	16	62,01
15	26 - 35	White	Strategic Planning Manager Sub-Saharan Africa	10	55,08

Smith et al. (2009). The average length of the interviews was 59 minutes, with the shortest being 47 minutes and the longest 96 minutes see Table 1. This was guided by Alase (2017), who recommends that interview duration for interpretivist studies should be between 60 and 90 minutes for the purposes of ensuring rich and thick descriptive data. The researcher took notes during the interview sessions, of key ideas and information the researcher believed would add value to the study, as per the interview protocol recommended by Creswell (2014). However, this was conducted in a manner so as not to distract the participant, a key lesson the researcher learned from the piloted interview when testing the instrument and, something McCracken (1988) advised against.

To ensure adequate security and safekeeping of the data collected as suggested by Alase (2017) and Rubin and Rubin (2012), the researcher deleted all audio recordings on the personal phone and utilised both personal Microsoft OneDrive Cloud Storage and Google Drive for data storage and management of all audio and transcripts.

4.10 Data analysis

The study followed the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach as it afforded the researcher the opportunity to explore in depth the lived experiences of women leaders in manufacturing organisations. Alase (2017) explained the importance of IPA in the qualitative research approach because of its ability to carefully examine and interpret the lived experiences of the participants. This approach was best suited as the study intended to make sense of the lived experiences of women leaders in manufacturing while navigating gender discrimination, and the IPA approach due to its participant-orientated nature allowed the researcher to afford the necessary respect and sensitivity due (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2021). The sensitive nature of the study required the researcher to fully immerse themselves in the lived experience shared by the participants while cautiously keeping their distance. The necessity of keeping the distance supported by McCracken (1988) was to assist when tough/sensitive questions were asked and necessary for delicate analyses. This robust sense making, or interpretative engagement is referred to as double positional role through the IPA approach and is defined as by Smith et al. (2009)

Dual role of the researcher as both like and unlike the participant. In one sense, the researcher is like the participant, is a human being drawing on everyday human resources in order to make sense of the world. On the other hand, the researcher is not the participant, she/he only has access to the participant's experience through what the participant reports about it, and is also seeing this through the researcher's own, experientially lens. (p. 35 – 36)

The IPA as a qualitative research approach was suitable for the study as it makes provision for participants who experience similar events to share their stories without any distortions and prosecutions (Alase, 2017). Through this the researcher was able to make sense of the lived experiences of women leaders in manufacturing with navigating gender discrimination and allowed the research study fully to explore the phenomenon under investigation. Supported by Smith et al. (2009), IPA is an approach which allows the researcher to produce a more consistent, sophisticated, and nuanced analyses.

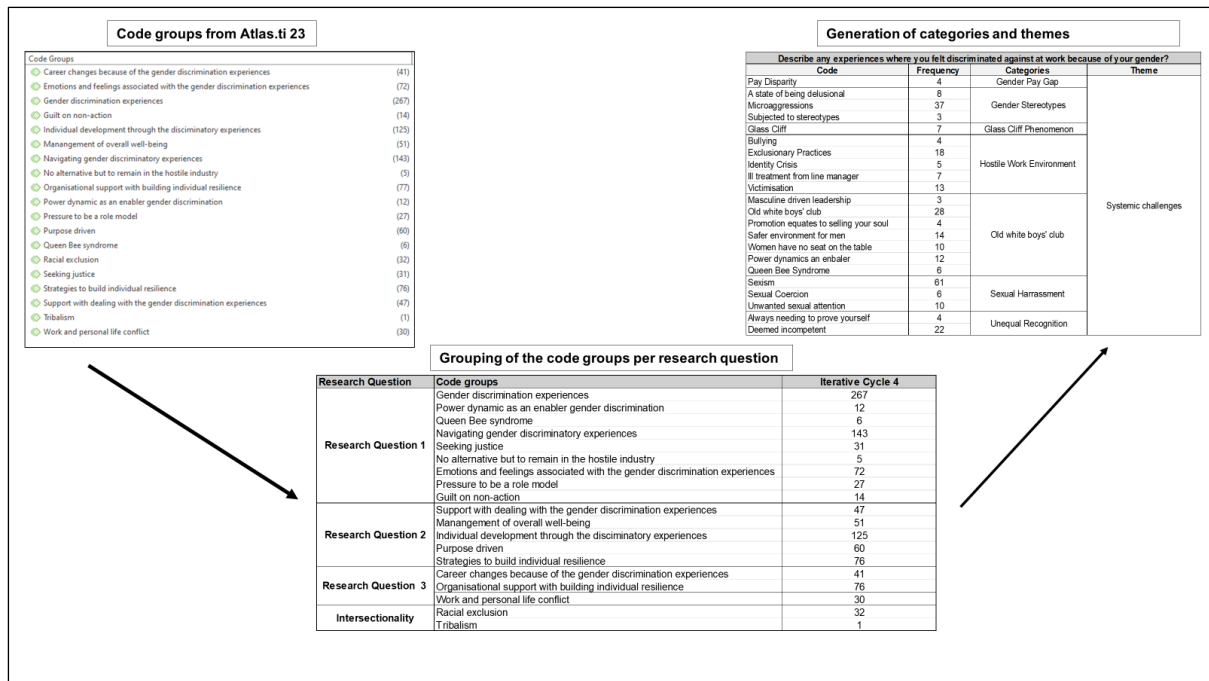


Figure 4: Three generic step of data coding.

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were generated from the audio recordings by a reputable external transcriber. The researcher opted for external services due to time capacity constraints and to avoid over-familiarity associated with a researcher transcribing their own interviews as advised by McCracken (1988). To ensure that confidentiality and protection of the information shared by the participants, before the transcriber could commence with the transcription, a non-disclosure form agreement was signed. The transcription process ran concurrently with the interview process and upon completion all transcripts were loaded on ATLAS.ti for the data coding process.

The data coding process followed the IPA recommended three generic step process of data coding, data condensation, and theme formulation process as shown in Figure 4, more visible diagrams can be accessed in Appendix 3 (Alase, 2017). A similar data analysis was used by Goyal et al. (2021) in the study of resilience by female board directors against gender discrimination and the bouncing up study that explored the development of the resilience of women leaders by Duchek et al. (2022).

The first phase was the re-reading the transcripts line by line for the initially coding on ATLAS.ti, which involved breaking down the interview responses into manageable quotations or phrases. This initial process assisted the researcher with making notes of the key words and phrases that are repeated by the participants, and according to Alase

(2017) the phrases could represent the core-essence of the participants' lived experiences.

The second phase involved going through the data for condensing the initial generic codes into a more manageable format but still an accurate representation of the responses from the participants. The condensation process included merging of some codes, as some phrases gave the same information but were interpreted differently. The codes were grouped on ATLAS.ti per sub-research question from the measurement instrument, for ease of use. The iterative process catered for code groups that were outside the boundaries of the measurement instrument to emerge.

This was followed by the category phase which involved exporting the code groups from ATLAS.ti to excel to reduce the data into manageable categories. The process was followed by interpretation of the categories to assess for emerging themes. By this, the researcher was attempting to capture the central meaning of the participants' lived experiences of using personal resilience to navigate gender discrimination in manufacturing environments in one or two words. Once the category codes were identified, the researcher assessed for the interrelationship that existed for each of the sub-research question to establish themes.

4.11 Quality Control

The following section will discuss how the research study ensured that rigor and quality practices were applied during the period of the qualitative study. The methodological layout of the study has been presented in preceding section, including the description of the rigour applied to the interpretation of the results included in Chapter 5 and 6 as advocated by Lincoln et al. (2011).

The following section will discuss how quality was ensured through validity, reliability, and trustworthiness strategies.

4.11.1 Validity Strategies

The following discussion details how validity was achieved during the research study.

Well-documented audit trail

To further enhance the trustworthiness and transparency of a qualitative inquiry a research audit trail is a useful strategy to ensure that all key stages involving theoretical, methodological, and decision-making by the researcher are well documented throughout the entire research project (Carcary 2009; 2020). Raw data of the study including audio recordings and transcripts are stored on the researcher's computer and cloud storage for safe keeping for protection of personal information. The researcher kept a notebook for interview summaries, data analysis notes and process methodology notes. This includes data processed and analysis on Atlas.ti and Excel, for generation of categories, themes, and the conceptual framework. Information on the research instrument development, including the piloted interview has been detailed in the previous section.

Member Checking

Member checking was conducted for the purpose of determining the accuracy of the findings by taking the articulated themes to the participants for commentary and understanding if the interpretation was accurate, as per the recommendation from Creswell (2014) and Rose & Johnson (2020). The researcher conducted the member checking on the pilot interview participant and the researcher's supervisor who has extensive experience in gender studies served as the second member check for the rest of the study.

Researcher's Role

The statement to follow serves to demonstrate transparency and acknowledgement of the potential impact of the researcher's cultural background, assumptions and biases on the research process and the results. Clarification of bias as recommended by Creswell (2014) and reflectivity are considered core characteristics of qualitative research.

The researcher has an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering and started her career journey as a STEM graduate in the Manufacturing sector as a process engineer, where there was little representation of women and she experienced marginalisation, particularly among white collar employees with technical qualifications. Despite being underrepresented in the faculty of engineering at university, the transition to the working environment was tough, worsened by having to navigate constant harassment from men on the shopfloor. On receiving her promotion into leadership from the graduate trainee programme, the researcher received no leadership training or support for the transition into leadership. There was little to no representation of female leaders in leadership positions as role models or mentors. The researcher experienced gender discrimination

and exclusionary practices and had to find ways of coping and remaining resilient. The researcher's interest in this study has resulted from the belief that the manufacturing industry needs to be more intentional about the agenda of gender equality to make the industry more inclusive for women.

The researcher was aware of her own biases and preconceived notions regarding gender discrimination within the manufacturing industry in embarking on this study. The researcher therefore made certain that the selection process of the participants was conducted with integrity and careful consideration as recommended by Alase (2017). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach method of analysis followed for the study encouraged the researcher to be mindful of explicit and implicit biases that could jeopardize the objectives and integrity of the study by removing the researcher's personal experience from that of the lived experiences of the participants. The extensive literature review, mapping of the research questions to previous studies and following a rigorous research methodology aimed at eliminating personal bias. The method of analysis followed rigorous IPA protocols to ensure integrity in the coding of the data.

Presentation of negative information

Information that was contrary to the literature and experiences of the researcher was not discarded, it was presented with the rest of the findings in Chapter 5 and 6 and discussed in Chapter 6. According to Creswell (2014) presentation of contradictory data, adds to the credibility and the validity of the study. Rose & Johnson (2020) supported the negative case analysis, by arguing that presentation of data and evidence that contradicts and support the findings as done so in the subsequent chapters increases the validity of the research study.

Rich, thick descriptions

The findings were presented in rich and thick descriptions as presented in Chapter 5, to take the reader into through the journey of the participant's lived experiences of navigating gender discrimination in the manufacturing environment applying personal resilience strategies. This procedure as recommended by Creswell (2014) and Carcary (2020) ensures that no significant findings are left out from the emergent analysis. A thick description providing a thorough account of the lived experiences including the context, the motives and intents are provided as recommended by (Carminati, 2018; Younas et al., 2023).

Prolonged Engagement

The research study was designed to be one hour long with the purpose of prolonging the engagement with the participants to gain greater in-depth understanding of their lived experiences, the reflection exercise prior to the interview enabled the researchers to gather more information. According to Rose & Johnson (2020), the extended time for engagement increases the probability of gathering more data, which improves the validity of the findings.

4.11.2 Reliability

For qualitative research reliability refers to the consistency of the findings presented from findings. According to Leung (2015) and Silverman (2021), reliability of the process and results can be enhanced through: refutational analysis, which the researcher did through member checking and presentation of contradictory data, constant data comparison which is covered in Chapter 6 particularly in relation to the literature; inclusion of deviant cases as previously discussed and use of tables as presented in Chapter 5. Coleman (2021) argued that reliability is enhanced by ensuring uniformity with respect to the interview process, hence the same interview guide was used across all the participants, with transparent and detailed description given behind the rationale of the research design and its implementation.

4.12 Limitations

The following stated limitations were applicable to the study and mitigations were applied to where possible:

Researcher's bias: the researcher as a primary instrument for data collection needed to remain objective as often as possible to reduce bias, as the researcher's cultural background and value systems can influence the data collection and data analysis process. The acknowledgment has been added under the discussion on the "Researcher's Role".

Time consuming: Time was a limiting factor, with the researcher having a full-time job in a factory environment, the data collection process was quite challenging as the participants did not have the flexibility of doing interviews over the weekend, so the

researcher had to juggle work and school during work hours. Although the transcription was done through an external party, the researcher had to constantly verify if information was as per the audio recorded before commencement with coding on ATLAS.ti. The time constraint led to the study having 15 instead of 18 participants due to a hard deadline set for data collection, to enable the researcher sufficient time with the data analysis.

Ethical concerns: Qualitative researchers have an obligation to protect the rights, privacy, and dignities of the participants (Alase, 2017). To address this ethical clearance had to be obtained from the University before the data collection was conducted. The researcher used external party services for transcription, before this the transcriber was requested to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Due to the sensitive nature of the study the participants were given a reflection document Figure 3 that the researcher did not request back, to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the information shared in the interview process. The participants were sent consent letters that emphasised that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any given time, this was re-iterated before every interview. The sensitive nature of the research may have resulted in participants being hesitant to share all their experiences. However, the richness of the data suggests that what was shared was meaningful.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides evidence of the key findings from the data collection and analysis exercised as detailed in Chapter 4. The study was aimed at understanding the personal resilience strategies that women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in South African manufacturing organisations. The presentation of the results follows the main research questions as outlined in Chapter 3 and each research question is descriptively answered using the sub-research questions found on the interview guide Appendix 2 that was used for the semi-structured interviews.

5.2 Summarised Data Analysis Approach

The data for the study was collected from 15 participants through semi-structured interviews using different video conferencing platforms. Interviews were transcribed and loaded on ATLAS.ti for the data coding process. As discussed in Chapter 4, the data coding process followed a three-step approach guided by the IPA methodology. The first phase was the re-reading the transcripts line by line for the initially coding on ATLAS.ti, which involved breaking down the interview responses into manageable quotations or phrases. This included the note taking to highlight key words and phrases that are repeated by the participants. The second phase involved going through the data for condensing the initial generic codes into a more manageable format but still an accurate representation of the responses from the participants. The condensation process included merging of some codes, as some phrases gave the same information but were interpreted differently. The codes were grouped on ATLAS.ti per sub-research question from the measurement instrument, for ease of use. The iterative process catered for code groups that were outside the boundaries of the measurement instrument to emerge. This was followed by the category phase which involved exporting the code groups from ATLAS.ti to Excel to reduce the data into manageable categories. The categories were then analysed and interpreted to consolidate into emerging themes.

5.3 Sample Description

The researcher used non-probability purposive sampling techniques for the sample selected for the study. To guarantee the research study had a homogenous mix of research participants, the study was restricted to women leaders in manufacturing with more than ten years of experience, those who had experience of being part of a factory leadership team and the organisation in which the women worked needed to be a large

corporation. Figure 5 is a graphical representation of the racial demographic of the participants. Out of the 15 participants, 10 women were black, three were white, one Indian and one Coloured. This was somewhat representative of the demographics of the country as indicated in Figure 5. Attempts to secure more black participants were made to increase the sample size by 3, but as discussed in section 4.12, this was not successful due to time constraints.

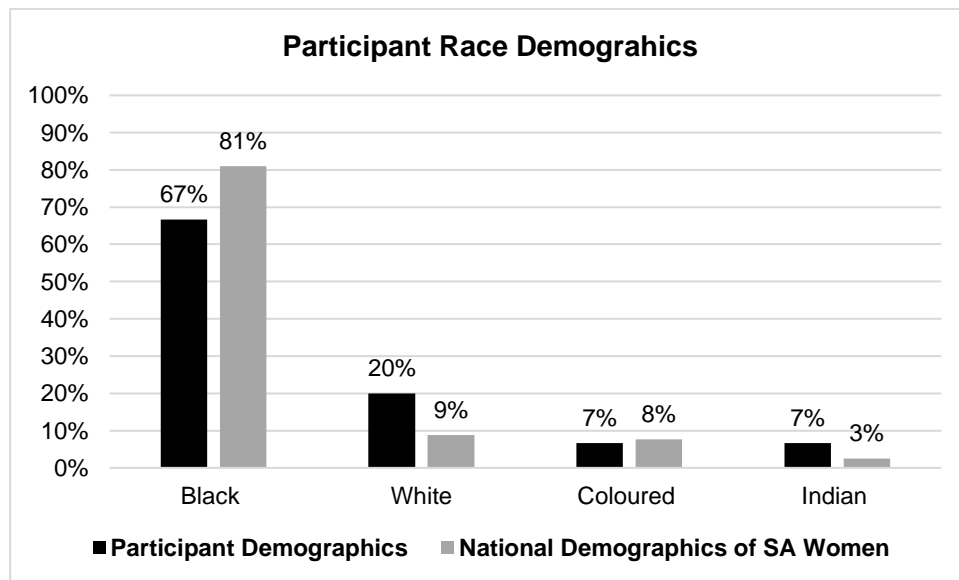


Figure 5: Participant Race Demographics

Women leaders within the manufacturing industry from senior to executive management were sampled to partake in the study. All selected participants work for large manufacturing organisations, varying from Consumer goods, Consumer health, Food and Beverage manufacturing, including Automotive and Chemical manufacturing as shown in the Table 2. The sample predominately comprised of women leaders who are operationally critical, meaning they are directly involved in manufacturing operations, and to ensure diversity of experience and insights, support functions to the operations such Planning, Quality and Human Resources were included in the study. The average number of years in manufacturing was 17 years, with 10 years being the minimum and 33 years the longest number of years served in the industry as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Participant Profile

Participant No.	Race	Living Circumstances	Job Title	Manufacturing Organisation	Years in Manufacturing
1	Indian	Husband and children	Category & Channel Director	Consumer Goods	22
2	White	Husband	Human Resources Director	Consumer Goods	33
3	Black	Alone	E-2-E Operations Director	Consumer Health	11
4	White	Husband and children	Operations Executive	Food Manufacturing	11
5	Coloured	Alone	General Manager	Automotive	29
6	Black	Husband and children	Quality Director Sub-Saharan Africa	Consumer Goods	20
7	Black	Husband and children	Sourcing Unit Director	Consumer Goods	30
8	Black	Alone	Senior Manager	Automotive	12
9	Black	Husband and children	Supply Chain Director	Consumer Goods	11
10	Black	Husband and children	Plant Lead	Food Manufacturing	18
11	Black	Alone	Head of Operations	Beverage Manufacturing	16
12	Black	Alone	Plant Manager	Beverage Manufacturing	11
13	Black	Husband and child	Manufacturing Manager	Consumer Goods	10
14	Black	Husband and children	Site Operations Manager	Chemical Manufacturing	16
15	White	Fiancé	Strategic Planning Manager Sub-Saharan Africa	Consumer Goods	10

5.4 Presentation of Results

This section presents the data analysed from the 15 semi-structured interviews. The transcribed data was coded using Atlas.ti 23 to condense the information into code groups as depicted in Figure 4. A total of 1065 codes were generated from the 15 scripts. The data was further condensed into categories and themes as discussed in Chapter 4; Figure 4 shows the schematic process followed.

The flow of the presentation of the results will follow a format that provides findings to the research question according to format on the instrument guide available in Appendix 2. To capture the depth and richness of the qualitative data collected, the data results will be presented thick and rich descriptions, to guide the reader through the key findings from the research study.

5.5 Research Question One Results

The first research question aimed to understand the different gender discrimination experiences that women leaders in South African manufacturing organisation encounter. The question sought not only to understand the experiences where women leaders were discriminated against but also gaining a deeper understand on how the women leaders navigated the different experiences. Crucial to the study was the Lived Experiences timeline Figure 3 shared in Chapter 4. The exercise allowed the participants to narrate the experiences in a story format of their journey in the manufacturing industry, which gave them permission to describe the discrimination experiences in their own terms. The data to answer this research question was collected through three sub-research questions presented on the interview guide and the findings are briefly discussed below:

5.5.1 Gender discrimination experiences women leaders experienced in manufacturing work environments.

Table 3 below gives a descriptive overview of the type of gender discrimination experiences encountered by women leaders within manufacturing organisations in South Africa. The top five issues highlighted systemic challenges women face. These include sexism, microaggressions, exclusion from the “old white boys’ club”, lack of acknowledgment of their hard work and workplace practices that excluded women. The data analysis highlighted that the women leaders continue to feel excluded from the historic “Old white boys’ club”; the industry is regarded as being hostile toward women, gender stereotypes are perpetuated; women feel set up for failure through the ‘glass cliff phenomenon’; and experience discriminatory practices of unequal pay, lack of recognition, together with sexual harassment within the South African manufacturing industry.

Each sub-research question findings will initially be presented through a thematic frequency table, showing the codes generated from the interview transcripts, the frequency number is indicative of the number of times codes were repeated from the data analysis. The table also displays the categorised codes that evolved during the data condensation process for the sub-research question and the last column on the table represents the theme that emerged from the iterative process.

Table 3: Experiences the women felt discriminated against at work because of their gender.

Describe any experiences where you felt discriminated against at work because of your gender?			
Code	Frequency	Categories	Theme
Pay Disparity	4	Gender Pay Gap	Systemic challenges
A state of being delusional	8	Gender Stereotypes	
Microaggressions	37		
Subjected to stereotypes	3		
Glass Cliff	7	Glass Cliff Phenomenon	
Bullying	4	Hostile Work Environment	
Exclusionary Practices	18		
Identity Crisis	5		
Ill treatment from line manager	7		
Victimisation	13		
Masculine driven leadership	3	Old white boys' club	
Old white boys' club	28		
Promotion equates to selling your soul	4		
Safer environment for men	14		
Women have no seat on the table	10		
Power dynamics an enabler	12		
Queen Bee Syndrome	6		
Sexism	61	Sexual Harassment	
Sexual Coercion	6		
Unwanted sexual attention	10		
Always needing to prove yourself	4	Unequal Recognition	
Deemed incompetent	22		

The section below will highlight some of gender discrimination experiences shared by the women leaders, these are categories as follows: gender discrimination practices, gender stereotypes and expectations including gender harassment.

Gender Discrimination Practices

Participant four applied for a role of managing director post which explicitly stated it was looking for man. While the business scouted for a man to fill the vacancy, she was asked to act for the period of the recruitment process. While she had earned the position as the most competent person, she was appointed into the role, she later discovered she was earning less than what a male counterpart would get paid.

'right, you're going to be like full Managing Director now' he also said – well, he didn't say it to me – 'a real Managing Director would have cost me like R7 million'. And that 'real Managing Director' thing that he said (laughs) and he mentioned the guy. So, he had interviewed a few men. (Participant 4)

A human resource professional confirmed that women continue to earn lesser than men for similar roles and equal qualifications.

*Gender discrimination further, I think in salaries. I think there is still a view and I see it and try and work quite hard on it, but it is definitely such a **sub-conscious thing**. But men typically start on better salaries than women counterparts, equally qualified, and that perpetuates throughout their career. (Participant 2)*

Another finding from the study is the evidence of glass cliff phenomenon, where women get promoted or moved into roles during periods of a crisis. The experience shared by Participant 10 highlights the precarious nature of leadership for women, whereby they are moved into roles and positions that male leaders will unwillingly take due to the high risk of failure.

“There was a lot of times I felt like they actually moved me into a role to go and clean up the mess of somebody who was not doing their job..... And I asked myself, had it been a female at the helm, would they have created a same position for that person or would they have forced her to get everything under control? So, by virtue of understanding, your capacity to absorb and get things done, people exploit you because they know you can do or get work done” (Participant 10)

The manufacturing facilities design and layouts, including practices still lack workplace gender inclusivity. Based on the findings from the analysis, manufacturing plant designs and processes still perpetuate gender discrimination, as the facilities only accommodate men. Participant seven shared her experience of having to work at a site where the plant design, and the practices were not inclusive to women:

..during holidays I had to do my prep work, and I think that's when I experienced firstly the ill-preparedness of having a female, because I was the first female they had sponsored. I didn't have ablutions. They didn't have overalls for females, so they didn't have the size. They didn't have the right size for my shoes because I'm a man's size 6. So, I used to wear a man's size 7 and they were big safety shoes – just because they were ill-prepared. (Participant 7)

Gender Stereotypes and gendered expectations

The findings showed that women leaders continue to face gender stereotypes in manufacturing, a precursor to gender discrimination. The women leaders are treated based on the preconceived ideas and assumptions on how women are meant to conduct themselves in society. Participant 12 related her experience how she was reprimanded by her line manager after she had expressed frustration to the team after an employee almost got killed in the manufacturing facility:

And then after that, my boss actually called me aside, No, no, let's chat. Your approach in that meeting, it was not the right approach because you're being too emotional. I think that's the word that he used. I was like, Okay, I'm being too emotional. What does that mean? Help me understand. I was like, was I shouting or what? Tell me, because for me, I felt like I was expressing my frustration at an incident that happened, and as the plant manager, I have to do that for the team to understand this is serious. And he's like, No, but he really just feels like I was being emotional. (Participant 12)

However, she recounted when a similar incident transpired the line manager, acted the same way but it was deemed acceptable because of his gender:

And interestingly enough, then I had an experience where I was at another brewery, and I think I was visiting another brewery and he was there, and he was actually addressing the team because they had had an injury. And I was watching this guy and how he was interacting with the team. This is exactly what I had done and now, but you're doing it. But when I did it, I was emotional. What does that actually mean? (Participant 12)

Gender Harassment

Manufacturing organisations continue to resist changing by adopting inclusive practices. Based on the findings women continue to be left out of exclusive and privileged networks within the hierarchy, even when the woman leader is part of the executive team. Participant five shared her experience of following the same script that men use to thrive in the manufacturing environments, but she continued to be side-lined by the 'Old White Boys' Club:

"... I'm leading the way others are leading, I'm following the script, I'm not getting the same response... The environment was becoming very clique-y amongst the males, you know. My vice-president was a white male and he automatically just gravitated to the other white male General Managers. So, there was the circle of laughter, you know, and when he'd arrive a few minutes early for a meeting, there was these exchanges of what they did on the weekend or some WhatsApp message that they'd been passing around to each other that they thought was very hilarious, or something like that. I was really starting to feel excluded... (Participant 5)

"It is the typical thing that you are not part of the old boys' club, and you don't get invited to those Friday afternoon drinks..." (Participant 2)

And then also, you know, being a female, there's only so much you can hang out with the guys before... you know, you've got to watch yourself and so on.. (Participant 5)

Another lived experience of gender harassment was shared by Participant two, as she retold the traumatic experience of traveling with a managing director for an overseas trip to the head office, before her job appointment was confirmed.

... I was offered the job, but I needed to go on an overseas trip with him to go and meet the head office before he could confirm my employment. And he was absolutely disgraceful. From the moment I stepped into the aeroplane he had his hands all over me and was just terrible. Terrible! And that is not gender discrimination but it is actually sexual harassment, and it is absolutely shocking, and he thought he could do that because of the unequal power relationship and I was wanting something from him – and it was only a job and nothing else – but it was almost implied that you will get this, but on my terms and there are certain conditions attached to it.. (Participant 2)

*..... We had client meetings and some of them needed tea. Normally it was like, oh we'll get the tea – **like the women will get the tea**. It changed a little bit over the years, **but in most cases the women made the tea**. (Participant 4)*

... it was a very old-fashioned strange thing, he typically would kiss a woman on both cheeks – I know, awkward, right – so I would just put my hand out 'Hello CEO, lovely to see you.' I don't like that kind of kiss/kiss, the European thing you know? It doesn't work for me. (Participant 2)

Inherently the patriarchal system continues to drive low representation of women in leadership levels by making women compete with one other and women assimilating to male-like characters:

But there's also a new enemy of even females playing politics against each other. That kills me. Because my fight all along, all these years, was to prove that a woman can do it, you know – as an engineer, as a leader, but also taking others with me and really building the belief in them because somebody believed in me. now, my sisters, we are stabbing each other in the back. (Participant 7)

Sexism was the predominant issue under sexual harassment and followed by micro-aggressions under gender stereotypes that women must contend with within the industry. It came as surprise that pay disparity was not highlighted as a major issue and the queen bee syndrome less predominant in the South Africa industry. The research question sought to understand the gender discrimination experiences that women leaders encounter in the manufacturing industry. The common theme emerging from the summarised categories highlighted that women are still experiencing systemic barriers that hugely contribute to the gender discrimination and limit their career progression.

5.5.2 How the women leaders navigated the gender discrimination experiences.

Table 4 gives a descriptive overview of the different strategies women leaders use to navigate the gender discrimination experiences as summarised in the previous section. The findings showed the main strategies that were grouped into five categories were: avoidance; pursuit of excellence; adopting a growth mindset; finding purpose in their jobs; and adopting Ubuntu leadership style. There was no one set tactic that was common amongst the women, however there was a willingness to change course if a chosen coping mechanism did not work, leading to common theme being development of an adaptive strategy.

Table 4: How do you navigate these experiences.

How did you navigate these experiences?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Theme
Avoidance	20	Avoidance Strategy	Adaptive Strategy
Masculine leadership style	3		
Transactional Leadership style	3		
No alternative but to remain in the hostile industry	5		
Willingness to be picky about your manager	1		
Build a high-performance team	19	Pursue Excellence	
Apply logic	4	Growth Mindset	
Bravery and courage	20		
Learn to introduce yourself	1		
Proving yourself	44		
Willingness to put a good fight	3		
Love the job	3	Purpose Driven	
Advocacy	8	Ubuntu Leadership	
Humility	16		
Respect	7		
Solid value system	1		
Strategically build relationships	22		
Team player	3		
Seeking justice	31		
Trust	9		

Avoidance as a strategy came up as a navigation mechanism some women use to withstand gender discrimination, Participant five shared how her coping mechanism with withdrawal:

I think in the earlier, and I would say even up until 2019, I don't think I dealt with it. Personally, I don't think I dealt with it, and hence me reaching a tipping point. I think that constant feeling of... what word can I say... of not being accepted, you know, I didn't deal with it. I didn't realise that over the years it made me start to self-doubt, you know, and until more recently.... There are times where I'm in a situation where I feel like I'm being deliberately ignored, you know, and I promise you it's not my imagination if I could describe the situation to you – where I'm being deliberately ignored.... It has been difficult because if it happens once in a while then okay fine. But if it's happening often, then it does become concerning for me, and it has caused me to withdraw quite a bit. (Participant 5)

Pursuit of excellence emerged as a method of navigating the gender discrimination experiences. To prove their capabilities and leadership skills participants alluded to building high-performance teams as strategy to overcome gender discrimination in the workplace, this was sentiment echoed by Participant one:

So, I am here to do a great job and I will take my people with me, and we will be the best performing team even, and you will not give them a hard time and they will not give me a hard time. It is maybe a protection strategy, so you can protect your team and you can protect yourself. (Participant 1)

Adopting a growth mindset and being purpose driven was established as another strategy that women use to adapt, learn, and overcome the obstacles associated with the gender discrimination experiences. The participants shared frequently the willingness to be brave, bold, and not be timid about chasing your dreams as shared by Participant two and 12:

.... but be bold, and be prepared to work hard and towards a goal, but aspire to things, put your hand up and say, 'pick me', even if you know you are not ready, it doesn't matter – you will get there eventually but you need to be noticed and you need to be brave, and courage is important. (Participant 2)

And I was like, again, for me, I believe I've worked hard, but I also believe being a partner is not just about me anymore. It's continuing that journey to show people that, yes, I will go the full mile and I'll get to that high. I will be that CEO one day and I'm doing this to show everyone that it's possible..... I can't give up because, again, if I give up, it's playing into everyone's expectations that we are waiting for her to fail...I've had to find other outlets for my emotions, because like you said, you can't be crying in the brewery there. (Participant 12)

Ubuntu leadership style was the predominant leadership style the women preferred to approach and address gender discrimination, this was through different elements such as exercising humility, respect, and seeking justice.

So I think the best thing that I did I think was actually go and acquaint myself to the shop floor people, and even the shop floor people were coming and literally you know

those little low signs of sabotage and everything else – that's where the shop floor people are coming back like 'oh be careful, this is what we've heard this is what's being plotted' because sometimes there was literally acts of sabotage. (Participant 8)

... also having your subordinates, those people trust me, those are your go-to-people. ..they will give a genuine support. Your operators on the floor, they'll give a genuine support because they don't have any boardroom fights.... All they want, they want a boss that is then going to be able to support them when they want to be supported. So, building the networks and connecting with the people that you work with directly, it helps. It alleviates the stress and the pressure because now you can talk to someone who understands where all of this is coming from. (Participant 11)

Key code groups that had a high repetition included the constant need to prove oneself to earn the respect, trust, and recognition. Due to the under-representation of women another common method to navigate gender discrimination was demonstrating their capabilities and leadership skills through building high performing teams. Another common element was striving for fairness in how people are treated, as part of marginalized groups subjected to discrimination, the women leaders were advocates for justice in the workplace. This was supported by the willingness to put in good fight through acts of bravery and courage. Due to their exclusion from specific networks because of their gender, women leaders strategically build relationships to get support and guidance, they use it as tool to get access to resources and opportunities and the relationships assist with their overall well-being. Although there was an acknowledgment of the long-term impact of avoidance as strategy to navigate gender discrimination, avoidance was used to provide some relief from the emotional distress. The researcher took note how fewer of the women had adopted masculine and transactional leadership style as navigation strategy. Instead resorting to Ubuntu leadership style as an approach to navigate and address gender discrimination.

5.5.3 The emotions and feelings associated with the gender discrimination experiences the women leaders encountered.

Table 5 is a descriptive summary of the different emotions and feelings associated with the gender discrimination experiences. The thematic analysis reduced the data to four categories namely: distressful emotions, lack of sense of belonging, mental health impact and suicide. The overarching common themes were the lack of psychological safety and psychological support.

Table 5: Emotions/Feelings associated with the mentioned experiences.

How did you deal with the emotions/feelings associated with the mentioned experiences?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Themes
A state of being delusional	8	Distressful Emotions	No psychological safety
Emotionally vulnerable	7		
Feeling exhausted	4		
Feelings of anger	7		
Feelings of frustration	5		
Impact on personal life	1		
Self-doubt	1		
Guilt on non-action	14		
Identity Crisis	5	Lack of sense of belonging	
No sense of belonging	11		
Impact on my self-confidence and self esteem	21	Mental Health impact	Lack of psychological support
Mental health compromised	4		
Pressure to be a role model	27		
Suicidal	2	Suicidal	

The predominant emotions expressed by women was distress, including anger, self-doubt, feeling vulnerable and a sense of guilt. Participant 15 captured some of these emotions in recounting her experience:

And I told Angela, because she's my good, work friend, like, she's my venting person. Like, if something happens, we vent, and we move on. And she, she actually suggested I report it, but you know, it was such a sneaky one. It was so subtle, it made me question, like, am I the one who's maybe sending signals? (Participant 15)

Lack of sense of belonging was another predominant emotion the participants mentioned including issues of identity crisis and at times feeling like a fraud, such was the case with Participant four:

I think over the years as Financial Director, I think I tried to prove to people that I was knowledgeable. So, I like really, really immersed myself into the factory, so I knew everything... Like I really tried to (laughs) understand how things actually worked, else people could just tell me stuff and I would just believe them. So I was like, I can't ever be caught out like I don't know what I'm talking about. (Participant 4)

While the few women that ascend to leadership can be role models to other women with aspirations to get to the top, the pressure to perform has a significant impact on the mental health of the individual in the role or position.

.....being appointed as the first female director in Africa, the pressure to perform that you then take on as a result of that is huge, right? I always say, I almost killed myself in that Company, right? It was a tough, probably the toughest job I did. And I gave it 200%, right? Because I didn't want to fail. (Participant 9)

Although mental health concerns are not exclusively linked to women's experience with gender discrimination, the mentioning of suicide puts emphasis on how the discriminatory

experiences contribute to high levels of stress and mental health challenges amongst women in the manufacturing industry

It would have killed me, yes. Because I could have had a lot of instances where I even considered taking my own life. That's why I left those places I was taken to, but I'm not comfortable sharing. It used to be very ugly. Yeah, it used to be ugly. (Participant 7)

Research question one highlighted that women are subjected to systemic challenges observed through gender discriminatory practices, gender stereotypes and gender harassment. The investigation also revealed that women develop different adaptive strategies to navigate the discriminatory practices including pursuing excellence, developing a growth mindset, and resorting to Ubuntu leadership style. Regarding emotions experience highlighted that women experience no psychological safety and psychological support in manufacturing environments. The next section will provide insights into research two pertaining personal resilience.

5.6 Research Question Two Results

The second research question was focused on understanding the different personal resilience strategies that women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in manufacturing environments. With the main construct being resilience, the question sought to understand the support the women leaders received to deal with the experiences. Further understanding how they have developed through the experiences, how they manage their well-being and exploring the different strategies they use to build their resilience.

5.6.1 The support women leaders have with dealing with gender discrimination experience.

Table 6 is a descriptive summary of the kind of support women leaders received with dealing with the experiences. The thematic analysis reduced the data to three categories namely: leveraging networks, strategic connections, and a work-life balance. The overarching common themes were building networks and having a supportive community.

Table 6: Support received with dealing with the discriminatory experiences.

What support did you have in dealing with these experiences and how did you get this support?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Themes
Strategic Relationships	9	Leverage Networks	Building Networks
Executive Coaching	2	Strategic connections	
Mentorship	14		
Sponsorship	6		
Supportive line manager	8		
Work friends	4		
Family	8	Work - life balance	Supportive Community
Friendship	5		
Sisterhood	12		
Supportive partner	3		

Leveraging networks through forming strategic relationships was highlighted as strategy for navigating the gender discriminatory experiences in the manufacturing sector.

And the network for me has helped in such a tremendous way, where you will go through bumps in your career, where you fail in such a bad way that you think it is over. You are going to fire me or my career is over. All of these feelings of fear and hopelessness come. And what has helped me get out of it is again, these senior coaches and mentors.. (Participant 6)

Forming strategic connections was highlighted as a crucial strategy of addressing and navigating gender discrimination. The connections vary from supportive work friends, mentors and career sponsors, supportive line manager and executive coaches.

But the leadership team was also – supportive... So, I felt because that team was so great, I didn't feel like I couldn't do my job you know? (Participant 15)

"So, I had Joseph, who was an incredible boss, right? In the sense that, you know, somebody who is unlimiting; he's like this big picture thinker about 'anything is possible. We can go to the moon. Let's go.'" (Participant 9)

A healthy work-life balance was mentioned as a significant contributor to building resilience and getting the necessary support to deal with the gender discrimination experiences.

No, to be honest I've always had friends, like I've got a very active social life and that, even through my conflicts I still had that active life going, and I think to be honest, that neutralized a lot you know; it brought a bit of balance, apart from my family. ... So I sort of always, luckily my social space has always been active and I have friends, go out, and that sort of helped me....(Participant 14)

I think it is important for a woman to have an understanding partner that you will work long hours, you will be required to be really involved in work even in your personal time and I think having that acceptance and that support is very important. (Participant 2)

And I came back, and I remember like afterwards I drove home, and I phoned my mom and I said, you know what, if they don't want me after all of these interviews, like it's

actually fine. Like I'm not asking them, I'm not going to anymore interviews. Like I'm not speaking to them anymore. It's just ridiculous. Like I can't actually prove myself anymore. (**Participant 4**)

5.6.2 How women leaders manage their overall well-being.

The following Table 7 is a descriptive summary of how women leaders manage their well-being. The thematic analysis uncovered different methods of well-being management varying from physical activity, creating time for socialising and for some prioritising their well-being was a challenge. The overarching common themes were striving for a work life balance, having a supportive community and for some prioritising their well-being was a challenge.

Table 7: How the women leaders manage their well-being.

How do you manage your overall well-being?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Themes
Difficult to manage my well being	10	Deprioritised my well-being	Neglect of my well-being
Processing my emotions	7	Emotional Activities	
Delegation	1	Empowering my team	Striving for work-life balance
Family time	2	Family Time	
Nature	3	Physical Activity	
Physical activity	14		
Taking time off work	9	Resting	
Hobbies	12	Social Activities	
Meditation	2	Spiritual and Mindful Activities	
Helping others	2	Volunteering and Community Engagements	

With juggling the complexities of manufacturing on the few occasions the participants shared how they struggle to prioritise their well-being.

*And if you have a good partner who can help that way, you can do anything. And then when I get home, I'm present at home with my kids. Yes, there might be a call here. There will always be e-mails that you want to check. So what I do, when I get home, I disconnect it a bit, check on the family, and then later on spend an hour of work. If there's escalations, I pick up the escalations. (**Participant 10**)*

*I'm actually very terrible at that, to be honest. Look, I need to make changes in my life because you can't be this stressed all the time. It's obviously not good for you. My well-being, to be honest, is not something that I have prioritised....I need to change something because 10 years from now, I look back and say, I ruined my life because of work. (**Participant 12**)*

*"I'm not always good at this. I'll be completely transparent. It's a challenge... So, it's like, ... I was working insane hours, and it was very stressful." (**Participant 9**)*

Striving for a work – life was highlighted as again a strategy to help women manage their well-being. It included making time for spiritual and mental activities, time for family, resting and delegation to empower teams.

..... this is feedback I also get from my team. I get very moody if I don't go to gym for the whole week. Right? It affects, I'm very short tempered, you know, I am direct, and not very good..... in the weeks where I'm super busy, or the stress levels are high, I have to actually prioritize that. It means that I wake up at 4 a.m. in the morning to do it, but that's important, right? And one of the things we were talking about is, you know, being able to accept what you will do, and what you will not do. And actually, writing down 'this I will not do.' So, one of my limits for instance is, I will not travel on a weekend. **(Participant 9)**

.... I am prioritizing leave. And what I mean by that is when I go on leave, I tell my boss/bosses – 'I am on leave, I will not have my laptop... I switch off. It is important.... So that is what I do, I just go, I switch off. I even take the teams messages off my phone... And I always say to my team members, guys I am a human being, I will die one day. **(Participant 6)**

Yeah. I thought resilience, for a long time, was not having any sick days. That's what I thought resilience was. And for a long time I didn't have any sick days. I thought resilience was pitching up no matter what situation you were having. And I think that's what we were taught to do, was to pitch up, you know.... **(Participant 5)**

Volunteering and community engagements was mentioned a way to manage overall wellbeing.

.....but then now I cope, my outlet right now is this whole fixation on lifting as we rise. So, my energy right now is to make sure that people that are coming after me, do not have to go through what I went through..... **(Participant 8)**

5.6.3 How women leaders have developed through the discrimination experiences.

Table 8 is a descriptive summary of the different ways in which the women leaders have developed through the gender discrimination experiences. The thematic analysis reduced the data to nine categories namely: authentic leadership, healthy self-esteem, growth mindset, self-awareness, build relationships, servant and ubuntu leadership, empowered teams, and an avoidant strategy. The overarching common theme were authentic leadership, building networks, servant and Ubuntu leadership and an avoidant strategy.

Table 8: How the women leaders have developed through the discrimination experiences

How have you developed through this discrimination experiences?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Theme
Authenticity	12	Authentic Leadership	Authentic Leadership
Assertive	6	Healthy Self Esteem	
Braver	4		
Confident	23		
Experiences build resilience	1		
Good communicator	1		
Self-mastery	36	Growth Mindset	
Growth mindset	24		
Take nothing personally	9	Self-Awareness	

Stakeholder management	3	Relationship Building Focused	Building Networks
Strategically build relationships	22		Building Networks
Greater purpose	13	Servant Leadership	Servant Leadership
Compassion	2	Ubuntu Leadership	Ubuntu Leadership
Delegating	2	Team is empowered	
Avoidance	20	Avoidance Strategy	Avoidance Strategy

Authentic leadership came out as one of the key characteristics from the data analysis that some of the women leadership believed they have developed the discriminatory experiences:

So this is how I dealt with it. Try and where we can – because we are all human – so I always try to show up as my authentic self, so people know when I am happy, when I am not, but always trying to be respectful in whatever situation. (Participant 3)

... in order to build resilience, I have to be myself. It's exhausting trying to be someone else. And it takes a lot of effort to remind yourself like, No, I need to be this person. You need to be this person. And people see through it as well. The best way that I can do, like look, this is me. Take it or leave it. I know you're not and also, I think what's important from a building block is to know that not everyone will like you. (Participant 12)

A healthy esteem was mentioned to be a crucial factor in how women navigate gender discrimination, as it allowed women to advocate from themselves and provide a foundation for assertiveness, self-mastery, and improved confidence.

Oh my goodness. In the moment, being assertive, being logical, afterwards I remember being with the EVP and he was being very tough on all the directors, and then I stood up to him and I said, 'No, this is not true'. And I stood up trying to defend Jody. And then he made a comment and he said, 'No Participant 3, this is not the time to be emotional'. So, then I said to him something along the lines of 'No, EVP, I don't think you know me enough to know when I am being emotional. This is me being assertive with you, I disagree with your comment, and your feedback to Jody'. (Participant 3)

...I understand myself a lot more and I can go to a leader and say, 'Please can you stop raising your voice at me because I don't like to be spoken to like that, and I will speak to you when I have calmed down.' So like now once you get older, you can say things like that and you are also not nervous you are going to get fired for saying things because I think when you are younger you don't. (Participant 1)

A growth mindset was highlighted as a trait that was developed overtime to build the persistence and resilience of overcoming the challenges associated with gender discrimination in the workplace and being brave to enough to embrace failure while taking nothing personally.

And without fear of making mistakes. You will make mistakes, but I've kind of gone past the stage of being too hard on myself. But if I feel like I've got a role to play, I'll go fetch it. So, I feel like I've gone past the point where I'm feeling like I'm being treated a certain way because I decide to stand up and stand out where I feel it's appropriate to do so. So, I always say to people, sometimes I forget that I'm a woman. Because that thing, I've parked it, I've put it away to say I'm in the room for a reason. I don't care who's here. They are going to hear, even those who don't want to hear me, (Participant 14)

.. I have done so many roles and made so many mess ups in my roles, but I have progressed, so I know it doesn't define me that I fail. And even if someone who is my senior stakeholder thinks I am useless, that doesn't define me (Participant 6)

Because as a human being, if you decide for example I cannot control behaviour - that is my thing – I have literally learnt a long time ago that I cannot control other people's behaviour but I can have control of my behaviour and I am accountable to myself (Participant 8)

Another important aspect was intentionally building relationships, understanding that performance and hard work will not speak for you shared Participant 3:

The unfortunate bit was that for a female who is young, it does take a bit longer, and it takes a concerted effort of building the relationships and demonstrating that people can trust you, and getting the qualifications and working harder than everyone, just so people can see that oh, okay, I could try and listen to this individual; whereas if I was a white male who comes in and says 'guys, we need to do 1-2-3' are they likely to face less resistance? (Participant 3)

I had to learn to use the relationship currency, and I think what people under-value is, a lot of people actually just want to be valued for the work they do. And so what helps you navigate is first and foremost just acknowledging them as a person (Participant 10)

Others included servant and ubuntu leadership and as well as empowering your teams. The experiences made the women have a greater sense of purpose and express more compassion:

I think I've been validated, but I've also felt a more pressing need to make sure I am involved in how I make things better. Make things better not just for women, but make a workplace an inclusive place for anyone. I always try to actively be part of conversations that speak to that so that I can have my voice heard so that I can tell people what the issues are that I have experienced and what other women have experienced. And I think I want to be involved. I don't want to take a back seat and say I've suffered, I'm out. I want to be involved. I want to be part of fixing the problem. (Participant 13)

So I think like all the challenges from a work perspective over the last how many years, it's like accepting okay, this is awful and there is a solution, and then trying to bring people together – you can't do it all by yourself – to try and find ways to do it better, like try and find a solution. (Participant 4)

The more experience the women leader has in manufacturing, the more confident they became in their capabilities and their character, while the opposite was an avoidance strategy:

So I think mine is a different story to yours because I think at the beginning I was probably lucky enough and maybe too naïve to understand the corporate politics, which in hindsight was not such a bad thing. But then later on, because I matured and understood, I was like 'Hang on, there is more to this game.' But by that time I was confident enough, I was mature enough and I knew that I deserved to be where I was... and it was like just be a human being, learn, there is nothing you can't learn. (Participant 6)

.. I have learnt to keep off the Company Y radar because it is political at that level and I am not interested in politics at all. So, I would rather stay off the radar because it is just more peaceful, and I get more done. (**Participant 2**)

5.6.4 The different strategies women leaders use to build their resilience.

Table 9 is a descriptive summary of the different strategies that women leaders use to build their resilience. The thematic analysis reduced the data to multiple categories the overarching common theme were authentic leadership, striving for a work-life balance and servant leadership.

Table 9: Different strategies used to build resilience.

What are the different strategies you use to build your resilience?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Theme
Experiences build resilience	1	Learning and growth	Authentic Leadership
Self-mastery	36	Self-Mastery	
Strong Character	12	Strong Character	
Psychological health	6	Psychological Support	Striving for a work-life balance
Spirituality	9	Spirituality	
Strategic Connections	16	Building Relationships	
Strategically build relationships	22	Building Relationships	
Supportive Community	34	Supportive Community	
Helping others	2	Servant Leadership	Servant Leadership

Authentic and servant leadership resurfaced again coping strategy by women leaders to build their resilience, this included self-mastery, building a strong character, and helping others:

*And so I joined this new team. They literally, robbed me because they decided that they didn't want me to be their manager. And you know, I don't know, we never got to the point of was it a race thing, was it a gender thing, you know, what were the issues? And that got me really thinking that, you know what, let me work on myself. Let me work on myself as a leader. Let me deal with all these insecurities and if people think I'm aggressive or whatever, let me reflect on that and just try and find out, you know Participant 5, who are you really, you know? (**Participant 5**)*

*I think I'm a really strong person, like I'm not trying to float my boat, I don't think people take chances with me often, I'm assertive, like I feel like my personality isn't the type of personality that people go and take chances with, and I think I'm very fortunate I think these things happen to a lot of people a lot more because they have different personalities. If you're not A type and outgoing and assertive in a certain way, I can very easily see it happening to people a lot more (**Participant 15**)*

*Basically, things that are outside of work, so there is some community work that I do that gives me joy, because it empowers others. (**Participant 7**)*

Striving for work for a work life balance was strongly recommended, through getting psychological support, centering oneself through spirituality, building relationships and a supportive community:

I wouldn't say mentors help you with resilience. I think working through experiences in life, like, if something personal has happened to you, I do think psychologists can help in this regard because they don't really tell you anything. They just let you figure out what you... You know? (Participant 15)

You decided to show up at work. I don't know if this applies in theory or in research, but spirituality is also important for me. And that has been one of my guiding principles, is to look for strength in times of difficulty, and to find peace. (Participant 5)

..the whole of management was - besides one person - was Indian men – a whole club of Indian boys or men who are just friends. And then shop floor people you know is predominantly black people. So literally the alliances are what made me succeed or survive, because sometimes even though they wouldn't do some things, they will do it because they were like 'We are doing this to protect you'. ... and they will literally have your back because they can see what is happening in the layers, because they they've been with these people for very long. (Participant 8)

Time to hang out with my female friends, some of whom are married, some are single, and you get different perspectives and I just love it. We talk about anything and everything, and I think again, human beings go through similar issues but because we don't know when you are isolated, you just think it is you. (Participant 6)

I think personally I just have a strong family support system because of the nature of the work I do. But I'm also very, very connected to God, and I think that becomes, I'd say, my... what do you call it, you know, where you... your exit point. I don't know what you call it. And that has always helped, because without a good spiritual connection you would never get a real sense of who you are, and your job will just be a job, it will not be a purpose. (Participant 10)

5.7 Research Three Results

5.7.1 How gender discrimination experiences have had an impact on the women leader career decisions.

Table 10 is a descriptive summary of how the gender discrimination experiences have had an impact on the career decisions of women leaders. The thematic analysis reduced the data to multiple categories. The overarching common theme were a better company culture, psychological safety, systemic challenges and seeking for change.

Table 10: How the gender discriminatory experiences have had an impact on their career decisions.

How have your gender discrimination experiences had an impact on your career decisions?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Themes
Create time for family	3	Work-life balance	Better Company Culture
More flexible environment	4	Flexible Schedule	
Searching for autonomy	3	Autonomy	
Environment where I am treated like a human being	1	Company Culture	Psychological Safety
Ill treatment from line manager	7	Poor working relationships	
No support	3	Poor working relationships	
Detrimental Impact on my mental health	8	Psychological Impact	
Unwilling to sacrifice value system	1	Poor working relationships	

Pay Disparity	4	Low income	
Limited advancement opportunities	5	Lack of promotion opportunities	Systemic Challenges
Looking for growth	3	Lack of promotion opportunities	
Non-Manufacturing environment	2	Exploring other career opportunities	Seeking for change
Personal reasons	1	Exploring other career opportunities	

Some participants shared the gender discrimination experiences made them look for a better company culture that would enable the women to have a work-life balance, flexible work schedule and sense of autonomy:

So, I think at that time I was not ready. Am I able to do it now? I think in my head, no. (laughs) Because I value work / life balance and I have a different form of pressure. Because the roles I have had are a different form of pressure. (Participant 6)

But I have to do all of that to suit me and my family life because I feel like it's just been on the back foot all along. Yeah. And everything else comes first, my career and so forth. But another part where I feel like my career is to support my well-being. (Participant 14)

So, I challenged them. I said, you brought me here and you said during the interview the reason you got me is because you want to be running like a world-class manufacturing ... now you want to direct me in terms of how I should be running the factory going forward....I think very stubborn and people that have been in the company for years who are set in their minds, they just didn't want to listen. That's when I knew I won't work here. It won't work. I left without notice by end of March. (Participant 7)

The lack of psychological safety has led to some of the participants leaving their jobs, among the other reasons mentioned were the company culture, poor working relationships, no support, and detrimental impact to their mental health:

But actually, outside of South Africa most people don't care that you're the only woman or the only black person. They see you as a human being and they interact. (Participant 9)

I challenged him. I told him what he was doing to me. I told him what he was doing to my team. And oh, he got so angry, to a point where he will just now challenge me in front of everyone, even senior leaders, even visitors. He just was so angry. I think that's when it just made me realise now, I can't continue doing this so that when I come back, I come back to something else, because I can't. (Participant 7)

No. Look, when I when I'm with him, I couldn't even sit with him, and honestly shared genuinely how I'm feeling because I knew he doesn't care. So it didn't even help me opening up to him. I'd rather go home and speak at home and come back. But now it got to a point where it's just too much and he was just being disrespectful. (Participant 14)

I think I'm a smart person, I have a lot to offer, I would kick butt in leading a factory but you can't really do that without the people following you and I just don't think people follow female factory leaders. (Participant 15)

Systemic barriers influenced the decision for women to switch their careers and seeking a different environment:

There is one instance that comes to mind. I was ready for the position. I had acted on the position. I felt there was nothing that I could have done more to prove that I am ready for the position. I was caught aside... we understand you are ready for this particular position. However, we feel like you're still lacking in one, two, three. But none of that came in any of my developmental discussions. In all my developmental discussion, it was well done, you're doing well. (Participant 11)

"I've had to change my career path because I just don't believe a factory director being female will succeed." (Participant 15)

The following section will highlight the kind of support the women leaders have received from their organisations to build their resilience.

5.7.2 The kind of support that organisations offer towards women leaders building their resilience.

Table 11 is a descriptive summary of the kind of support the organisation offers towards building resilience. The thematic analysis reduced the data to multiple categories and the overarching common theme were no support offered, men as advocates and supportive leadership.

Table 11: Organisational support offered towards building resilience.

What kind of support does your organisation offer towards building your resilience?			
Codes	Frequency	Categories	Themes
HR formal grievances	1	Reliance on HR systems	No support offered
Lack of support	18	Lack of Support	
Lack of support from leadership	9	Lack of Support	
Lack of training and development	10	No education and training programs	
Legislation related	6	Reliance on HR systems	
Safer environment for men	14	Lack of Support	
Work and personal life conflict	30	Rigid Culture	
Women have no seat on the table	10	Lack of Support	
Role of men in advocacy	12	Role of men as advocates	Men as advocates
Social issues driving conversations	1	Role of men as advocates	
Create time for family	14	Supportive leadership	Supportive leadership
Supportive line manager	8	Supportive leadership	

The predominant theme that came across the women leaders was that organisations did not offer suffer any support for building resilience:

The organisation teaches us to be resilient in practice, doing the job, but it doesn't teach us to be resilient in leadership. Though some of our executive may appear as resilient leaders, we're not taught how to be resilient leaders... how does an organisation teach me to be resilient? It teaches me to be resilient in my job, to perform my job better each time I do it. But it doesn't teach me to be resilient as a person. That's something you

have to figure out on your own. You don't get support for mental health. You don't get support for that. **(Participant 5)**

*I found ways to get around it, you know, because personally, I did nothing wrong, and yes, it's weird, it is weird, you go home, and you feel weird about it for a little bit.... Also, the people who report things, it can go really bad for you, like, it's not always as safe as you think to report things. I've heard of examples, if people report things, and it becomes really messy, and I think it can be career limiting, to some extent, to report certain people. I mean, I don't think our HR deals with it very well. **(Participant 15)***

*"So on paper, definitely the organization has it" **(Participant 6)***

*"You know we rely on our ICAS and that is just not sufficient." **(Participant 2)***

*"I don't like the psychologists that they give you through ICAS. Like, they're pretty useless, eh?" **(Participant 15)***

The second predominant theme was the role played by men as advocates and having good leaders offered the support required to navigate gender discrimination:

*Henry was like one of those people who were like the biggest cheerleaders of my career. Who were like, you know, you can do it. You have all the right stuff. You know, somebody who's always positively claiming you, right? Again, those people are very important in your career. **(Participant 9)***

*I must say he's very, very – he's very attentive to gender diversity. Like, he'll – he's been, like, okay, make sure you pick an equal amount of females and males to present, you know, like, ask some of the females if they want to take us through the country scorecards or whatever for the monthly results call. He's very attentive to it. **(Participant 15)***

*"So I had Tutsi, who was an incredible boss, right? In the sense that, you know, somebody who is unlimiting; he's like this big picture thinker about 'anything is possible. We can go to the moon. Let's go.'" **(Participant 9)***

*I feel like I've also been lucky. Like, I feel like I've had really good leaders **(Participant 15)***

5.8 Intersectionality

Although intersectionality was not a construct under study, as mentioned in Chapter 2 it is impossible to ignore the influence of intersectionality in the lived experiences of women with gender discrimination in the manufacturing environment. The overarching themes as presented on Table outside the scope of the instrument guide were highlighted as systemic racism, the negative impacts of employment equity include reverse discrimination, tokenism, stigmatization and lastly tribalism.

Table 12: Intersectionality

Intersectionality		
Codes	Categories	Themes
Leading a team of Indian men and I was labelled "Black Forest Cake" because of my skin colour	Microaggressions	Systemic Racism
Apartheid had already conditioned me that I could not do better than white men	Racial Discrimination	
Battling to fit in as a minority, not enough to be black or not white		
Being coloured female has hindered my career progression		
Discriminated more on race than gender		
Feelings of being constantly judged as a coloured girl		
I used to walk into the process control room and all the Afrikaans speaking men would leave the room		
It is exhausting because only competence is assumed for white men when you get into a room		
No one trusted me because I was a black female running the show		
Not natural for a coloured girl to get sponsorship from a white male		
Racist behaviour		
White counterparts invited to braais that I never got an invite for		
My white manager supported me because my success was his KPI	Cons of Employment Equity	
To win the against the stigma of being an affirmative action appointee I needed to tough to make it	Cons of Employment Equity	Perceived Tokenism
I was only seen as an employment equity candidate who did not know much	Cons of Employment Equity	Employment Equity Stigmatization
Only viewed as a naive, affirmative appointed black female and not for my capabilities		
Treated like a BEE appointee as the first black female supply chain director	Language discrimination	Tribalism
Biggest hurdle on top of being a black woman was not being able to speak Isizulu		

Here the intersectionality between race and gender highlights the compounded effect of oppression, particularly from people from previously marginalised groups.

So being a minority in race and gender definitely did influence my career, and still does up until today. It still does influence my career negatively – to get sponsorship. To me it seems like it's not natural for a white man to mentor a coloured female. It's like unheard of. (Participant 5)

.. The legal counsellor checks my bank account every month, he checks my social media, he checks lots of things – and I'm not even aware. I got to hear from these things later, to say I was always checked. And they were going up and down, checking everything I was doing. It was crazy, because now they've really driven fear into everyone that for the first time in this business we have an African South African leader. She's female for that matter. What's even worse, the rest of... especially marketing, because they were doing innovation and stuff, they really side-lined me – new innovations we were going to do, big projects – I am not aware of. They go straight into my team who is predominantly white males because they don't trust that I know anything. To them also I was an Employment Equity candidate. (Participant 7)

".... you know what they call the department?" and the lady obviously asked 'what?' 'They call it the Black Forest Cake' and so then they asked 'what do you mean?' Exactly. So it was like 'the Black Forest, the cream at the top and the cream in the layers and then you have the brown sponge in the middle.' (Participant 8)

Employment Equity Act also becomes a barrier for a more diverse, equity and inclusive workplace, it is proven to discredit the capabilities and potential of those previously marginalised leading to perceived tokenism and stigmatization.

...coming into this company and there's that view of, ooh, black female supply chain director, what's going on? What's BEE triple, from a lot of white males in in the company. And being able to come in and perform and do a great job is what fuels me as well. So I'm not limited in my thinking anymore, right? I am not allowing that to happen. (Participant 9)

Now, because I'm having to prove myself that I'm not an affirmative action appointee, I needed to leave the person that I am, my fabric, the beliefs that I have about the people that I work with because I now need it to be tough. Because for you to make it, you need to be tough. (Participant 11)

Tribalism in manufacturing environments serves to perpetuate gender discrimination through reinforcing patriarchal norms and using language as a barrier to discredit the leadership capabilities of women.

I mean there was a team of 255 people in the operating area, across all shifts, not in one shift. And luckily I didn't have to address them all in one go, but still, you know? And the biggest challenges was well you are a black woman, you have a Zulu surname. And I was like 'I am not Zulu, I am married to a Zulu guy'. But you must speak Zulu. (Participant 6)

5.9 Conclusion

The findings from the qualitative research study shared insights on the personal resilience strategies that women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in South African manufacturing environments. The research study revealed that women continue to grapple with systemic challenges, and the women leaders that remain within the industry amidst the discriminatory practices they are exposed to, do so through adapting various coping strategies. This is enabled through having a strong community of support, and adoption of Ubuntu leadership style. Lastly the research study highlighted that gender discrimination cannot be studied in isolation without recognising intersectionality and its compounded effect of other identities especially race. The summarised table showing the consolidation of the themes for the creation of a conceptual framework is found in Appendix 4. The findings are further discussed in Chapter 6 and conclusion including suggestions for future research are discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion on the results presented in Chapter 5, following the sequence of the research questions presented in Chapter 3. The analysis will provide a comparison and a contrast between the findings in Chapter 5 and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, to provide answers to the questions in Chapter 3. The insights shared will provide a better understanding on the personal resilience strategies that women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in South African manufacturing organisations. The presentation of the discussion will follow the same structure and sequence presented in Chapter 5, which was in line with the research questions and provides insights to the research problem shared in Chapter 1.

The key findings revealed that women continue to grapple with systemic challenges, and the women leaders that remain within the industry amidst the discriminatory practices do so through adapting various coping strategies. This is enabled through having a strong community of support, and adoption of Ubuntu leadership style. Lastly the research study highlighted that gender discrimination cannot be studied in isolation without recognising intersectionality and its compounded effect of the lived experiences of women in the manufacturing environment.

6.2 Discussion of results for Research Question One

Research Question One: What are the gender discrimination experiences of women leaders within South African manufacturing organisations?

Research Question One was posed to understand the lived experiences of women leaders in manufacturing whereby they were discriminated against because their gender at work. Additionally, the research question sought to understand how women leaders navigated the different gender discrimination experiences and how they dealt with the emotions associated with the mentioned experiences. The following section provides a detailed account of the findings from the research and provides a contrast or confirmation with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The presentation of the findings will follow the format presented on the instrument guide.

6.2.1 Gender discrimination experiences women leaders experienced in manufacturing work environments.

The study found that in post-democratic South Africa women leaders within the manufacturing industry still grapple with gender discrimination. The findings showed that despite government efforts to correct the injustices of the past and promote gender equality, organisational practices and policies still perpetuate gender discrimination. The overarching theme highlighting the discriminatory experiences was concluded as systemic barriers. The experiences shared by the sampled group of women leaders were not isolated incidents but were common amongst the participants, and they echoed some sentiments shared in literature, highlighting that gender discrimination is deeply ingrained within organisational structures and systems resulting in unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender.

6.2.1.1 Gender Discrimination Practices

The research study revealed that recruitment processes within the manufacturing industry continue to exclude women from opportunities in senior leadership positions. This was not only through explicit preferential treatment towards a specific gender, but the study also confirmed the biases that women experience during interview processes and the continued pay gap disparity due to unequal pay offers for the same qualifications and skills, deterring women from seeking promotions. This was consistent with findings from literature. Bosquet et al. (2019) found biases in hiring and promotion processes as one of the key factors behind the low likelihood of women applying for promotions. This was also highlighted as one of the systemic issues that continues to contribute to gender discriminatory practices, causing a significant gap in achieving gender equality (Bosquet et al., 2019). Exley & Kessler (2019) noted that women are less likely to be hired, even when the candidate is equally performing as a male candidate. Gorman & Mosseri (2019), also argued that organisational recruitment, promotion and pay practices play a significant role in gender under-representation and perpetuating gender discrimination. The paper highlighted how recruitment methods particularly in male-dominated fields tend to disadvantage women, as there is historical pattern to hire through informal networks and referrals, which reinforce divisions, as men are most likely to recommend male for roles (Gorman & Mosseri, 2019). Regarding pay disparities, Gorman & Mosseri (2019) argued that whether organisations rely on subjective assessments or formalised evaluations, the

processes reinforce gender biases, as decision makers in male dominated environments have preferential treatment towards men, this arguably disadvantages women, contributing to the gender pay gap and limiting women's career progression.

Further insights from the study revealed how women tend to be deemed promotable during moments of a crisis and appointed into positions to clean up a mess or failure created by a man. This is consistent with the study conducted by Groeneveld et al. (2020) who found that women are more likely to be appointed in precarious leadership positions, aligned to the glass cliff phenomenon of only appointing women in times of crisis which exacerbates the perception between leadership qualities and the qualities possessed by women. It was also noted that women continue to be subjected to unpleasant work conditions, such as facilities design and structure not being inclusive to other genders except for men. Some examples from the study included facilities not having ablutions for women, and personal protective gear not inclusive to the female body type and size. This was argued by Bridges et al. (2021) in exposing how male-dominated industries continue to undermine women's capabilities and promote gender discrimination through hegemonic masculinity meant to exclude women by associating certain trades with only male attributes.

It is important to note that pay disparity was among the least mentioned form of discrimination amongst the women. This was certainly a deviation from what the study was anticipating, as there exists a body work that argues that gender pay gap stems from gender discrimination and the continued societal norm to undervalue women (Blau & Kahn, 2020; Meara et al., 2020). This provided an interesting insight and might be due to an unwillingness to speak openly about pay potentially due to the lack of transparency in organisations around this issue. Nonetheless the issues of gender discrimination practice those women raised freely focused more on hiring and promotion practices.

6.2.1.2 Gender Stereotypes and Gendered Expectations

The other construct under gender discrimination that was predominant was gender stereotypes and gendered expectations. Under these category three themes were highlighted, firstly the view that women leaders are in a state of delusion about the occurrence of the gender discrimination incident, secondly constantly subjected to stereotypes and, the most common with a high frequency in the data was the experience of micro-aggressions. The sentiment "you are emotional" was highlighted as a frequently

used microaggression, which perpetuates the stereotype that women are less rational, to undermine their leadership capabilities and contributions in the workplace. This confirmed literature that amongst other stereotypes, women continue to be classified as emotionally unstable and weak, while men hold the perception of strength and being assertive (Wu et al., 2021). The study also revealed that a similar response that had led to a woman participant being called “emotional”, was more tolerable when a man expressed frustration and anger. This supported the study that was conducted that Tabassum & Nayak (2018) that the expression of anger by men in professional settings is regarded as appropriate, while woman’s expression of the same emotion is regarded as low class and unprofessional.

6.2.1.3 Gender Harassment

The study showed evidence of sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual harassment experiences that the women were forced to contend with in manufacturing organisations. It was alarming that sexist practices were ranked the highest amongst the women, even at their seniority level within their respective companies. This demonstrates the urgency required for the academic world to highlight the lived experiences of women navigating gender discrimination and the need for organisations to implement effective policies that prevent the continued marginalisation of women. The research study found sexual coercion to be prevalent in the manufacturing industry. In one case, a participant 2 as highlighted in chapter 5 was lured into an overseas trip with an executive member, and confirmation of the job was through the participant consenting to sexual acts. Cortina & Areguin (2021) studied this form of harassment and whether implicit or explicit, it is conducted with the intention of making conditions of employment dependent on the victim consenting to sexual advances.

Another form of harassment highlighted in the study was a senior member of the board acting inappropriately, by wanting to kiss a woman in a professional setting on the cheeks. Inappropriate and unwanted physical attention and violation of physical boundaries is documented as leading to mental and emotional stress for victims as argued by (Fitzgerald ,2019). In addition, this can be a tool that masculine environments use to assert dominance and reinforce power imbalances. Fitzgerald (2019) found that senior leaders exploit their positions to make unwanted sexual advances, such as touching women inappropriately without consent, this form of harassment was noted to be pervasive and

normalised in male-dominated industries. This was consistent with study conducted by Cortina & Areguin (2021) who provided an in-depth examination of this form of harassment, sharing that the act is often unreciprocated and unpleasant, usually leaves the victim traumatised.

The last noted finding was gender harassment. According to Perez (2022) with gender harassment the aim is to disempower the victim leading to emotions of belittlement, doubt, internalization of the harassment leading to major psychological impact on the victim. Supported by Sweet (2019), gender harassment was found to be a form of mind manipulation and abusive power tactic, in this occasion, the aim is to undermine women and make them doubt their lived realities of gender discrimination. A case shared in the study was a women leader instructed to make tea, although there was acknowledgement that things had become better over the years, however the stereotypical norm in the professional setting was that “women made the tea”. Such behaviours continue to reinforce societal misconceptions on gender roles and stereotypes further contributing to systemic gender discrimination that has always undermined women’s capabilities outside the boundaries of gender stereotypes.

Significant to this finding is that due to the covert nature of gender harassment, it often leaves women questioning their reality and feeling delusional. In the findings, the case presented in Chapter 5 whereby an incident made the participant 15 have multiple doubts about the incident, to extent she thought she had sent signals that led to the harassment. This highlight how instances of gender harassment makes women invalidate their experiences due to the predominant feelings of being confused. Due to the uncertainty of the event or incident, gender harassment seldom gets reported, which was the case with the finding mentioned from the study. The finding was supported by Taylor et al. (2018) that this form of harassment is often difficult to detect or prove, as it lacks clarity or overt actions and underreporting further makes it difficult to hold the perpetrators accountable, further perpetuating acts of gender discrimination in the workplace (Gómez-González et al., 2023).

The following section explores how women leaders navigate the gender discrimination experiences:

6.2.2 How women leaders navigate the gender discrimination experiences.

The study found that there was no set rule in how the women leaders navigated the gender discrimination experiences in manufacturing organisations. With time, the women

established ways to thrive despite the challenges, hence the overarching theme of developing an adaptive strategy. The findings for this research question touch on the concept of resilience, which is another construct under investigation for the research study. However, it was important to understand the interpretation of gender discrimination based on the participant's lived experience without pre-empting the end-goal.

The research study found women in historically male-dominated industry avidly pursue excellence to demonstrate competence and invalidate the misconceptions about women's capabilities. This approach focuses on ensuring they build high performing teams. The finding presented in Chapter 5, shared how having a best performing team was a protection strategy. This confirms the findings by Ellemers (2018) and Tabassum & Nayak (2021) which invalidated the stereotypes that only men are ambitious, and goal orientated. Women lacking ambition has historically been a stereotype misconstrued to undervalue and discredit the capabilities of women, particularly in male dominated occupations (Tabassum & Nayak, 2018; Wu et al., 2021). The pursuit of excellence was not only on the professional front, but also recounted at a personal level. Adopting a growth mindset and being purpose driven was established as a strategy that women in the study use to adapt, learn, and overcome the obstacles associated with the gender discrimination experiences. This was supported by studies conducted on mindset theory that a growth mindset can improve an individual's resilience towards challenging circumstances or setbacks (Tabibnia & Radecki, 2018; Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

A significant observation to the study was Ubuntu leadership style predominantly highlighted as an approach of navigating gender discrimination in the workplace. The study found that key elements or methods of survival were exercising humility, showing respect and trust, operating on an authentic value system, pursuing collaboration through strategic relationships and being team player, most importantly being an advocate in the presence of injustice. There was no evaluation to leadership as a separate construct for the purpose of this study, hence the researcher did not interrogate the participants on their perceived leadership styles. However, this is an interesting finding and warrants further investigation in future studies. It highlights how women not only gain respect and prove competence through mobilising the support of their team as a leader, but also achieve a form of organisational support outside of the hierarchical structures of privilege. However, Netshitangani (2019) had highlighted the importance of collective leadership in the world of management which is a value espoused by the philosophy of Ubuntu leadership. A philosophy that can resonate with people from different gender, races, cultures, and

traditions, due to its ability to recognize all human beings and their interconnectedness through the phrase “I am because you are” (Netshitangani, 2019).

Another observation made from the findings was how none of the participants mentioned organisational support as a coping mechanism for navigating the gender discriminatory experiences. This highlights how deeply rooted gender discrimination is within organisational structures and practices, that tackling systemic challenges is experienced as an individual pursuit. However, this was not true for all participants, and an interesting finding was that two women denied any form of gender discrimination, and were comfortable adopting a typical masculine leadership style to assimilate. This confirmed the study completed by Power et al. (2009) that there was significant portion of women in male dominated industries that assimilated “one of boys” behaviour to gain social acceptance from male colleagues, while accepting gender discrimination practices that were detrimental to women.

6.2.3 The emotions and feelings associated with the gender discrimination experiences the women leaders encountered.

The findings to this research question revealed how toxic culture dominates manufacturing organisations, as argued by Sull et al. (2022) leads to increased attrition rates, some elements include lack of driving diversity, inclusion, and equity in the workplace. The two themes that emerged from the findings presented in Chapter 5 were lack of psychological safety and no psychological support. The finding of lack of psychological safety confirmed study conducted by Gómez-González et al. (2023), it highlighted that without the necessary support, victims do not report, and the underreporting further makes it difficult to hold the perpetrators accountable, having a long-term impact on victim’s overall well-being. Hence the second highlighted finding in the research study pertaining to no psychology support highlights the impact on mental health which is reflected in the findings of a participant expressing suicidal thoughts. This was confirmed by Bridges et al. (2021) that high exposure to stress experienced in environments like manufacturing or trauma from experiences such as gender discrimination, does not necessarily create resilient employees but rather leads to negative impact on their mental and emotional well-being.

6.2.4 Summarised findings for Research Question one

The findings under this research question showed that post-democratic South Africa women leaders within the manufacturing industry still grapple with gender discrimination. The key findings showed that despite government efforts to correct the injustices of the past and promote gender equality, organisational practices and policies still perpetuate gender discrimination. These were observed through discriminatory hiring practices, gender pay disparities and women deemed promotable only during periods of crisis. The study highlighted that women continue to be subjected to unpleasant work conditions, with manufacturing facilities design and structure not accommodative towards women. Cultural expectations and societal stereotypes of women are deeply rooted within manufacturing cultures, subjecting women to gender harassment that sexist practices were ranked the highest for the research study.

The research question also sought to unpack how the women leaders navigated the gender discriminatory practices and it was predominately highlighted that women avidly pursue excellence to demonstrate competence and invalidate the misconceptions about their capabilities. Ubuntu leadership style and avoidance were among the coping mechanism mentioned, while it was observed that none of the participants highlighted organisational support as a tool to navigate the discriminatory practices. To conclude the findings for the research question, lack of psychological safety and no psychological support were highlighted indicative of the toxic culture that dominates manufacturing environments.

6.3 Discussion of results for Research Question Two

Research Question Two: What personal resilience strategies do women leaders use to navigate their gender discrimination experiences?

This section provides a discuss on the research findings under research two which sought to understand the personal resilience strategies that women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination in manufacturing environments. The presentation of the discussion follows the format on the instrument guide, presenting a contrast or confirmation between literature in Chapter 2 and findings from the research study in Chapter 5.

6.3.1 The support women leaders have with dealing with gender discrimination experiences.

The findings to this research question established two overarching themes which were building networks and having a supportive community. Fundamental to the themes were the ability to leverage networks and forming strategic connections, most importantly building a work life balance. The study found women who leveraged networks through forming strategic relationships managed to get the necessary support that enabled them to navigate the gender discriminatory experiences in the manufacturing sector. Bridges et al. (2021) and Kuntz et al. (2017) confirmed the finding, the study revealed that forming networks was crucial to women developing individual skills of adapting and thriving in environments whereby they are marginalised. The finding, however, contradicts the current literature on how women are excluded from networking opportunities essential to getting access to the C-suite, consequently not getting the necessary support (Dwivedi et al., 2023). However, Greguletz et al. (2019), supported the finding that women do invest in strategic networks such as having mentors, coaches, and career sponsors receive the necessary support, but highlighted that the networks are less effective because women in male dominated occupations have always been structurally and systemically disadvantaged from having access.

Another research finding under this question was building a supportive community outside the spheres of their profession. Establishing a work-life balance was noted as an important factor to building a supportive community. The supportive community was reported to give the women leaders a safe environment, where they can freely share their experiences of discrimination without fear of judgment and retaliation. The community provides not only support, but the women get emotionally validated, and this lessens the burden of self-doubt and feelings of isolation associated with the discriminatory experiences in the workplace. It is important to note that only a few women prioritised having a work-life balance, which was expected. In manufacturing environments where gender discrimination is highly prevalent, women contend with deeply ingrained stereotypes that have always portrayed women as less committed to their careers, leading them to sacrifice their work-life balance by working excessively to disprove the stereotypes. This was supported by Ellemers (2018) and Tabassum & Nayak (2021), the authors shared how women in male-dominated occupations grapple with systemic stereotypes perceiving men as ambitious, showing competence, while women are expected to demonstrate an affinity towards building a family. The theory of role congruity further expanded how the perceived

gender stereotypes and managerial roles, encouraged bias against women for leadership positions due to the inherent conflict of what society considers as women roles and what is considered as effective leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Groeneveld et al., 2020). This demonstrated on the finding in Chapter 5, women tend to overly compensate to disprove the stereotypes, by working long hours and even to an extent of avoiding sick leave, as acts of showing competence and commitment towards their careers. The stereotypes subject women to constant prejudice in the workplace, as the perceptions of incongruity between women's characteristics and those associated with leadership, results in lower expectations regarding their potential and influences their evaluation at a leadership and individual level (Tabassum & Nayak, 2018). For example, when a woman becomes a parent, unlike a man, the common assumption is that childcare will take precedence over their commitment to work, therefore limiting their career progression, hence the overcompensation with working long hours and neglecting their well-being (Ellemers, 2018).

The next section shares findings on how the women leaders manage their well-being:

6.3.2 How women leaders manage their overall well-being.

According to Mhlanga (2022), gender prejudices and stereotypes have been reported as one of the contributing factors to women leaving the male-dominated industries. Studies conducted into the retention of women highlight that women who work in previously male dominated industries continue to face multiple barriers such systemic gender discrimination that result in poor work experiences and result early resignation (Bridges et al., 2020; Chong et al., 2020; Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018). Tabassum & Nayak (2021) also confirmed that gender harassment and gender stereotypes, do not only have an impact on a woman's career progression but has been demonstrated to have a negative impact on their well-being. Considering this, the research study sought to understand how the women leaders prioritized taking care of their overall well-being given their context of constantly tackling gender discrimination. The themes that emerged from the research question were complete neglect of their well-being, the themes of striving for a work balance and having supportive community re-emerged, highlighting the importance of a community and the women having a balanced life outside the workplace.

Additionally, the research study highlighted how the women leaders shared how prioritising their well-being is a challenge, as the work hours are extremely long. Inherent

with the nature of a manufacturing operations, most work around the clock, essentially as a leader, one seldomly switch off. This was supported by a finding that signified the importance of having a good partner to assist with thriving in the home and work life. This was a common acknowledgement amongst women who were married or had partners. The same highlighted that upon arriving at home, there will always be family that requires attention, including work emails and phone escalations that need to be attended to. Although there was an acknowledgement of the importance of a work-life balance, the women leaders found switching off a difficult thing to do, as it yielded a lot of fear and the uncertainty of things falling apart, and the women leader being unavailable to provide the necessary support. Interesting to the finding, was women who took feedback from their team on how their neglect of taking time off, particularly physical activity made the leader moody which impacted the morale of the team. The feedback was taken constructively, that the participant ensured time was taken off to prioritise their well-being and was deliberate about not accepting any work travels over the weekend to avail take with the family.

An observation made from the findings was the lack of organisational support to enable the women leader's better management of their overall well-being. It highlights the current gap on how organisations are very far removed for the lived realities of women within the manufacturing industries.

6.3.3 How women leaders have developed through the discrimination experiences.

After understanding how women leaders navigate the different types of gender discrimination experiences and the kind support received, the question sought to understand how the participants believed they have developed through the experiences. The research study found that common amongst the women was the development of different leadership styles such as Ubuntu, servant, and authentic leadership, while avoidance as a strategy re-emerged as a theme including cultivation of building relationships. A finding from the study was that authenticity was established as a key characteristic that they developed over time, which enabled the women leaders to cope. The ability to express vulnerability, empowered the women leaders to show up authentically and present the best version of themselves. One participant highlighted the mental exhaustion and the effort required to present a different version of yourself was difficult to endure. This contradicted the perceived gender stereotypes that society has

considered as being successful for effective leadership, and in this instance stereotypical feminine qualities such as being openly vulnerable, soft, and kind have been successful in male-dominant environments (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Groeneveld et al., 2020). Another finding was the cultivation of a healthy self-esteem, as established in the former sections that the gender discrimination experiences have challenged the women's sense of worth, competence and capabilities. Fundamental to building a healthy self-esteem was the development of confidence and self-mastery which touches the aspect of authenticity as previously discussed. The development of an assertive character was a new insight, which contradicts the stereotype that positions men as being assertive as highlighted by Wu et al. (2021), however it is supported by Miller-Graff (2022) who placed emphasis of development of interpersonal skills such as assertiveness as crucial to developing competence to navigate challenging contexts.

The re-emergence of Ubuntu leadership with an emphasis on exercising compassion, the re-emergence of cultivating networks and focusing on building relationships, confirms literature from Smith et al. (2020) and Huta & Waterman (2014), who found well-being was closely tied to the social functioning with peers. Supporting both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, where the former focused on individual is in pursuit to experience happiness, satisfaction, and pleasures in life and the former pursuit is for a purposeful and meaningful life, driven by personal growth and creating a greater good for society. Whereas the re-emergence of an avoidance strategy confirms the lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy that Power et al. (2009) argues plays a significant role in the ability of women to form strategic relationships. However, this short-term approach is not guaranteed to yield positive results, as this might lead to either women resigning from the industry or staying to assimilate a character like being "one of the boys" enabling them to accept gender discrimination and adopted an anti-women approach to gain social acceptance from male colleagues (Power et al., 2009).

6.3.4 The different strategies women leaders use to build their resilience.

For this research question, the study found an interesting observation in that there was re-emergence of authentic leadership, striving for a work life balance and servant leadership as strategies women leaders use to build their resilience. The study found the authentic leadership theme had three domains of learning and growth, self-mastery, and the development of a strong character. This agrees with the (MTIR) multidimensional

taxonomy of individual resilience model figure 2 as presented in Chapter 2, under the domain of manifested resilience. The two subdomains to be discussed under authentic leadership will be the developmental competence and character. According to Miller-Graff (2022), development competence is a form of resilience whereby an individual develops the relevant skills for adapting to different contexts, which includes development of interpersonal skills and achievement of individual developmental milestones as means to overcoming obstacles. Confirming this, the study found self-mastery had the highest frequency amongst the different strategies shared by the participants, with learning and growth cited as another strategy under authentic leadership. A lived experience by participant 5 was shared in Chapter 5, where it was highlighted that the woman leader had challenges with the new team accepting her as their new leader and whether it was a matter of gender or race was inconclusive. However, instead of abusing her power or retaliating, the participant used the dilemma as an opportunity and period of self-reflection to understand her strengths and weaknesses that would enable personal growth and emotional intelligence. Another insight established was the development of a strong character, echoing Miller-Graff (2022) on the MTIR model, shared that the character as a form of resilience is the propensity to take the right action when the context and circumstances require of the individual act as such. Participant five on the study reflected on how having a strong and assertive character, commands respect and people particularly men hardly take chances on you.

The striving for a work life balance resilience strategy was common amongst the women leaders, and it has emerged repeatedly from the previously discussed sections. The finding from the study using the MTIR confirmed the psychological health under manifested resilience and assets under the domain for generative resilience. The study found getting psychological support helped the participants overcome the adverse effects of gender discrimination, this helped mitigate the detrimental impact on their mental health and established a coping strategy. This is confirmed by resilience literature that psychological health using the mental health model is not just the absence of psychological distress or disorders but experiencing a sense of well-being and positive mental state (Miller-Graff, 2022). Furthermore, the pursuit of well-being through using psychological health support as a strategy was confirmed by Smith et al. (2020) who found it was closely tied to the social functioning with peers. This leads to the second finding of the study under the work-life balance building relationships and a supportive community, which corresponds to the asset subdomain on the MTIR model. Assets refer to the

resources and opportunity structures that an individual has access to within their social ecological systems, this includes but not limited to family, community, and culture (Miller-Graff, 2022). This form of resilience described by the MTIR model uses assets that the individual has access to reduce the impact of adversity on an individual. This finding is supported by who Gayatri et al. (2022) did a study that highlighted the crucial role that family plays regarding building resilience. The family has been found to create a sense of community that enables adaptation to challenges, collective coping under adversity, and the communal recovery from crisis and stresses (Gayatri et al., 2022). The family functions were noted to be closely related to wellbeing and the support has been proven to reduce worries associated with anxiety and depression (Gayatri et al., 2022). The finding was also supported by Sher (2019) who highlighted the fundamental role played by the family and supportive community in an individual building resilience. The network of relationships and resources offered by the community and family provides the necessary support for an individual to overcome challenges just as gender discrimination. The sense of belonging and community, contributes to their confidence and competence.

The last research finding was servant leadership as a strategy to build resilience. One of the participants highlighted doing activities outside work, committing to work that uplifts the community and empowering others played a significant role in the building of their resilience. This form of resilience strategy was confirmed by the MTIR model under generative resilience, regarded as moral action. Moral action refers to purpose and value driven response for the greater good by an individual towards adversity (Miller-Graff, 2022). Moral actions are fostered for a collective welfare, the contribution of the individual towards the common good, unifies the society and in the long run impacts their adaptability (Miller-Graff, 2022). This highlights that moral identity is linked to a broader sense of caring for other, meaning people's commitment to moral values plays a significant role in their interpersonal relationships as confirmed by (Ellemers et al., 2019).

A significant observation made during the research study was that none of the participants mentioned organisational support as a resource or tool, that assists with building their resilience. Based on the findings thus far, manufacturing organisations seem to have ineffective policies and practices to combat gender discrimination in the work environment, which thus far seem to have negative impact on the mental health and their career progression. Tackling gender discrimination is observed as individual responsibility, a burden women have to carry by themselves, as manufacturing organisations through

the presented results are observed to not have proactive organisational support systems to promote gender equality and foster a healthy and inclusive work environment for all.

6.3.5 Summarised findings for Research Question Two

The investigations under research question two found women who leveraged networks through forming strategic relationships managed to get the necessary support that enabled them to navigate the gender discriminatory experiences in the manufacturing sector. Key findings highlighted were building a supportive community which was noted to be an important factor with establishing a work-life balance. Albeit a challenge for most women leaders due to the long working hours, and the inability to switch off. The research question also sought to understand how women leaders believed they had developed through the experiences, common amongst the women was the development of different leadership styles such as Ubuntu, servant, and authentic leadership. The same themes re-emerged when understanding how the women leaders built their resilience. A notable point was how organisational support was absent from the different coping mechanism mentioned regarding management of their well-being and building their personal resilience.

6.4 Discussion of results for Research Question Three

Research Question Three: How do South African organisations support women in dealing with of gender discrimination experiences within the manufacturing sector?

This section provides a discuss on the research findings under research three which aimed to understand the organisational support that women leaders received with dealing with gender discrimination in manufacturing environments, and it included understanding the impact the discriminatory experiences had on their career decisions. The presentation of the discussion follows the format on the instrument guide, presenting a contrast or confirmation between literature in chapter 2 and findings from the research study.

6.4.1 How gender discrimination experiences have had an impact on the women leader career decisions.

The study found that themes that emerged from the research question were, looking for a better company culture, an environment that will provide psychological safety to deal with the systemic challenges and some considered leaving the industry for a change in environment. A finding presented in Chapter 5 revealed how a participant decided to move

out of manufacturing because they valued a work life balance, and another case presented showed how a participant transitioned from different roles to prioritize family and their well-being. The finding supported the study from Bridges et al. (2020) and Germain et al. (2012) on how organisational traditional cultures do not offer flexibility, proven by poor work-life balance, demand of long working hours and lack family friendly policies and thus battle to attract or retain women in the in male-dominated industries such as manufacturing. Another finding was the re-emergence of lack of psychological safety, the women mainly highlighted poor working relationships and the detrimental impact of the work environment on their mental health. An example from the findings presented by participant seven, described how challenging her boss made the manager extremely angry to a point that the manager started humiliating the participant in front of her colleagues and subordinates, and ill-treated her to a point of getting sick. This left the organisation with either losing her through resignation or finding her a different role within the organisation. The finding confirmed what Bridges et al. (2020) and Duchek et al. (2020) had highlighted this regarding about organisational cultures, that they fundamentally lacked organisational support that provide psychological safe environments and inclusive leadership that provided not only a work-life balance but conducive working environment for all.

Another finding under the research question was how women still grapple with systemic barriers such as lack of promotional opportunities. Participant 11 shared an experience on how her career progression became stagnant after she had been acting a position, only to forfeit the appointment to the role to a man. The feedback received as to why the participant did not get the role was surprising, as the participant had been led to believe the performance was sufficient for a promotion during personal development discussions. This evidence supported studied showing that women in male dominated fields continue to encounter discriminatory practices regarding, insufficient support towards development for promotional opportunities, lack of mentorship, networking, and sponsorship opportunities (April & Singh, 2018; Barrett, 2011; Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2015; Shantz & Wrights, 2011; Zehr & Korte, 2020).

An observation made was how some women were not oblivious to the current realities that manufacturing is not inclusive and does not support career progression for women. The finding presented in the study was a women leader who had the self-assurance of being able lead a factory, however she had to change her career path because of the grim reality that people do not follow female leaders, hence they are destined to fail. This confirmed by Mhlanga (2022) that gender prejudices and stereotypes are among the

contributing factors women leave male-dominated industries. This confirmed by studies conducted into the retention of women highlight that women who work in previously male dominated industries continue to face multiple barriers that result in early resignation (Bridges et al., 2020; Chong et al., 2020; Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018).

6.4.2 The kind of support that organisations offer towards women leaders building their resilience.

The study under this research question sought to understand the organisational support women received towards building their personal resilience strategies as they navigate gender discrimination within manufacturing organisations. Based on the findings from the previous sections, it was highlighted that there currently exists minimal evidence of the efforts from organisations with tackling the systemic issue of gender inequality. The predominant themes found in the study were, lack of organisational support, men playing the role of advocates, and supportive leadership. The finding of lack of organisational support highlighted factors such as a rigid culture that offered no balance between work and personal life, lack of education and training programs and reliance of HR systems which only ensured organisation legal compliance to the law. The finding of a rigid culture that does not allow integration of personal and professional supports the literature by Bridges et al. (2020); Germain et al. (2012) that industries such as manufacturing whereby the culture is heavily masculinized based on historic nature of them being male-only environments, are dominated by organisational traditional cultures that do not offer flexibility, resulting in a poor work-life balance, long working hours and lack family friendly policies. Rosa (2017) and Witmer (2019) further added that majority of organisations have not developed effective gender equitable policies that promote workplace flexibility, because masculine practices are normalised and deeply entrenched into organisational systems.

The study found that there was an over-reliance of Human Resource (HR) systems as a form of providing support to employees with support to build their resilience. An example was logging of formal grievance to report incidents of gender discrimination, and this would be regarded as sufficient support for the victim. A finding presented in Chapter 5, revealed how a participant was constantly subjected to constant sexual harassment in a form of unwanted sexual attention. However, the incident never got reported because the cultural norm is that reporting of such cases is a career limiting move, that usually ends badly for

the victim, as HR processes do not offer any protection. The finding was supported by Gómez-González et al. (2023) who argued that without the necessary support, victims do not report, and the underreporting further makes it difficult to hold the perpetrators accountable and has long term impact on victim's overall well-being. In addition, studies by Folke et al. (2022) and Kim & Meister (2023) have demonstrated that the current reporting systems are ineffective and tend to make matters worse for the victim in that it triggers retaliation from the perpetrator. The reporting procedures often subject the victim to abuse of having to relive and recount the traumatic and dehumanising experiences multiple of times without the necessary psychological support present. Outside the HR formal grievance procedures, South African organisations seem to have a big reliance on ICAS (Independent Counselling and Advisory Services), a popular employee health and wellness provider, which have been stated to be ineffective, as the participants sought to get psychological help privately. As supported by Fitzgerald & Cortina (2018) victims tend to manage the situation or find alternative coping mechanisms rather and reporting the case tends to be the last resort.

The research study found that men playing the role of advocacy and supportive line managers played a pivotal role in providing the necessary support for women to develop their personal resilience. This finding was not expected based on the literature reviewed regarding the support provided by organisations towards women building their resilience. Men in positions of power and influence playing the role as advocates, plays an important role of challenging the status quo against the systemic barriers women face in manufacturing organisations, and provides women with psychologically safe and inclusive work environments. The findings from the study showed how the participants felt supported when male leaders positively validated their work and performance, when they proactively advanced the agenda of gender diversity and advocated for their career development and progression.

6.4.3 Summarised findings for Research Question Three

In understanding how the gender discrimination experience had an impact on their career decisions, the study found that themes that emerged from the research question were, looking for a better company culture, an environment that will provide psychological safety, dealing with systemic challenges and some considered leaving the industry for a change in environment. The research study wanted to understand the organisational support women received towards building their personal resilience strategies as they navigate gender discrimination within manufacturing organisations. Based on the findings from the

previous sections, it was highlighted that there is minimal evidence of efforts from organisations with tackling the systemic issue of gender equality. The predominant themes found in the study were, lack of organisational support, men playing the role of advocates, and supportive leadership. The research study found that men playing the role of advocacy and supportive line managers played a pivotal role in providing the necessary support for women to develop their personal resilience.

6.5 Intersectionality

The research study found that there was an intersection between the women's experiences and their race, especially black and coloured women. Although, intersectionality was noted as outside of the scope for the study, since the sole focus was on gender, it is important to shed light on the complex ways race and gender shape the experiences of women as they navigate gender discrimination in the manufacturing industry. The themes that emerged under intersectionality were systemic racism, reverse discrimination, perceived tokenism related to employment equity, employment equity stigmatization and tribalism.

The research study found that race and gender has influenced the women's progression in the industry. A case presented in Chapter 5 highlighted how a women leader of coloured descent shared her lived experiences of battling to get mentors and sponsorship, which has negatively impacted her career, because in the environment she operates in, it was unnatural for white men to provide mentorship to coloured women. Another similar finding of the intersection of race and gender was shared by participant seven, who shared her lived experience of being constantly under surveillance, because it had been a taboo in the organisation for a black woman to occupy the position of General Manager. Her entire life was under scrutiny, and the workplace was worse, as she was frequently sidelined and decision making needed to have an approval of white males who were her subordinates. In support of the finding was also the lived experience of Participant eight who had joined a team full of Indian men and was subjected to derogatory names such as "Black Forest cake". Symbolic to the Black Forest flavoured cake with white icing at the top, implied that white people are only in executive management where decisions are made and black people in this case black women at middle or senior management. Although the delivery of the microaggression was meant to mock black people, it cannot be ignored that it was used as tool to undermine woman's competency and capabilities. Another finding which was not highlighted by literature, was the role of tribalism especially

in the South African context continues the exclusion of women and further perpetuates gender discrimination. In a manufacturing environment especially the factory floor, language can either become a tool for acceptance or a barrier that continues to marginalise women. Participant six shared her experience of having to engage more than 250 people from the factory floor as a plant manager, and language presented a major challenge as she wasn't fluent in isiZulu dialect. As a black person the failure to communicate in the language of the dominant group typically male, socially excluded the participant and in an environment with the prevalence of gender discrimination, this was observed as disrespect.

The research study found that employment equity policies inadvertently exclude women in the workplace, especially from previously marginalised groups and the unintended consequence is tokenism, stigmatization which further exacerbates the lived experiences of gender discrimination. This finding was consistent with the literature reviewed. Oosthuizen et al. (2019) found that there was a negative belief system towards the EEA (Employment Equity Act) policies that has prevented progress in the organisations due to threatened self – image, in support of the study by Hideg & Ferris (2014) on how the effectiveness of gender-based EE policies have been hindered by threats on the self-image for both men and women. This was found to be driven by fear of tokenism and marginalisation when appointed to historically male or white dominated positions, and professionals who are beneficiaries and are appointed in such positions dislike the stigma associated with EE policies because they are typically associated with incompetence and being regarded as less qualified (Leslie, 2019; Oosthuizen et al., 2019). Furthermore, Mayer (2017) pointed out that black women leaders frequently encounter dual discrimination on the grounds of both gender and race, becoming embroiled in ongoing postcolonial disputes and narratives about dominance, power, and feelings of superiority and inferiority. With one of the cases presented in Chapter 5, the participant revealed how she needed to fit into the model of masculine leadership to gain the social acceptance, as the stigma of being an Affirmative Action appointee made people doubt her capabilities. In addition, participant 9 revealed how her appointment as the first black female supply chain director was undermined by white males in the business as an action taken by the business to earn B-BBEE status. This was a finding supported by Oosthuizen et al. (2019) who found white male employees fear the reverse discrimination and retribution by EEA policies as well as limitation to their career opportunities. This highlights how EEA policies have been ineffectively implemented across manufacturing organisations. Instead of

increasing diversity and inclusion of previously marginalised groups particularly women, poor organisational implementation has resulted in the inadvertent exclusion of women.

This highlights the severity of the women's lived experiences with gender discrimination as they experience multiple forms of oppression. Intersectionality exacerbates the challenges the women leaders face as it has compounded the effects of discrimination with other forms of bias and marginalisation through the lens of race and gender. This reveals the ability of women leaders to overcome adversity through the development of necessary coping mechanisms and the development of their strength through adversity using resilience as supported by (Chance, 2022). Although the study focused on gender as the participants shared their perspectives on their lived experiences of discrimination, intersectionality played a significant role in the prejudice and stereotypes women leaders encounter in the manufacturing environment and their advancement into leadership.

6.6 Academic contributions from the study

The research study contributed to the field of Gender Studies with a focus on gender discrimination experiences of women leaders within male dominated environments and including a contribution to the field of the study of Individual Resilience. The research study findings shared insights that have supplemented the foundational Miller-Graff (2022) model of multi-dimensional taxonomy of individual resilience through an extension into the male-dominated manufacturing industry. Organisational support was identified and added to supplement MTIR model of resilience. The research insights that contributed to the development of the conceptual framework are shared the following sections: highlighting the gender discrimination experiences, the process the women leaders use to build their individual resilience, and organisational support as an enabler. Figure 6 represents the proposed framework of building resilience in manufacturing environments based on the arguments presented in the subsequent sections.

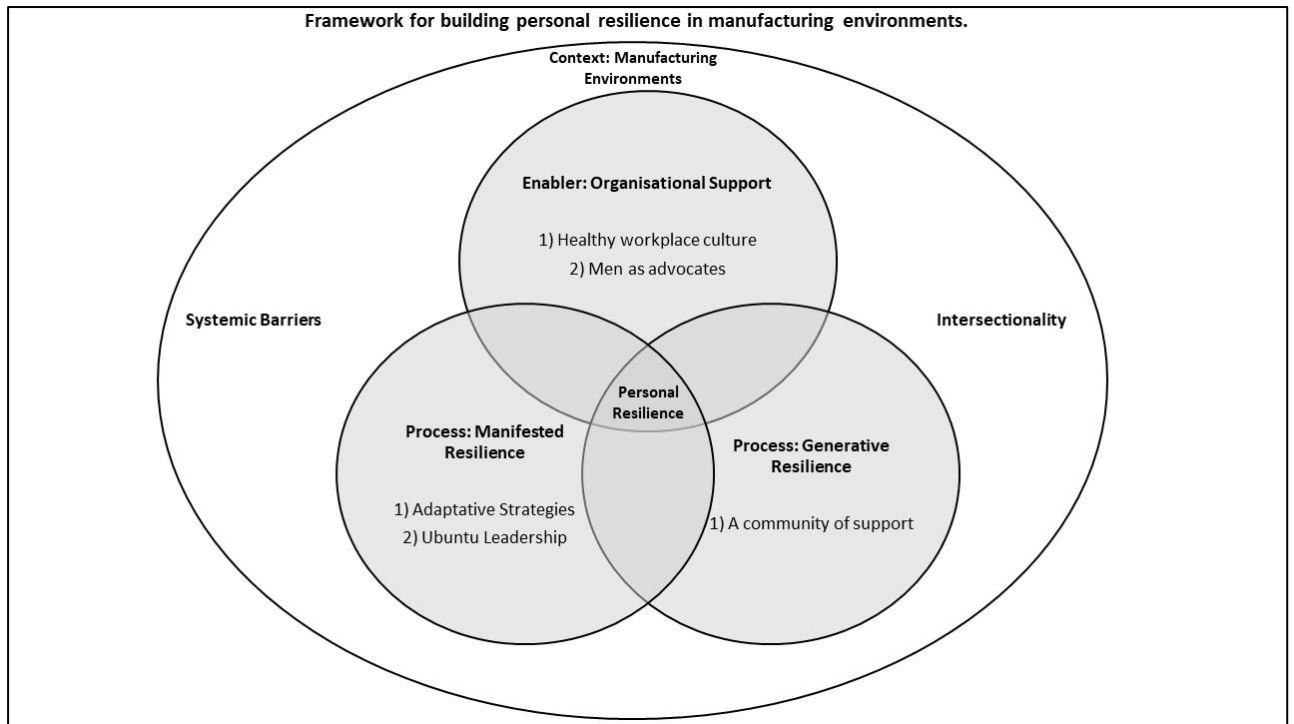


Figure 6: Framework for building personal resilience in manufacturing environments.

The consolidation of the findings into themes from the data analysis gave context of the systemic barriers women leaders face within the manufacturing industry and, within the context of manufacturing, it is hard to ignore the intersectionality between race and gender and its compounded effect on the gender discrimination experiences women face. The insights are summarised below:

6.6.1 Systemic Barriers

- Post-democratic South Africa gender discrimination is still prevalent in the manufacturing industry.
- Recruitment processes within the manufacturing industry continue to exclude women from opportunities in senior leadership positions. This is not only through explicit preferential treatment towards a specific gender, but the study also confirmed the biases that women experience during interview processes and the continued pay gap disparity due to unequal pay offers for the same qualifications and skills, deterring women from seeking promotions.
- Women are deemed promotable only during period of crisis.

- Women continue to be subjected to unpleasant work conditions, manufacturing facilities design and structure are not inclusive to other genders except for men.
- Women leaders are subjected to societal stereotypes such as being more emotional and less rational in their thinking.
- Gender harassment including sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention, remain systemic barriers that are deeply entrenched within the manufacturing sector, used to disempower, and undermine the capabilities of women.
- The intersectionality between race and gender, exacerbate gender discrimination for the women leaders as they are constantly under surveillance, scrutiny and continue to be side-lined in the workplace.
- Employment equity policies inadvertently exclude women in the workplace, especially from previously marginalised groups and the unintended consequence is tokenism, stigmatization which further exacerbates the lived experiences of women with gender discrimination.

6.6.2 The Process of building Personal Resilience

Considering the context provided of systemic barriers and intersectionality experiences, women leaders navigate the uncharted territories by building their individual resilience through the process of generative and manifested resilience adopted from the Miller-Graff (2022) model of multi-dimensional taxonomy of individual resilience. Using manifested resilience from the MTIR model as a process of building individual resilience, the thematic analysis summed the developmental competence and psychological health as key components encompassed within adaptive strategies. The adaptive strategies the women leaders used included avidly pursuing excellence to prove their competence and invalidate the misconceptions and stereotypes regarding women's capabilities. Another element was adopting a growth mindset and being purpose driven was established as a strategy that women leaders use to adapt, learn, and overcome the obstacles associated with the gender discrimination experiences. In contrast, avoidance although it has a negative connotation associated with it, was underscored as an adaptive strategy for navigating the gender discriminatory experiences. A choice some women make to avoid resigning, was discovered to be assimilation to stereotypical male characters to gain social acceptance from their male counterparts.

The research study added to the manifested resilience subdomain from Miller-Graff (2022) the construct of Ubuntu leadership. The leadership style was predominantly highlighted as an approach of navigating gender discrimination in the workplace. The study found that key elements or methods of survival were exercising humility, showing respect and trust, operating on an authentic value system, pursuing collaboration through strategic relationships and being team player, most importantly being an advocate in the presence of injustice.

The other process for building resilience is through the subdomain assets under generative resilience on Miller-Graff (2022) on the MTIR model. A community of support encompassing family, strategic relationships and leveraging networks. Through the community of support the women leaders manage to get the necessary support that enable them to navigate the gender discriminatory experiences in the manufacturing sector. The supportive community give the women leaders a safe environment, where they can freely share their experiences of discrimination without fear of judgment and retaliation. The community provides not only support, but the women get emotionally validated, and this lessens the burden of self-doubt and feelings of isolation associated with the discriminatory experiences encountered in the workplace. An enabler for forming a strong community was discovered to be a strong work-life balance, highlighting the criticality of a healthy workplace culture.

6.6.3 Enabler for building personal resilience – organisational support.

Organisational support was regarded as an enabler for the building of personal resilience for women in male-dominated occupations particularly manufacturing because the dynamics are such that an employee spends a considerable amount of time in the workplace. Therefore, organisations play a significant role through creating environments that support and foster the development of women's resilience, the insights summarised from the study were as follows:

- Psychological support by employer to improve the well-being of the employee, particularly with managing work-related stresses often leading to impact on mental health.
- A psychological safe environment is the foundation for providing a work environment that is supportive. Therefore, empowering women to comfortably speak out against gender discrimination without fear of exclusion and retaliation.

- A work-life balance was established as crucial to the overall well-being of the women. The proactive balance between personal and professional life alleviates the stress associated with the discriminatory practices women encounter in the work environment and assists with navigating the challenges more effectively.
- Men playing the role of advocates against gender discrimination plays a significant role in dismantling systemic barriers that hinder gender equality, inclusion and promoting of diversity. Men can use their privilege to amplify the voices of women, proactively challenge biases and stereotypes, including fighting for equitable environments.
- Supportive leadership and management that goes beyond policies but effectively driving the agenda of gender equity and inclusion in the workplace through building organisational cultures that value women and foster their growth through providing conducive work environments.

6.7 Conclusion

The chapter provided a discussion for the findings presented in Chapter 5, while along with a comparison with scholar literature presented in Chapter 2. This was done to provide answers to the research questions presented in Chapter 3. The chapter addressed the academic contribution made by the research study. The analysis from the discussion allowed for the conceptualisation of a framework that will assist women leaders with building personal resilience within manufacturing environments. The business contribution by the research study will be discussed in the next chapter, as organisational support was highlighted as an enabler for building personal resilience for women in male-dominated occupations such as manufacturing.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The South African manufacturing sector plays a crucial role in the economic growth of the country. However, the country has failed to grow its industrial base and has seen a decline in manufacturing sector, including employment (Francis & Webster, 2019; Statistics South Africa, 2023). Statistics show that there are more women than men graduating with engineering qualifications, however women remain a minority in STEM fields required in the manufacturing sector, this driven by women leaving STEM industries due to gender discrimination deeming them incompetent and incapable to lead effectively (Barkhuizen et al., 2022; Eagly & Sczesny, 2019; Trade and Industry, 2019). Therefore there is existence of a body of work focusing on provision of support and creating motivation and job satisfaction for women in female-dominated occupations, however little has been done to understand this from a context of women in previously male-dominated environments such a manufacturing and coping mechanisms used to build resilience necessary to overcome the gender discriminatory experiences (Cohen & Duberley, 2021; Fernando et al., 2018; Mozahem et al., 2019).

This argument was supported by theoretical debates and discussions presented in Chapter 2, on how the role of congruity and glass phenomenon continues to exacerbate the underrepresentation of women in the manufacturing industry. This was highlighted to further be driven by gender discrimination which continues to be a systemic barrier for women's progression and career development in the industry. Pivotal to the study was understanding how women leaders use resilience to navigate the gender discriminatory experiences, including the support provided by their organisations.

Chapter 3 provided arguments based on the gaps established in the literature review to generate research question for the study. The study sought to under the gender discrimination experiences women leaders face in manufacturing environments, the personal resilience strategies and understanding how organisations provide support with dealing with the discriminatory experiences. The data for the research study was collected using the research methodology outlined in Chapter 4 and the findings were presented in Chapter 5.

Key findings as descriptively discussed in Chapter 6 showed the overarching topics indicate that women are still subjected to systemic barriers stalling their progression within the industry. The women leaders navigate through adapting different coping strategies

including adoption of Ubuntu leadership style. Some elements for building their resilience include having a strong community of support, which is enabled by a healthy workplace culture. The research study could not ignore the role played by the intersectionality of race and gender, in the lived experienced of the women leaders in manufacturing. The contribution to academia was outlined in Chapter 6. This chapter will elaborate on the business significance and provide areas for improvement.

7.2 Gender Discrimination experiences of women leaders in South African manufacturing organisations

Recruitment processes within the manufacturing industry continue to explicitly discriminate against women, this was consistent with the finding Bosquet et al. (2019) found biases in hiring and promotion processes as one of the key factors behind the low likelihood of women applying for promotions. The research study found that women are deemed promotable during periods of crisis, supported by Groeneveld et al. (2020) who found that women are more likely to be appointed in precarious leadership positions, aligned to the glass cliff phenomenon of only appointing women during period of crisis. Other discriminatory practices highlighted in the study included how the design and practices of manufacturing facilities exclude women, and gender pay disparity still exists to undervalue the capabilities of women.

Other findings highlighted under this research question were gendered stereotypes and expectations that continue to undermine the capabilities of women and their contributions in the workplace. Microaggression were found to be used against women to perpetuate the stereotype that they are less rational and emotionally unstable, while the societal perception about men is of strength and assertive this was supported by (Wu et al., 2021; Tabassum & Nayak 2018). What the research study found significant and of concern was that sexist practices were ranked the highest amongst experiences of gender discrimination, despite the privileged position of the women leader participants. Sexual coercion was found to be prevalent and as outlined by Cortina & Areguin (2021) this form of harassment is conducted with the intention of making conditions of employment dependent on the victim consenting to sexual advances. The research study also uncovered practices of gender harassment supported by Perez (2022) and Sweet (2019) which were practices aimed at undermining women and making them doubt their lived realities of gender discrimination. Due to the uncertainty of the event or incident, gender

harassment seldom gets reported, for most women it was found to be a career limiting move, due to insufficient reporting system, the finding supported Taylor et al. (2018) that this form of harassment is difficult to prove and holding perpetrators accountable becomes a challenge (Gómez-González et al., 2023).

The research study found that the women leaders avidly pursue excellence to demonstrate competence and invalidate the misconceptions about women's capabilities as way to navigate the discriminatory experiences. These included building high performing teams, adopting a growth mindset and being purpose driven to overcome the obstacles associated with gender discrimination. A significant observation to the study was Ubuntu leadership style predominantly highlighted as an approach of navigating gender discrimination in the workplace. While other women leaders attested to have not experienced any from gender discrimination as they had assimilated to typical masculine leadership styles as supported by (Power et al., 2009). The study further revealed that toxic culture in manufacturing leads to high attrition rates as the findings highlighted lack of psychological safety and psychological support, which is detrimental to the mental and emotional well-being of the women, this was confirmed by studies by (Bridges et al., 2021; Gómez-González et al., 2023).

7.2.1 Business implications from the study

There is an urgent need for manufacturing organisations to re-evaluate the ineffectiveness of their organisational policies and procedures to deliver the agenda of employment equity. The research study further highlights the urgent need to increase the representation of women in the leadership positions and to ensure attrition of female talent, and for manufacturing organisations to implement effective measures to alleviate gender discrimination in the workplace.

7.3 The personal resilience strategies that women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination experiences.

The findings from the research study revealed that women typically receive support to navigate the gender discriminatory experiences through leveraging networks outside work and developing a community of support, however this is only possible with work-life balance. This was supported by Bridges et al. (2021) and Kuntz et al. (2017) through

studies that revealed that forming networks was crucial to women developing individual skills of adapting and thriving in environments whereby they are marginalised. Another finding associated with building resilience was how women prioritised their well-being, which further highlighted the importance of having a life balance outside work. Whereas, for some women the extremely long hours made it impossible to use these resilience strategies. Women who were married and partnered, mentioned the importance of having a good partner who created the balance between work and home.

The research study found that common amongst the women was the development of different leadership styles such as Ubuntu, servant and authentic leadership, including cultivation of relationships. The ability to express vulnerability, empowered the women leaders to show up authentically and present the best version of themselves. This contradicted the perceived gender stereotypes that society has considered as being successful for effective leadership, and in this instance stereotypical feminine qualities such as being openly vulnerable, soft, and kind have been successful in male-dominant environments as supported by (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Groeneveld et al., 2020).

7.3.1 Business implications from the study

Manufacturing organisations seem to have ineffective policies and practices to combat gender discrimination in the work environment, which thus far seem to have negative impact on the mental health and career progression of women within the industry. Tackling gender discrimination is observed as an individual responsibility, a burden women carry by themselves, as manufacturing organisations do not have proactive organisational support systems to promote gender equality and foster a healthy and inclusive work environment for all. Organisations therefore need to provide platforms or forums for women to be able to network and build strategic relationships across the spectrum. The work environment culture needs to allow flexible working arrangement to assist women with creating a work life balance, to dispel the stereotype that women are less committed to their careers has been detrimental to their well-being. This includes effective initiatives build around creating a psychological safe work-place inclusive of psychological support which was discussed as pivotal to overcoming the impact of the experiences on their mental health. There needs to be a re-evaluation of grievance processes to ensure safety and efficacy, as they currently subject victims to abuse.

7.4 How South African manufacturing organisations support women in dealing with gender discrimination within the manufacturing sector.

The study found most women were looking for a better company culture, an environment that will provide psychological safety, dealing with systemic challenges and some considered leaving the industry for a change in environment, while investigating if the gender discrimination experiences had an impact on their career decisions. Majority of manufacturing organisations are inflexible and are proven to have poor work-life balance, demand long working hours and the policies are not family friendly, thus battle to attract or retain women (Bridges et al., 2020; Germain et al., 2012). Another research finding was how women still grapple with systemic barriers such as lack of promotional opportunities, highlighting the discriminatory practices of availing sufficient support and offering development opportunities.

The research study found that there currently exists minimal evidence of the efforts from organisations with tackling the systemic issue of gender inequality. The finding of lack of organisational support highlighted factors such as a rigid culture that offered no balance between work and personal life, lack of education and training programs and reliance of HR systems focused only on ensuring organisational legal compliance. It was also noted that incidents of harassment never get reported because the cultural norm is that reporting of cases is a career limiting move, that usually ends badly for the victim, as HR processes do not offer any protection.

The research study found an unexpected finding that men playing the role of advocacy and supportive line managers played a pivotal role in providing the necessary support for women to develop their personal resilience. Men in positions of power and influence playing the role of advocates for gender inclusivity, can challenge the status quo against the systemic barriers women face in manufacturing organisations.

7.4.1 Business implications from the study

Most women highlighted company culture and an environment that will provide them with psychological safety as crucial. Creating awareness around sexual harassment, confidential spaces for reporting and zero tolerance of behaviours associated with harassment is needed in companies to encourage reporting and to move away from the practices of normalising abusive behaviour or turning a blind eye to it. Manufacturing

organisations would benefit from reviewing family friendly policies that create more flexibility and opportunities for work-life balance should they wish to attract and retain more women. Practices to support women through their career advancement in the industry, such as mentorship, would encourage resilience when challenges are experienced with promotional and development opportunities. Business needs to encourage and engage men more broadly in both the understanding of issues experienced by women in male-dominated environments like manufacturing, and make sure they use their positions of power and influence to develop practical ways in which they can better support gender inclusivity.

7.5 Intersectionality

The research study found that there was an intersection between the women's experiences and their race, especially black and coloured women. Although, intersectionality was noted as a limitation for the study, as the sole focus was on gender, the study shed light on the complex ways race and gender shape the experiences of women as they navigate gender discrimination in the manufacturing industry. It revealed how race and gender has influenced women's progression in the industry, by not finding mentors and sponsors. Microaggressions emerged that not only mocked their race but more so their gender, to undermine woman's competency and capabilities. Language was also highlighted as barrier that socially excluded women.

The research study found that employment equity policies inadvertently exclude women in the workplace, especially from previously marginalised groups and the unintended consequence is tokenism, stigmatization which further exacerbates the lived experiences of gender discrimination. This highlights how EEA policies have been ineffectively implemented across manufacturing organisations. Instead of increasing diversity and inclusion of previously marginalised groups particularly women, poor organisational implementation has resulted in the inadvertent exclusion of women.

7.6 Recommendations from the study

- Organisations need to perform frequent audits of their recruitment policies and hiring practices to ensure they are free of bias and discrimination, and for any gaps established preventative measures must be put in place to ensure the recruitment and selection processes do not unfairly discriminate against women.

- Annual workplace induction trainings should have mandatory gender discrimination programs, to create awareness on gender bias and gender stereotypes to foster workplace environments that are more inclusive.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion needs to be proactively driven through the organisation culture and it must be championed by leaders within the organisation especially men. The organisations should have in place regular monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the programs. The activities for monitoring should include transparency around pay, all opportunities and promotions should be made visible and accessible for both genders.
- Manufacturing organisations need to create environments that are more flexible and have effective well-being programs to promote a healthy work life balance culture that will enable all employees to the opportunity to balance both professional and personal life.
- Men should use their position of power and influence on the role of advocacy against gender discrimination, through active support and participation in gender equality initiatives for the purpose of creating a more inclusive environment for all.

7.7 Limitations

- Researcher bias, as stated in chapter four, acknowledged the potential impact of the researcher's cultural background, assumptions and biases on the research process and the results. The researcher therefore made certain that the selection process of the participants was conducted with integrity and careful consideration using the stipulated criteria. The researcher also created distance from the data, by allowing an external party to transcribe the data. The bias was also reduced using a research guide during the interviews.
- The research study dealt with a sensitive topic, to eliminate fear of judgment and ensure the participants shared only parts they were comfortable with, the researcher used the Lived Experiences document that was shared days before the interview. Depending on the character of the participant, the information shared might have had impact on the data results.
- The study was intentionally limited to within the scope of South Africa, although the women we mainly based in Gauteng and Kwa Zulu Natal provinces.

- The unwillingness to speak openly about pay, demonstrates the lack of openness and transparency that exists in organisations. Without an open dialogue, advocacy for fairness remains unchallenged, and organisations cannot be held accountable.
- Due to the sensitive nature of the study aspects that could have added value to the study might have been omitted, although the researcher ensured the participants, were as comfortable as possible.

7.8 Future Research

The following are suggestions for future research opportunities that were identified in the research study:

- The research study to place a boundary on race and gender, by only focusing on equal number of white and black women, to explore the impact on intersectionality on gender discrimination within South African organisations.
- Exploring the relationship between Ubuntu leadership and how women leaders build individual resilience to overcome gender discrimination in male-dominated environments.
- The role men play as advocates against gender discrimination in manufacturing environments.
- The role organisations can play with de-stigmatization of employment equity act policies.
- How manufacturing organisations can drive effective and sustainable Diversity, Equitable & Inclusive programs to drive gender equality.

7.9 Conclusion

The manufacturing industry in South plays a pivotal role in the economic growth of the country, it therefore cannot continue to decline particularly attributed by talented skills leaving the sector. The research has highlighted the resilience of women leaders in navigated the systemic barrier that is gender discrimination in the male-dominated industry. The case presented an urgent need for manufacturing organisations to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their organisational policies and procedures to bridge the gap between governmental laws, to deliver robust programs to ensure manufacturing environments are diverse, equitable and inclusive to all genders.

8 References

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Appendix 1: Consistency Matrix

Table 13: Consistency Matrix

Research Question	Literature Review	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
<p>Research Question 1</p> <p>What are the gender discrimination experiences of women leaders within South African manufacturing organizations?</p>	(Chance, 2022)	Lived experiences Timeline Activity Semi structured interviews	Moustakas's (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological data analysis method. Software: Dedoose software
	(Goyal et.al., 2021)	Qualitative: elite Interviewing	Thematic data analysis
	(Khilji & Pumroy,2018)	Semi-structured Interviews	Coding and theme analysis
	(Padavic et al., 2020)	Interviews	Thematic coding
	(Bolzani et al., 2021)	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic coding
	(van Vuuren et al. 2021)	Semi-structured interviews	Thematically using ATLAS.ti 8
	(Bridges et al., 2021)	Systematic Review	Thematic data analysis
	(de Leon & Rosette, 2022)	Questionnaires	Quantitively analysed
	(Keister et al., 2022)	Systematic Review	
	(April & Singh, 2018)	Semi-structured interviews	Coding analysis using ATLAS.TI
	(Greguletz et al. 2018)	Interviews	Open coding NVivo
	(Groeneveld et al., 2020)	Bi-annual observations	Descriptive Statistics
(Tabassum & Nayak, 2021)	Literature Review	Thematic analysis	

	(Reinwald et al., 2022)	Comprehensive data basis	Descriptive Statistics
	(Kräft, 2022)	Frankfurt Consulting firm	Descriptive Statistics
	(Syster et al., 2023)	Semi-structured interviews	NVivo12
	Question 1 - 3 on instrument guide		
Research Question 2 What personal resilience strategies do women leaders use to navigate gender discrimination experiences?	(Goyal et al., 2021)	Qualitative: elite Interviewing	Thematic data analysis
	(Duchek et al., 2022)	Biographical interviews	Coding MAXDA2020
	(Bridges et al., 2020)	Systematic Review	Thematic data analysis
	(Jogulu & Franken, 2023)	In-depth interviews	Thematic analysis using NVivo 11
	(Métais et al., 2022)	Literature Review	Theme categories
	(Ng & McGowan, 2023)	Semi-structured format	Thematic analysis
	(Miller-Graff, 2022)	Empirical review	
	Question 4 - 7 on instrument guide		
Research Question 3 How do South African organisations support women in dealing with gender discrimination within the manufacturing sector?	(Chance, 2022)	Lived experiences Timeline Activity Semi structured interviews	Moustakas's (1994) modified StevickColaizzikeen phenomenological data analysis method. Software: Dedoose software
	(Goyal et al., 2021)	Qualitative: elite Interviewing	Thematic data analysis
	(Papafilippou et al., 2022)	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
	(Espí et al., 2019)	Firm data	Descriptive Statistics
	(Ebrahim, 2018)	Case laws	
	Question 8 - 9 on instrument guide		

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Table 14: Interview Guide

<p>Research Question 1:</p> <p>What are the gender discrimination experiences of women leaders within South African manufacturing organisations?</p>	1. Describe any experiences where you felt discriminated against at work because of your gender?
	2. How did you navigate these experiences?
	3. How did you deal with the emotions/feelings associated with the mentioned experiences?
<p>Research Question 2:</p> <p>What personal resilience strategies do women leaders use to navigate their gender discrimination experiences?</p>	4. What support did you have in dealing with these experiences and how did you get this support?
	5. How do you manage your overall well-being?
	6. How have you developed through this discrimination experiences?
	7. What are the different strategies you use to build your resilience?
<p>Research Question 3:</p> <p>How do South African organisations support women in dealing with of gender discrimination experiences within the manufacturing sector?</p>	8. How have your gender discrimination experiences had an impact on your career decisions?
	9. What kind of support does your organisation offer towards building your resilience?

Appendix 3: Thematic analysis

Figure 7: Code groups from ATLAS.ti 23.

Code Groups	
◇ Career changes because of the gender discrimination experiences	(41)
◇ Emotions and feelings associated with the gender discrimination experiences	(72)
◇ Gender discrimination experiences	(267)
◇ Guilt on non-action	(14)
◇ Individual development through the discriminatory experiences	(125)
◇ Manangement of overall well-being	(51)
◇ Navigating gender discriminatory experiences	(143)
◇ No alternative but to remain in the hostile industry	(5)
◇ Organisational support with building individual resilience	(77)
◇ Power dynamic as an enabler gender discrimination	(12)
◇ Pressure to be a role model	(27)
◇ Purpose driven	(60)
◇ Queen Bee syndrome	(6)
◇ Racial exclusion	(32)
◇ Seeking justice	(31)
◇ Strategies to build individual resilience	(76)
◇ Support with dealing with the gender discrimination experiences	(47)
◇ Tribalism	(1)
◇ Work and personal life conflict	(30)

Figure 8: Grouping of the code groups per research question in EXCEL.

Research Question	Code groups	Iterative Cycle 4
Research Question 1	Gender discrimination experiences	267
	Power dynamic as an enabler gender discrimination	12
	Queen Bee syndrome	6
	Navigating gender discriminatory experiences	143
	Seeking justice	31
	No alternative but to remain in the hostile industry	5
	Emotions and feelings associated with the gender discrimination experiences	72
	Pressure to be a role model	27
Research Question 2	Guilt on non-action	14
	Support with dealing with the gender discrimination experiences	47
	Manangement of overall well-being	51
	Individual development through the discriminatory experiences	125
	Purpose driven	60
Research Question 3	Strategies to build individual resilience	76
	Career changes because of the gender discrimination experiences	41
	Organisational support with building individual resilience	76
	Work and personal life conflict	30
Intersectionality	Racial exclusion	32
	Tribalism	1

Figure 9: Generation of categories and themes.

Describe any experiences where you felt discriminated against at work because of your gender?			
Code	Frequency	Categories	Theme
Pay Disparity	4	Gender Pay Gap	Systemic challenges
A state of being delusional	8	Gender Stereotypes	
Microaggressions	37		
Subjected to stereotypes	3		
Glass Cliff	7	Glass Cliff Phenomenon	
Bullying	4	Hostile Work Environment	
Exclusionary Practices	18		
Identity Crisis	5		
Ill treatment from line manager	7		
Victimisation	13		
Masculine driven leadership	3	Old white boys' club	
Old white boys' club	28		
Promotion equates to selling your soul	4		
Safer environment for men	14		
Women have no seat on the table	10		
Power dynamics an enbaler	12		
Queen Bee Syndrome	6		
Sexism	61	Sexual Harrassment	
Sexual Coercion	6		
Unwanted sexual attention	10		
Always needing to prove yourself	4	Unequal Recognition	
Deemed incompetent	22		

Appendix 4: Theory Building Concepts.

Table 15: Consolidation of themes to theory building.

Categories	Second Order Themes	Theories
	Systemic challenges Systemic Challenges	Systemic Challenges
Gender Pay Gap Gender Stereotypes Glass Cliff Phenomenon Hostile Work Environment Old white boys' club Sexual Harassment Unequal Recognition Avoidance Strategy Pursue Excellence Growth Mindset Purpose Driven Ubuntu Leadership Distressful Emotions Lack of sense of belonging Mental Health impact Suicidal Leverage Networks Strategic connections Work - life balance Deprioritised my well-being Emotional Activities Empowering my team Family Time Physical Activity Resting Social Activities Spiritual and Mindful Activities Volunteering and Community Engagements	Adaptive Strategy Avoidance Strategy	Adaptive Coping Strategy
	Lack of psychological support No psychological safety Neglect of my well-being Striving for work-life balance Striving for a work-life balance Better Company Culture Psychological Safety Seeking for change No support offered	Healthy workplace culture
Authentic Leadership Family Time Physical Activity Resting Social Activities Spiritual and Mindful Activities Volunteering and Community Engagements	Authentic Leadership Servant Leadership Ubuntu Leadership Authentic Leadership Servant Leadership Supportive leadership	Ubuntu Leadership Style
Authentic Leadership Healthy Self Esteem Growth Mindset Self-Awareness Relationship Building Focused Servant Leadership Ubuntu Leadership Team is empowered Avoidance Strategy Learning and growth Self-Mastery Strong Character Psychological Support Spirituality Building Relationships Building Relationships Supportive Community Servant Leadership Work-life balance Flexible Schedule Autonomy Company Culture Poor working relationships Psychological Impact Low income Lack of promotion opportunities Exploring other career opportunities Reliance on HR systems Lack of Support No education and training programs Reliance on HR systems Rigid Culture Role of men as advocates Supportive leadership	Building Networks Supportive Community Community Support Building Networks	A community of support
	Systemic Racism Reverse Discrimination Perceived Tokenism Employment Equity Stigmatization Tribalism	Intersectionality