CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND

According to the South African censuses of 1996 and 2001, females constitute the majority in the population of South Africa: 52% (1996) and 52.2% (2001) of the population was female at the time of these censuses. At these two times, the number of females also predominated in all provinces, except Gauteng, where the female proportion was 49% (1996) and 49.7% (2001) (Statistics South Africa, 2003:6-11). However, women's representation in the mainstream economy is at odds with the demography.

South African women are no exception to the international and historical phenomenon of being subjected to various kinds of discriminatory behaviour, attitudes and policies, whether intended or unintended, which have hampered women's full integration into the labour market for centuries (Chafetz, 1990; Devanna, 1987; Erwee, 1992; Van der Westhuizen, Goga & Oosthuizen, 2007).

However, the period following the first fully democratic election in South Africa in 1994 was the starting point of a feminisation of the South African labour force, when, as it were, the gates of employment were opened wide to all women (Casale, 2004; Casale & Posel, 2002). This phenomenon was driven particularly by greater numbers of African women entering the labour force. Nevertheless, despite the country's improved growth and performance, this change in women's position is not an unqualified success, as women remain overrepresented among the unemployed: more than half of the adult female population is unemployed, according to both the narrow and expanded definitions of unemployment. Moreover, even when women are employed, they continue to be disadvantaged (compared to men) in the labour market, as women are still overrepresented in low-income, less secure employment (Van der Westhuizen *et al.,* 2007).

Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2007:13-38) present the salient features of feminisation of the South African labour between 1995 and 2005 as follows:

Although the increases in the working age population of males and females were very similar, there was a much greater percentage increase in female labour force participation, both narrow and broad, over the period. Females made up 'almost 58% of the growth in the labour force, while males accounted for 42.3% of the change' (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007:13).

'The percentage increase in broad unemployment was higher for females (87%) than for males (79%)' (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007:22).

'Women benefited more from the net jobs created over the period. Female employment increased by 41%, almost double the increase of 22% in male employment' (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007:13).

The number of African women who joined the labour force over the period accounts for almost half of the total growth of the labour force (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

In terms of growth per sector, the number of women in elementary occupations grew most, as there was an average increase of approximately 10% per year (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

The number of women managers grew the second fastest, with an average growth rate of 8.4% per year. The number of women as managers more than doubled to 248 000 over the period, but this increase started from a very low base. Hence, women still occupied only 28.9% of management positions in 2005 (which is nevertheless up from 22.2% in 1995) (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

In every racial group, unemployment rates among women are higher than among men. The unemployment rates are highest among African women. (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

The earnings figures reveal that working women in all race groups earned less than their male counterparts in 1995 and 2005. However, in nominal terms, women received larger increases over this period. White men and women earned more than people from the other race groups. Black African men and women earned the least of all race groups (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

Generally, women still earn less than men at same level of education (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

The above findings reveal that, although women have made significant inroads into the labour market, they are still sectorally segregated in mostly elementary occupations, low paying and insecure jobs, and still suffer gender and racial discrimination in respect of their pay. Women's participation in the economy as managers is also low (28.9%), compared to that of male managers (70.8%) (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007).

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The increased feminisation of the labour market in South Africa can be attributed principally to legislative and government interventions, coupled with the operation of social and market forces. Interventions include the following:

entrenching gender equality in the Constitution;

establishing a Commission for Gender;

enacting legislative reforms to remove discrimination and other barriers to women's independence and security, for example, in the form of the Employment Equity Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998c), the Skills Development Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998a) and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (Republic of South Africa, 2003); accelerating the participation of women through special programmes such as affirmative action and equal employment opportunities;

appointing women to national positions; and

encouraging the education of women and girls.

It seems that the democratic government of South Africa is taking the saying that if you liberate a woman, you liberate the nation seriously. The first president in post-apartheid South Africa, Nelson Mandela, was unequivocal about the link between women's liberation and the liberation of society as a whole. At the opening of the 1994 Parliament, he said: '...freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression, unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of the women of our country has radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered to

intervene in all aspects of life as equals with any other member of society' (Mandela, 1994).

South Africa has earned a position as a world leader regarding women's rights and is ranked eighth in the world in terms of gender equality in government, as 30% of South Africa's parliamentarians are women. This percentage is much higher than the global average. Globally, women only hold 14% of parliament seats and only 8% of Cabinet Ministers are women. During Thabo Mbeki's term, South Africa was among the first African countries to have a female Deputy President, with 11 female Cabinet Ministers, and nine Deputy Ministers. The policy has continued under the Zuma presidency too. South Africa is also a world leader in respect of the number of senior government positions held by women. Ironically, while South Africa has such an impressive track record for the representivity of women at government level, the private sector continues to lag very far behind (Makhubalo, 2007).

To place the problem in perspective, the South African Women in Corporate Leadership 2006 Census indicates that, while women constitute 41% of the working population in South Africa, they only constitute 16.8% of all executive managers and 11.5% of directors. Contrary to what one would expect, although legislation has never excluded white women from senior management positions, with the exception of positions in family-owned companies, very few white women have made it to the top (Makhubalo, 2007).

South Africa is not alone, however, when it comes to poor representivity of women in management positions. It is sobering to realise that in June 2007, only 12 of the Fortune 500 companies and 25 of the Fortune 1000 companies were run by women. Expressed differently, this means that 488 of the Fortune 500 companies and 975 of the Fortune 1000 companies have male CEOs. A lot of hard work clearly still needs to be done, globally, and across all sectors, to empower women at management level (Makhubalo, 2007).

According to Van der Westhuizen *et al*. (2007:11), there are a number of economic and social forces that continue to draw women into the labour market.

These include increases in the cost of living, a 'decline in female access to male income as a result of increased unemployment among males, the consequences of [the] HIV epidemic and an increase in the number of households headed by females due to changes in household structure' (Van der Westhuizen *et al.*, 2007:11). Other possible explanations include the abolition of apartheid laws that previously restricted movement and access to employment, which fuelled women's aspirations and hopes.

Even though the feminisation of the labour market is a welcome development, the phenomenon has exacerbated a range serious social and psychological problems as women struggle to balance work and home responsibilities. Family life and professional life are more and more difficult to reconcile. Several changes and expectations in professional life and in family life create more and more incompatibilities between these two spheres of life. It is becoming increasingly difficult for many employees to reach a balance between the two, resulting in the prevalence of work-family conflict, which has attracted the attention of researchers throughout the western world (see, for example, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kanter, 1977; Zedeck, 1992) It has also inspired research in the South African context (Erwee, 1994; Moller, 1998; Msimang, 2001; Van den Berg & Van Zyl, 2008). The research has given rise to a plethora of theoretical models (see, for example, Bakker, Demerouti, Euwema, 2005; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001). The findings of empirical research points to a serious need for urgent action by government, organisations and society as a whole (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Franks, Schurink & Fourie, 2006; Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh & Houtman, 2003; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008).

The convergence of interest on women by politicians and researchers is understandable, considering women's sheer numbers in the population, their subordination in society, their underdevelopment and especially their untapped potential. Women's economic empowerment, and their cultural and social emancipation have multiplier effects beyond the households, many of which they head. They swell the nation's pool of human assets – hence the support

given to women in development by national agencies and international donor communities (Central Statistics, 1998:1).

The ability of women in general, and of single mothers in particular, to succeed in their home and economic pursuits depends, amongst other things, on their psycho-social well-being. The motivation for this study is therefore a desire to ensure that the goals of economic emancipation and the potential contributions of women and especially single mothers in management and professional occupations are not undermined by the psycho-social dysfunctionalities they face in the workplace and at home. If such problems cannot be solved, the hope of poverty eradication and the contribution of women to national development will be a mere illusion.

As more women enter the managerial ranks in today's world, the problems that they face in maintaining the delicate balance between their personal and professional lives have become more evident. In general, research on gender has tended to focus on dual career households, which are defined as households where both parties are in management and professional or technical occupations. Such research has established the fact that dual career couples face several problems in relation to work, namely, role-related dissatisfaction, low levels of role performance and role-related withdrawal (Pillay, 1986; Pitzer, 1999). Although these findings are important for women and the organisations involved, the emphasis on dual career couples has overshadowed the case of single parent (female and male) employees, who are the sole heads of their households. These single parents (never married, separated, divorced or widowed) have received very little attention in the research on gender. This neglect becomes all the more glaring and disconcerting when it is noted that there were almost 3.5 million female-headed households in South Africa as reported in the 1996 census (Wallis & Price, 2003). Among the most economically active groups, single mothers in South Africa represent about half of the proportion of married women. Additionally, the percentage of men and women who are divorced or widowed increases with age. The current study is therefore about a dominant, but neglected, segment of the South African population.

Studies of single mothers in the United States of America (USA) (Avison, 1997; Avison, Speechley, Thorpe, Gotlib, Rae Grant & Turner, 1994; McLanahan, 1983, 1985; Robbins & McFadden, 2003), the United Kingdom (UK) (Gill &Davidson, 2001) and South Africa (Gatley, 1987; Snyman, 1986; Wallis & Price, 2003) and other countries point to a very serious situation. The authors have noted significant demographic changes in their societies, especially, an increase in the number of families headed by single mothers. This is largely the result of increased rates of marital separation and divorce, and an increase in the proportion of mothers without partners due to teenage pregnancies. Owing to the multiple burdens they shoulder, many single mothers live in poverty. In the US studies, there is widespread agreement that single motherhood constitutes an important risk factor for psychological distress, with consequences for an increased risk for affective disorders and increased rates of mental health services use (Avison *et al.,* 1994; McLanahan, 1983, 1985; Robbins & McFadden, 2003).

Gill and Davidson (2001:383-399) investigated the problems and pressures facing single mothers in management and professional occupations in the UK. Qualitative data were gained from semi-structured interviews with 20 single working mothers, and the sample also completed the Pressure Management Indicator questionnaire. The interviews revealed that the single working mothers experienced some of the problems and pressures previously reported by women in dual career couples, but to a much greater degree. This included difficulties with childcare, work overload and role conflict. Findings also indicated that 'the death of a partner, separation or divorce affects the career aspirations and career development of the women in the sample and that the single mothers were less able to take advantage of job-sharing and part-time working because of greater financial pressures. The single working mothers reported higher levels of pressure from workload and the home/work balance than comparative normative groups. However, as stress moderating strategies they employed better use of problem-focused coping than other women and made more use of social support than other managers' (Gill & Davidson, 2001:383).

There have been very few South African studies on single women (Gatley, 1987; Snyman, 1986; Wallis & Price, 2003). In a study of 300 single-parent families in one South African city, Snyman (1986) found that finance-related difficulties were most common. This included finance-related dissatisfaction with living arrangements, employment, child maintenance and crèches. Hence financial services were ranked first among the three most important facilities required. Other facilities included counselling facilities in connection with children's problems and after-school centres. Even though South African society has experienced huge transformations, especially in the delivery of social services such as houses, electricity and water, the plight of single mothers remains critical.

Wallis and Price's (2003) study on work-family conflict among a group of twenty single working mothers with pre-school age children shows that for most of them, the family setting and their role as mother within that setting was the most important. Unlike in the past, these women developed positive attributes and characteristics such as strength and independence from their experiences as single mothers. Although they saw work as secondary to home, they still accorded work a very significant place in their lives, as it provides stimulation, keeps loneliness at bay and allows them to express their independence. However, their levels of work-family conflict, role overload and work-to-family and family-to-work interference were medium to high. The stress experienced by working women and the consequences of this on their home and work lives have been reported in several recent studies in South Africa (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; De Villiers & Kotze, 2003; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2006; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Oldfield & Mostert, 2007; Patel, Govender, Paruk & Ramgoon, 2006; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008; Van den Berg & Van Zyl, 2008). However, in almost all these studies, the case of single mothers, which is feared to be worse, is usually subsumed under women in general.

From this background it is evident that this area warrants a research focus in an African setting, where single mothers are a large force to be reckoned with. In general, this study draws attention to the lopsided balance of research on women in management and professional occupations in South Africa by

highlighting the distinct plight of single mothers in management and professional ranks.

The researcher assumed that single mothers in management and professional occupations in South Africa face higher levels of stress due to work-family pressures, restricted opportunities for personal growth and development, poor organisational support, financial pressure and social isolation than their partnered counterparts. It was also assumed that organisations and employers need to put organisational systems in place to support single working mothers in managing their personal pressures, work demands, role conflict, time for family life and difficulties with childcare.

Given the current situation, the following research questions were asked as a point of departure in this study:

What pressures and stressors do single mothers working in management and professional occupations in South Africa encounter?

What is the nature of the pressures that single mothers in management and professional occupations face in balancing family and work life?

Do single mothers in management and professional occupations experience more pressure and stress than married mothers in related positions?

In comparison with married working mothers, what support strategies do single mothers working in management and professional occupations favour to mitigate the stressors?

What kinds of resources do organisations need to provide in order to support single working mothers to cope with work and family demands and stress?

To answer these questions, it was decided to investigate the problems and pressures that single mothers in management and professional occupations experience and to identify organisational systems that are important in supporting working mothers to cope with work-family conflict and stress.

1.2   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Bearing the above research questions in mind, the primary objectives of the research were

- to develop a valid and reliable measuring instrument to survey the problems and pressures single mothers in management and professional occupations in South Africa experience;
- to survey single working mothers' perceptions about the resources they perceive to be important in supporting them to deal with high job and family demands and to cope with stress; and
- to make recommendations regarding possible support systems and practices that organisations could implement to assist single working mothers in coping with work and family pressures and stress.

To achieve the primary *objectives* of the research, it was necessary

- to obtain sufficient theoretical information and empirical data about the kinds of problems, pressures and stressors working mothers experience;
- to obtain sufficient theoretical information and empirical data on the nature of the resources that management can provide to mitigate the stressors and to support working mothers to cope with work and family demands;
- to determine the relationship between working mothers' demographic characteristics and their experience of work and family demands and stress;
- to determine the relationship between working mothers' demographic characteristics and their perceptions of the support systems available to help them cope with work and family demands and stress;
- to determine the association between working mothers' perceptions of support systems and their experience of work and family demands and stress; and
- to determine the main 'effect' of marital states on the dependent variables by comparing the perceptions of single working mothers with the perceptions of a comparable group of married working mothers.

1.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study *creates the rationa*le for the importance of the study. Creswell (1994:111) argues that to ascertain the significance of a study, one should answer three major questions: How will the study add to the scholarly research and literature in the field? How will the study help to improve practice? How will the study improve policy?

The entry of women into the labour force, which Casale and Posel (2002) and Casale (2004) describe as the 'feminisation' of the labour market, means that, whereas in 1995 only about 38% of all women of working age were active in the workforce, by 2001, nearly 51% were active in the workforce. Although much of the increase has been in the lower-paying categories, increasingly, women are penetrating the higher echelons of management and swelling the ranks of management and professional occupations. This shift is seen as one of the indices of development in all countries, as it shows effective use of person-power on the one hand, and the bringing to bear on management of the unique qualities of females to complement those of men on the other hand. However, organisations need to be sensitive to the needs of their employees in order to encourage maximum performance from them. The participation and performance of women in the labour force would be greatly hampered if the majority of them work under conditions that render them ineffective both at home and at work. The findings of this study would therefore be useful to government, organisations, and women themselves in the following ways:

They would be useful to government in its endeavour to create conditions conducive to women, through legislation or otherwise. For example, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act 75 of 1997, as amended in 2002) (Republic of South Africa 2002b) could be extended to compel organisations to provide working conditions and facilities such as day-care centres, the absence of which tends to put much pressure on women in general and single working mothers in particular.

Organisations would benefit from knowing the impact of working conditions on the careers of women employees, so that jobs and working conditions can be organised in such a way that they meet women's needs.

Women themselves would be able to take proactive steps to bring women's issues into the open or to the attention of trade unions. Besides, as others have done elsewhere, the women concerned could negotiate with their organisation to create conditions which will enable the women to fulfil their work and family responsibilities.

Theoretically, the study can help refine instruments for measuring the pressures facing mothers in professional occupations, while, at the same time, improving models of career development specifically applicable to single mothers in management and professional occupations, since the limited research findings available suggest that they face unique problems and pressures.

1.4   THE RESEARCH SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This study looks at managing the problems and pressures facing single mothers in management and professional occupations in South African organisations. The study recognizes that single fatherhood may be as problematic as single motherhood. However, attention in this study is focused on single working mothers, because women tend to bear greater responsibilities for the upkeep of their children and home.

This study is also limited to single mothers in management and professional occupations, where the pressures of such positions make more demands than the routine jobs of women in the rank and file. An equivalent number of married working mothers were however included in this study to provide a 'control group' for comparative purposes, and to increase the number of respondents in the sample to ensure meaningful statistical analyses.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This research report consists of six chapters.

Chapter 1 addresses the background and context of the study, the formulation of the problem and the purpose and outline of the research.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of problems and stressors experienced by working mothers. A theoretical model based on the systems principles of inputs, processes and outputs was developed to illustrate the impact of external environmental factors and internal organisational processes which cumulatively and negatively affect the performance and well-being of women employees.

Chapter 3 provides a literature overview of the acts, procedures, systems and practices which government applied towards ameliorating the conditions of women in general and in some cases, working women in particular. The chapter also reviews the resources which organisations can or should leverage to mitigate the negative impact of job demands on women employees.

Chapter 4 deals with the research methodology. It explains the research approach and the research design. It includes issues such as the design and administration of the questionnaires, the population and sampling procedure, and the collection of data and the statistical methods applied to analyse the data.

Chapter 5 focuses on the interpretation and discussion of the research results. First, the results of Lawshe's content validity analysis of the initial items, the results of the exploratory factor analysis and the item and reliability analysis of the questionnaires are reported comprehensively. Then, the results of the correlation between variables and the results of the analysis of variance are discussed. Lastly, the results of the logistic regression analysis with a classification of the sample into single or married subsets are discussed.

Chapter 6 contains a summary and the recommendations of the study. The focus in the discussion of the results is on answering the research questions. Only the statistically significant findings with practical implications are discussed. Recommendations with regard to possible support systems that government and organisations can implement to mitigate the pressures single working mothers experience are provided. The limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also outlined in this chapter.

1.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the problem of the study has been presented, against the background of the importance of women in the South African population and the feminisation of the labour market from 1995 to 2005 and beyond. The use of legislation and the example of the attitudes and convictions of the ruling party to the need to integrate and give visibility to women in political life have helped to accelerate the entry of women into the labour market. Other social and market forces were also at play. Nevertheless, the feminisation of the labour market has not been an unqualified success, as women are still restricted largely to feminine occupations, characterised by low paying jobs and insecurity on the one hand, and subjected to racial and gender discrimination in pay on the other. The phenomenal increase of women entering the labour market has had stressful consequences for women's quality of home and work lives in general. Some researchers (Erwee, 1994; Moller, 1998) have even suggested that the impact of the Employment Equity Act, which encourages the promotion of more women to managerial positions, may lead to increased levels of stress among women, because of their lack of training and the negative impact of gender discrimination on the adjustment of women. Some authors claim that what seems to play an important role in the difficulties experienced by many career women is the lack of investment in resources such as training, decision-making authority and social support (Van den Berg & Van Zyl, 2008).

Although women in general are faced with issues of balancing home and work responsibilities, the weight of these burdens fall more heavily on single working mothers than on partnered working mothers. Single mothers – more than 3.5

million in South Africa – deserve to be the focus of research. Their sheer numbers and the neglect of their plight in research is one of the motivations for this study.

The objectives of the study and the specific research questions have been outlined. The scope and the significance of the study are also highlighted. In the next chapter, an overview of the problems and stressors experienced by working mothers is presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CONSTRAINTS, PROBLEMS AND STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY WORKING WOMEN

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The literature review is a crucial part of any research project. According to Mouton (2001:86), a literature review is aimed at finding out what has already been done in a specific field of study. Moreover, a literature review is regarded as a 'process of indicating where a particular report or research fits into the context of the general body of scientific knowledge. To ensure that the research questions are unique and will add value to a body of knowledge, the researcher has to find out what has been written in the specific field and discover what has been found empirically' (Babbie, 2005:457).

In this chapter, the constraints to the advancement of women, and in particular the problems and stressors that working women in professional and management careers in South Africa experience, are examined. A multi-facetted approach was followed to describe the constraints, problems and stressors that working women may experience. Frone, Russell and Cooper (1995) emphasize the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach in identifying the possible constraints, problems and stressors facing a population. Drawing on an extensive review of research on women's occupational stress, Davidson and Fielden (1999) point out the need to investigate all potential problems – the psychological, sociological and physiological forces that can have an impact on people. Davidson and Fielden (1999) also highlight the need to consider sources of stress both inside and outside of the organisation which can affect the behaviour, the performance and the mental and physical health of women at work.

As noted in Chapter 1, women outnumber men in the population. In spite of this, women continue to trail men in almost all indices of development. After reviewing the global scene, Mathur-Helm (2005:57) has commented scathingly that 'women worldwide are still holding secondary positions, are under-utilised in the labour market and are still a wasted resource'. South Africa is no exception. There are many reasons, as many authors have noted, a decade after the Beijing Conference of 1995, where South Africa signed a declaration on gender and development, committing itself to increasing women's participation in decision-making to 30% by 2005 (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007; Bowen, Cattell & Distiller, 2008; Mathur-Helm, 2005, 2006; Mello & Phago, 2007; Moorosi, 2007; Morrison, 2005; Stone & Coetzee, 2005; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). In this chapter, these reasons are discussed in six broad categories, namely, cultural and societal constraints, the labour market and labour policies, and financial, organisational and individual reasons. It should be noted that these categories are inter-related and interact to present formidable barriers to women's progress in society and to hamper women's well-being in the workplace.

2.2   CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL CONSTRAINTS

2.2.1 Philosophies about and attitudes to women

Social role theorists (for example, Eagly, 1987) argue that the society and the culture into which women and men are born and socialised leave indelible traits which define gender roles. Jones and Montenegro (1982:8) contend that gender roles are transferred from generation to generation via accumulated acculturation and socialisation and are the foundation of gender stereotypes. A stereotype, as defined by Morrison (1992:24), is 'a relatively rigid and oversimplified conception of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labelled with the so-called group characteristics'. Gender stereotyping applies to both men and women. For example, women are generally thought to be emotional, dependent and less assertive than their male counterparts, who are portrayed as independent, assertive and rational (Zulu, 2003). Stereotypes extend to the jobs people do: according to Brown and Jordanova (1982),

women today are stereotypically identified with the so-called caring professions of teaching, nursing and social work.

Gender denotes those characteristics, attributes, behaviours and activities considered by society to be appropriate for men and women (Zulu, 2003). According to Zulu (2003), young girls and boys are taught at an early age to value what society perceives as female and male characteristics, maintaining that this kind of socialisation pattern leads girls and boys to believe, for instance, that being modest, submissive, affectionate, nurturing, people-oriented and emotionally expressive are female characteristics, whereas being aggressive, assertive, independent, rational and task-oriented are male characteristics. Young girls grow up with the belief that displaying male characteristics is improper and the same applies to young boys who are discouraged from displaying what society classes as female characteristics. This attribution of roles and characteristics perceived as appropriate for a particular gender may be responsible for women's failure to aspire to be leaders or the barriers they encounter when they attempt to enter management positions (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001; Schein, 2007; Zulu, 2003).

Berthoin and Izrael (1993:63, cited in Schein, 2007) provide an overview of women in management world-wide. They argue that 'probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialised countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male'. According to Schein (2007), gender stereotyping of the managerial position fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement, and promotion and training decisions. She found that gender stereotyping of the managerial position has persisted over the last thirty years, in spite of the progress made by women in management: 'Despite all the societal, legal, and organizational changes that occurred in the USA over the last 30 years, male managers continue to perceive that successful managerial characteristics are more likely to be held by men in general than by women in general' (Schein, 2007:8). The results of cross-cultural studies in Germany, the UK, China and Japan have also shown similar trends, from which Schein (2007) concludes that the similarity in strength

of the male perceptions may reflect 'intractable attitudinal barriers'. The South African situation is similar.

2.2.2   The South African situation

The mythical stereotypes attached to gender roles in society ensure that women in South Africa also remain secondary to men in leadership and management positions. According to Greyvenstein (1989:21), 'there are particular problems in South Africa with regard to the traditional conflict of roles in women, whereby women are more traditionally set with regard to stereotype sex-roles. A deeply-rooted patriarchal outlook of the South African society backs up this'. Contemporary South African society has not yet reached the point of accepting that it is appropriate for women to be both homemakers and effective career women (Greyvenstein, 1989:19).

Although working women have increasingly moved away from the home into the wider spectrum of economic employment, including teaching, many have internalised the traditional stereotypes to such an extent that they suffer guilt and shame when they opt for self-determination or self-development beyond the realm of homemaker (Jones & Montenegro, 1982:8). This role conflict can lead to personal sanctions and a lack of ambition, poor self-image and inadequate confidence (Greyvenstein, 1989; Jones & Montenegro, 1982). Researchers in South Africa (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008) have found that the conflicts women experience between their traditional roles as housewives, mothers and homemakers and their professional roles as managers and leaders are largely responsible for the strains and stresses which they experience.

The effect of the deeply entrenched stereotyped view of women remains at the core of modern society's attitudes and philosophies about women (Brown & Jordanova, 1982:389) and are also instrumental in the creation of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to the promotion of females and working mothers to management positions. The intrinsic barriers are discussed with the individual

constraints (Section 2.6.1) and the extrinsic barriers addressed as part of the organisational constraints (Section 2.5.2).

2.3   LABOUR MARKET AND LABOUR POLICY CONSTRAINTS

Over the years, South African women have faced discriminatory practices which are both politically and economically motivated. While it is true that women's participation in labour has increased over the years (Van der Westhuizen *et al*., 2007), a range of practices in the labour market and in the workplace still persist that contain elements of discrimination and inequality and that subject women to inferior treatment. Among the problems facing women in the labour market are inadequate education and development, sector participation, gender segmentation, and unequal recruitment and employment practices.

2.3.1   Inadequate education

Barker (1995:63-65) notes that various inequalities that have manifested in the South African labour market amount to discrimination. These inequalities range from educational inequalities to occupational ones. According to Reskin and Padavic (2001:255), it is assumed that women are not advanced because of their lower levels of education, and that they lack the experience and training desired in people in top positions. As a result, women are often locked into jobs which offer less diversity of experience and have fewer opportunities for upward mobility. Contradicting these assumptions, Barker (1995:163) claims that the discrimination directed at women results from factors that are related to neither their education nor the labour market, for example, being female or black African. However, the South African Human Development Report (2003:19) reflects that, while important strides have been made towards overcoming past inequalities in the labour market, the distribution of jobs, occupations and income still correlates strongly with race, gender, age, disability and spatial factors.

In 2002, the labour absorption rate remained at 33.1% for women compared to 46.4% for men. According to Statistics South Africa (2003), the census of 2001 indicates that more women (48.1%) than men (35.8%) remain unemployed. A person's level of education and training plays a vital role in shaping opportunities for powerful advancement in the workplace. In economic terms, education thus forms the first step towards successful self-employment and job creation for both men and women. *The Graduate* (1999:10) notes that 'even though the labour market in SA has the ability to absorb new entrants the imbalances between skilled and unskilled labour blocks the opportunities for certain groups'. Gender segregation in education is still evident between men and women. Budlender (2002) shows that nearly 18% of black African women at the age of 25 years have no formal education, with only 6% of them having achieved a Grade 12, a diploma or tertiary education. This phenomenon can be attributed in part to the fact that historically, education for women has not been seen as a relevant benefit in society.

Educational opportunities for black African people were limited in the apartheid era, and the situation for women was particularly problematic. Some parents believed that education was not important for girls. Today, although more and more young women are now enrolling to study, they encounter a number of problems which range from sexual abuse and assault to career stereotyping. Some find it hard, if not impossible, to visit libraries and classrooms at night to study, because they fear being raped or subjected to other forms of violence. There is also a tendency to dismiss pregnant girls from school (Budlender, 1998b:16). Nonetheless, Education Statistics (2008:30) notes that women students are in the majority at universities in South Africa. In 2008, women made up 56.4% of the total student body at South African universities. This indicates that there is a gradual expansion of the number of women who are acquiring professional qualifications that will perhaps take them to managerial levels.

2.3.2 Sector participation

Budlender (1998a:18) notes that biases in the labour market which affect women include gender segmentation by industry and occupation. Such biases allow women fewer choices than men and restrict women predominantly to agricultural work, casual work and informal activities.

In South Africa, the formal sector of the economy is the biggest employer of both men and women. On average, there are more males from all racial groups who are in formal employment than females. When it comes to employment by sector, there are relatively more women in the service, trade and financial sectors in South Africa. Over half (51%) of black African employed women and 38% of all employed women work in elementary (unskilled) jobs compared to 36% of black African men and 27% of all men (Budlender, 1998a:19).

Samson (1997:13) notes that, in South Africa, 16% of people performing paid work in 1994 were in the informal sector, of which 70% were female and 79% were black Africans. The vast majority of these women work in survival enterprises. The October household survey (1995, cited by Budlender, 1998a:21) indicates that a larger proportion of women are found in clerical and semi-professional occupations, while a larger proportion of men are in operator and artisan or craft occupations.

2.3.3 Gender segmentation by position

In South Africa, even though there seems to be a growing trend of women making an impact in positions of power, with some of them becoming effective and successful entrepreneurs, the bigger picture is still that women are under-represented at the management level and are over-represented at the unskilled levels. According to Fagenson (1993:5), gender segmentation by position is greatly influenced by such factors as women's level of education, practical work experience, their marital status, affirmative action policies, as well as societal attitudes and women's perceptions of themselves and their role in society and in organisations.

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Budlender (1998b:21) shows that, in 1995, 38% of all women in South Africa worked in elementary positions. A fairly large percentage (20%) of women were working as clerks and 12% as service or shop workers. Under a quarter (22%) of the managers were female, with black African women making up only 9%. Bennett (2002:1) notes that at the time of Bennett's study, women in government and parastatal organisations made up 25% of upper management (up from 12.6% in 1998). Despite an increase in the number of black Africans and women in the private sector, men (and particularly white men) still dominate the boardrooms. It is only in the retail sector that women take up 35% of executive positions (compared to fewer than 45% of white men).

2.3.4   Unequal recruitment, employment and development practices

One of the many problems facing women in the labour market is discrimination that is entrenched in organisations' recruitment and employment policies. It is evident that sometimes employers do not always implement positive changes in legislation. Recruitment policies in organisations still often tend to favour men; and women are not considered for some appointments, because of the possibility of their getting married in future and having children. This is confirmed by the questions which are commonly asked during interviews (as experienced by the researcher of this study), such as: 'When do you plan to get married?' or 'When do you plan to have a baby?' Some job advertisements even specify that only male applicants need to apply.

Jacklin and Maccoboy (1974, cited in Hearn & Parkin, 1988:23) claim that women are not psychologically handicapped for management, but are often blocked by institutions' recruitment, hiring and promotion policies, adding: '[W]e have to acknowledge the fact that most women have their first real experience of leadership in the workplace (as supervisors, particularly in the retail sector), meanwhile the majority of men's first experience in this regard tends to be at school and at home.' Erwee (1988:219) argues that companies do not usually plan for their employees' long-term career development, especially in the case of women; and where women are recognized, only a select few benefit. Milwid (1990:20) posits that 'those who went to graduate school – the focus of their

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academic programs had been on gathering information and developing skills, but not on applying those skills in real life situations'. This means that leaving school, a technikon or university to enter the place of work (the corporate world) presents an added psychological challenge to women.

2.4 FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

2.4.1 Differences in earnings and benefits

In comparison with international standards, South Africa's socio-economic environment illustrates various inequalities. These inequalities are largely based on race and gender. As a product of the apartheid regime, women and black Africans have clustered more in informal activities, which usually generate low earnings and benefits. Despite the new democracy and improved levels of education and job skills in South Africa since 1994, the standardisation of wages has been determined by influences associated with labour market discrimination, low mobility (especially for women), as well as institutional forces (Fallon & Lucas, 1998:1).In general, women earn less than men, as they usually occupy poorly paid positions. Budlender (1998a:19) notes that women earn only between 72% and 85% of what men with a similar level of education earn. This is largely due to the fact that women and men occupy different jobs and work in different sectors of the economy.

Barling and Sorensen (1997) suggest that single working mothers may face more financial strain, less social support and greater work overload than mothers with partners. In terms of financial strain, mothers incur additional 'opportunity costs' as a result of having children, but, as Baylies (1996) points out, in material terms, married women are 'compensated' for these in a way that single mothers are not. The uncertainty and irregularity often associated with maintenance payments means that single working mothers have to meet their housing and household costs on one salary, in contrast with the double salary of dual career households. Formal paid childcare also represents a proportionally larger drain on the total household income for mothers who have to rely on such childcare; and single mothers may indeed have to place greater

reliance on paid childcare. Therefore, 'despite their participation in the workforce, a substantial proportion of single mothers suffer from significant socioeconomic disadvantage, largely as a result of being the sole wage earner in the household' (Avison,1997:661).

2.4.2 Extended-family responsibilities

In the African context, traditional extended-family responsibilities require that family members with financial means must also support those relatives who are in need. This may include the financial care of elderly or sick relatives and the support of needy children of brothers and sisters. In many instances, this practice places an additional financial burden on working dual couples and even more so on employed single mothers.

Additional and ongoing financial burdens are a powerful source of stress for single mothers. Brown and Moran (1997), as well as Hope, Power and Rodgers (1998) have shown that these burdens contribute to single mothers' elevated rates of distress and various disorders, compared to those of married mothers.

2.4.3 Unequal access to socio-economic rights

Amien and Paleker (1997) mention a number of critical factors which contribute to women's unequal access to socio-economic rights. These factors were identified during several poverty hearings convened in all nine provinces of South Africa and reported in *The People's Voices* (1998). These factors included:

- the disproportionate share of reproductive work performed by women, particularly in relation to childcare, elderly and sick relatives;
- the deep social patterns of gender discrimination;
- violence against women;
- entrenched gender roles, for example, the rearing of children;
- the migrant labour system which relegated women to rural areas, where they have to make a living for themselves and their dependants;

customary law practices such as polygamy and patriarchal inheritance principles; and

traditional leaders, who prevent women from acquiring land in their own name.

2.5 ORGANISATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

Schein (2007:17) remarks that 'most executive positions, having been occupied predominantly by males since the beginning of industrial society, have been designed under the assumption of a gender-based division of labour' which has the effect of impeding women's progress. Historically, women's place has been limited to the home, where they are wives, child bearers, mothers and homemakers. By contrast, men are the breadwinners and providers.

Burke and Nelson (2002:7) emphasize that the new challenge in the management arena of today's organisations is to foster the advancement of capable women to the ranks of executive leadership. However, according to them, evidence to date suggests that this challenge will be formidable, because competitiveness in the 21st century depends on the quality of management in addressing the stereotypes related to leadership roles in organisations (Burke & Nelson, 2002).

2.5.1 Organisations work along masculine traits

One of the barriers in the promotion of women is the stereotyping attitude that women in leadership positions diverge from the accepted norm of a woman's personality profile (Greyvenstein, 1989:14). It is assumed that women in leadership should emulate masculine behaviour, and suppress their feminine approach to life. These phenomena can best be explained in terms of social role theory and expectation states theory.

Social role theory research has indicated that 'gender-roles spill over to organisational roles' (Eagly & Johnson, 1990:233). The literature on social role

theory and expectation states theory distinguishes between achievement-oriented or 'agentic' and social-service-oriented or communal attributes. Agentic characteristics and behaviours have been documented as assertiveness, ambition, competing for attention and making problem-focused suggestions. Communal behaviours have been described as speaking tentatively, supporting and soothing others, and being helpful and sympathetic (Weyer, 2007:483). Generally, agentic traits are ascribed to men and communal behaviours are ascribed to women. These stereotyped gender roles are biased. From this bias, discrimination toward either of the sexes may arise.

In any case, women and men tend to behave in accordance with the roles and expectations held by their society. One of these contested roles in organisations is leadership, which for centuries has been portrayed as distinctively male in nature (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998, cited in Weyer, 2007). This explains why most leadership positions are held by men, who structure the organisation and work along masculine traits and needs (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Women are coerced by androcentric perceptions to behave in both a 'masculine' and a 'feminine' way in order to attain leadership (Greyvenstein, 1989:14). Schein (2007) has therefore called for a critical questioning and changing of the assumptions underlying such designs and work environments, to facilitate a work and family interface. She quotes the famous statement by Dr Frene Ginwala, the former speaker of the South African National Assembly, that 'institutions that discriminate are man-shaped and must be made people shaped. Only then will women be able to function as equals within these institutions' (cited in Schein, 2007:18).

2.5.2 Extrinsic organisational barriers

Greyvenstein (1989:21) maintains that 'extrinsic barriers indicate environmental mutables that influence the entry and progress of women. These barriers have been embedded in society's anachronistic attitudes regarding career women, the institutional system of society, the nature of occupational structure' and the bureaucratic and professional characteristics of organisations. Greyvenstein (1989:22) maintains that 'nepotism, chauvinism, women being pushed to leadership positions as just representatives of women's sex, lack of mentors or

role models, single-sex networks, family commitments, and work interruptions are among the external factors that are identifiable as barriers to promotion for women'. Burke, 2005, argue that women today want to be economically active, but still encounter a 'glass ceiling'. This glass ceiling means that women can see the opportunities for leadership, but are obstructed by mythical beliefs and philosophies from advancing themselves.

Lastly, Catalyst, 1998, cited in Burke, 2005:16-17 mention the following extrinsic organisational barriers that have a negative effect on working women's expectations and career advancement:

- negative assumptions about women, their abilities and their commitment;
- perceptions that women do not fit into the corporate culture;
- a lack of core opportunities for female employees who have leadership potential;
- the assumption that women would easily relocate for career advancement;
- a failure to make managers accountable for advancing women;
- management's reluctance to give women revenue-generating experience;
- work interruptions, for example, pregnancy, resulting in prolonged absenteeism;
- negative mentoring and self-selection, where women move into staff areas instead of line positions;
- exclusion from informal career networks where men have learned the unwritten rules of success;
- appraisal and compensation systems that are not uniform for men and women;
- corporate or education systems designed prior to women's large-scale entry into the workplace;
- systems measures that do not take into account new policies, such as flexible work arrangements;
- discrimination and sexual harassment; and
- other forms of cultural discouragement, such as a work environment that values long hours over actual performance, or offers limited support for work-family initiatives.

The constraints described above have the potential to leave working women with a sense of failure and frustration. This, in turn may reduce their motivation or commitment and lead to their withdrawal from work (Demerouti *et al*., 2001). Continuous denial or frustration of working women's aspiration and career expectations also has the potential to create conflict and job stress. Job stress is generally defined in the literature as an employee's feelings of job-related hardness, tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion and distress (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). According to Avison (1997) and Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002), extensive and enduring job stress may impair an employee's psychological and physical well-being. A lack of psychological well-being is related to feelings of burnout, tension and strain, and poor self-esteem and depression (Mclellan & Uys, 2009:1). Empirical research has demonstrated that burnout has a negative impact on employees' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, extra-role behaviours and in-role behaviours (Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke, 2004; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006).

Understanding the relationship between the work environment and employee well-being is therefore important in order to learn how working mothers can be supported to cope with work demands and family demands.

2.5.3 Job characteristics, job stress and employee well-being

It is important to comprehend how job characteristics relate to employee well-being. A large body of research has been done in recent years, exploring the causes and effects of stress on individuals at work. Davidson, Cooper and Baldini (1995), Devanna (1987) and Cooper and Payne (1998) mention the following sources of work-related stress, namely, factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organisation, relationships at work, career development, organisational structure and climate, and the work-to-home interface. Most of these sources of stress are predominantly related to job characteristics. According to Oldham and Hackman (1981), job characteristics pertain to the attributes associated with a particular job and include areas such as job variety, skill variety, job stress, task significance, task identity, and supervision. Using factor analysis,

Cornelissen (2006) identified seven factors that describe different aspects of a job, which are qualified as status, physical strain, autonomy, advancement opportunities, social relations at the workplace, work time and job security. Generally speaking, these factors represent two sets of variables that can be distinguished in any kind of job, namely job demands and job resources. Jones and Fletcher (1996:34) define demands as 'the degree to which the environment contains stimuli that peremptorily require attention and response'.

The relationship between job demands, job resources, job stress and employee well-being can best be explained in terms of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Demerouti *et al*. (2001) and refined by Bakker *et al*. (2005). An essential proposition of the Job Demands-Resources model is that job characteristics can be organised in two broad categories or two sets of working conditions, namely, job demands and job resources (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003). A more detailed discussion of the Job Demands-Resources model can be found in Section 3.4.2.

By means of a series of structural equation modelling analyses, Demerouti *et al*. (2001) and Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer and Schaufeli (2003) demonstrated that job demands are unique predictors of burnout (in other words, exhaustion and cynicism) and are indirectly related to the duration of absence from work, whereas job resources are unique predictors of organisational commitment, and indirectly of absenteeism. 'According to the JD-R model, job demands are primarily responsible for health impairment, whereas job resources lead primarily to increased motivation and attachment to work and the organization' (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003:1).

In a more recent study, Bakker *et al*. (2005:170-180) analysed the interaction between job demands, job resources and burnout. Their results indicate that the combination of high demands and low job resources adds significantly to predicting the core dimensions of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism). Respondents reported high levels of fatigue and demoralization when high job demands coincided with poor job resources. However, the process of interaction can work the other way around too; for example, the negative

influence of job demands on burnout can be mitigated as a result of relevant job resources. Sufficient job resources may enable workers to deal with high job demands and at the same time increase their enthusiasm to put energy into their work (Bakker *et al*., 2005; Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007).

These findings suggest that the provision of relevant physical, psychological, social and organisational resources seems to be an important variable that 'buffers' the effects of stress on working mothers. These resources are identified and discussed in Section 3.4.

2.5.4   Work-to-home interference

Understanding the relationship between work-to-home interference is important in order to learn how working mothers, and in particular single working mothers, can and should be supported. Much of the debate concerning the stress induced by the work and family demands has focused on the multiple roles a working woman must adopt in order to carry out her responsibilities relating to her work and family (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Franks *et al.,* 2006; Geurts *et al.,* 2003; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008). Research by Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1993) shows that a substantial proportion of employed parents (40%) experienced problems or conflicts in balancing work and family demands, often referred to as work-to-family conflict, negative work-to-family spillover, work-to-family strain or work-to-home interference (WHI). Constant interference between work and family can hinder a woman's career progression, decrease her satisfaction with her work, interfere with her concentration on the job, increase absenteeism, and even lead to high turnover (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997).

Work-to-family conflict has been defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:77) as 'a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role [home] is made more difficult by participation in another role [work]'. According

them, work-to-family conflict can take three forms: first, conflict due to an inability to satisfy family and professional role expectations in the time available (time-based conflict); second, conflict due to the sum of efforts which the person must make in the job and family fields (strain-based conflict); and third, conflict due to the incompatibility of behaviours which the person must adopt in both spheres (behaviour-based conflict) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008). According to Duxbury and Higgins (1991), work-to-family conflict as a source of stress has been correlated with the following dysfunctional negative consequences: increased health risks, poorer performance of the parenting role, decreased productivity, tardiness, absenteeism, turnover, poor morale, reduced life satisfaction, and lower mental health.

Geurts *et al*. (2003) base their definition of work-to-home interference on the Effort-Recovery model of Meijman and Mulder (1998) and define work-to-home interference as an interactive process in which a worker's functioning in one domain (such as the home) is influenced (negatively or positively) by load reactions that have built up in the other domain (for example, at work). Geurts *et al*. (2003) distinguish between negative work-to-home interference and positive work-to-home interference. Negative work-to-home interference is defined as a situation in which negative load effects build up at work and hamper functioning at home. Positive work-to-home interference is defined as positive load reactions built up at work that facilitate functioning at home (Geurts *et al*., 2003). Empirical research has consistently shown that work demands are far more likely to interfere with domestic obligations than the other way around (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992).

Negative work-to-home interference is frequently considered a significant source of stress. An inability to balance work and family roles, in addition to other potential stressors, can influence a person's health. Research indicates that work-to-home conflict can have adverse effects on well-being, leading to anxiety, exhaustion, poor physical health, and insomnia (Frone *et al*., 1992; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1997; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). In a recent meta-analysis, Allen, Herst, Bruck and Sutton (2000) have shown that work-to-home

interference was particularly associated with stress-related outcomes, including burnout, work-related stress and depressive complaints. Extensive conflict between work and family roles may thus impair a person's psychological well-being (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 2002). According to this approach, work-to-home interference is perceived as an independent variable that is related to ill health.

In other studies, work-to-home interference has been treated as a dependent variable. From this perspective, negative work-to-home interference is also often considered an outcome of stress or as a stress reaction (strain) caused by work-related stressors, particularly quantitative workload (work pressure, overload and time demands) (Baxter & Alexander, 2008; Geurts *et al.,* 2003). There is reliable evidence that quantitative workload is the most and often the only relevant antecedent of work-to-family conflict (Frone *et al*., 1992; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008). A measurement of negative work-to-home interference can therefore be used as an independent variable (source of stress) and/or as a dependent variable (stress reaction) in understanding the presumed consequences of work-to-home interference on married and single working mothers.

Furthermore, a considerable amount of knowledge has been gathered on the antecedents of positive and negative work-to-home interference. The results of several empirical studies (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Frone, 2003; Frone *et al*., 1997; Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Geurts *et al*., 2003; Oldfield & Mostert, 2007; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002) support the assumption that job characteristics are associated with negative work-to-home interference and that job demands and a lack of workplace social support and resources could endanger the work-home balance and foster negative work-to-home interference.

Research undertaken in South Africa by Van Aarde and Mostert (2008:8) indicates that negative work-to-home interference is best predicted by job demands (including pressure, overload and time demands) and a lack of job resources (including autonomy, supervisor support, instrumental support and

role clarity). The best predictors for positive work-to-home interference are autonomy, supervisor support and colleague support. These findings are consistent with the results of previous research, such as that of Bakker and Geurts (2004), Frone *et al*. (1997) and Oldfield and Mostert (2007). It was also found that job resources, especially autonomy and social support, have a negative relationship with negative work-to-home interference (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Parasuraman, Purohit & Godshalk, 1996). The practical implications of these findings are that working women may experience positive interaction between their work and family life if they receive sufficient job resources.

2.6 INDIVIDUAL CONSTRAINTS

2.6.1 Intrinsic personal traits and beliefs

In most instances, intrinsic, internal or personal barriers are psychologically inherent and have to do with a person's value system, attitudes, self-belief and personal image. There are so-called female limitations that are deeply ingrained in the traditional and stereotyped attitudes of societies about typically feminine characteristics (Van der Westhuizen 1997:544). Mathipa and Tsoka (2001) list females' poor self-image, lack of assertiveness, less career-orientedness, less confidence and poor performance as barriers to the advancement of women to leadership positions in the education profession, for example.

In society, there are general beliefs about the overall competence and capacity of individuals with a specific characteristic. According to expectation status theory, each status characteristic has its own independent status value and carries a distinctive set of stereotypical traits shared in society through status beliefs (Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelditch, 1980; Weyer, 2007:485). A society that subordinates the status of women to that of men is likely to breed low self-esteem, a lack of assertiveness, less confidence and low aspirations in women. Women may eventually internalise these traits and act out these beliefs in ways that constitute a self-fulfilling prophecy (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001).

Stereotypical traits and beliefs are internalized through the process of gender socialisation and become part of males' or females' mental functioning and role behaviour. Henslin (1999:76) contends that 'an important part of socialization is the learning of culturally defined gender roles'. Gender roles are reinforced through 'countless subtle and not so subtle ways' and are perpetuated by parents, the extended family, peers and other members of the community, and religion and other complex social institutions. Behaviour is strongly influenced by gender roles when cultures endorse gender stereotypes and form firm expectations based on those stereotypes (Eagly, 1987).

Both the social role theory (see Section 2.2) and expectation status theory argue that gender influences the way people are perceived by others, perceive others, and perceive themselves (Korabik, 1997). How women perceive their gender role and what they believe others expect of them can create role conflict and stereotype threat in specific situations; for example, conforming to internalized role behaviour may clash with the expected behaviour prevalent or required for a particular position. Support for this argument can be found in the following quote from Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001:786): 'Conforming to their gender-role (females) can therefore produce a failure to meet requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender-role'. If this situation is not worked through properly, it can create role conflict and become a potential source of stress. Having to cope with dual role expectations not only exposes women to higher strains and stresses than men (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Morrison, 2005) but also has a negative effect on their performance, due to stereotype threat (Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999).

Research indicates that stereotype threat can have a negative effect on performance by increasing anxiety. For example, Spencer *et al.* (1999:4-28) have found that women performed significantly worse than men on a mathematics test when the participants were led to believe that the test would probably produce gender differences. These findings suggest that negative stereotypes can and do negatively affect performance, even when the

stereotype has not been internalized or incorporated into the person's view of the self.

2.6.2 Female and male expectations

Milwid (1990:9) found that a number of women, when entering the labour market, have preconceived ideas about employment. Milwid (1990) notes that several women think that getting a job would lead to a long-term career commitment. However, at the same time, several secretly hope to stop working and contemplate retiring when they get married. The prospect of getting married could make them reluctant to work towards being promoted to better positions. Milwid (1990:22) also points out that because women are hard-working when it comes to household duties, they usually expected that the workplace also needs people who work hard and do well on the job. Hence, they work very hard in order to gain recognition and keep their jobs, which can then create work-to-home interference and stress.

Adding to women's expectations of their gender role, men also tend to have preconceived stereotyped ideas about women in employment. Milwid (1990:44) notes that these stereotypes fit into two categories. The first is the generalisation about female temperament which assumes that women are by nature too emotional, too nice or too unstable for business. The second pertains to occupational ability, and it is believed that subjects such as finances, electronics and plumbing are inherently beyond the scope of a woman's abilities.

At times, the expectations that men hold about women stem from family roles. Rather than view women as colleagues and equal partners, men tend to see women at work as mothers, sisters and even daughters. While this is true for men, at the same time, women themselves might view their male colleagues as brothers and cousins, as well as seeing them as authority figures, like fathers (Milwid, 1990:45). It should be noted with caution, that as soon as this happens a female professional loses her credibility. Consequently, a female colleague will fail to act independently and challenge her boss and other male colleagues. As soon as the workplace is run like a home, the female professional adjusts herself to a

daughter's role and thus cannot make any major decisions. This shift blocks her way to advancing upwardly into management positions (Milwid, 1990).

2.6.3 Family life and marital status

Drobnic, Blossfeld and Rohwer (1999:133) argue that 'the difficulty of combining employment and family responsibilities remains an obstacle for the achievement of equality in the labour market'. The fact that many people believe women's primary responsibility involves caring for children and other household tasks affects women's occupational choices. In western communities, most women find themselves having to work part-time in order to fulfil their dual responsibilities as both mothers and house-keepers (or wives). Ferguson (1989, cited in Rogers, 1998:38) notes that in societies where male dominance is a dominant culture, the function of serving and caring for men and children is placed in the hands of women. Hence, Du Toit (1992:132) states that 'since the practicing of a professional career requires rigorous work hours, dedication, as well as commitment, the implications of practicing such a career for the married women with children, especially small children, are substantial'. In most instances, the demands posed by being a manager require a woman to disregard her home and family obligations to fulfil the expectations associated with her male-normative management jobs (Martin, 1993:277-278).

Ginn and Sandell's (1997) research into stress experienced by a large sample (1 276) of social services staff found that levels of stress were higher for women with children at home, especially where these children were younger, and that the levels were considerably higher for single mothers compared to those with partners. Levels of stress were also related to employment characteristics. Stress levels were greater where longer hours were worked and for staff whose jobs entailed heavier responsibilities, in other words, those in more senior management and professional positions. Ginn and Sandell (1997) concluded that it was the combination of high levels of responsibility in jobs, together with responsibility for young children and working full-time which generated high stress levels. When all three factors were present, although women with

partners experienced high levels of stress, the levels experienced by single working mothers were even higher.

In a study of 100 working mothers employed on a full-time basis at a large retail organisation in Durban, South Africa, Patel *et al.* (2006:39-45) did not find evidence that work-family conflict affected the performance of the subjects adversely, although married women reported significantly higher family-work conflict than unmarried women, while women in the highest paid category gained the highest job performance rating. Moreover, Patel *et al.* (2006) found that more than half the sample indicated that paid work was more important than their housework and that working had a positive impact on their families. These authors interpreted this as indicating an acknowledgement of the growing financial contributions that women are making to their homes. Patel *et al*. (2006:44) also regarded the fact that more than half of the sample did not think that they would be better mothers if they stayed at home as proof of the growing number of women who resist the traditional roles foisted upon them by society and who no longer define their identities in terms of these roles.

In a qualitative and quantitative study of 20 single working mothers, Gill and Davidson (2001:393) found that

> the majority of women in the sample reported problems in combining work and family responsibilities. The two main difficulties reported were lack of time, and tiredness and lack of energy. The single mothers surveyed experienced high levels of role conflict, in balancing the competing demands of work and family, and high levels of work overload in terms of the sheer volume of what they had to do. The two main sources of stress reported by the women in the sample were the volume of work they had to do in terms of the number of demands placed upon them, and the weight of responsibility they felt for their families.

Gill and Davidson (2001) also found that the single women in their sample suffered a degree of social isolation and exclusion. Nearly half of the women sampled felt excluded from a prevailing 'couples culture' and were seldom invited to mixed gatherings. Some reported that they were perceived as a 'threat' by other women. The pressures resulting from being a member of a

minority group have been well documented (Davidson & Cooper, 1992), but mainly in relation to other contexts. The pressures inhibit single mothers' opportunities for recreation and social activities, and may be an additional source of stress for them.

2.7   OTHER RESTRICTIONS AND STRESSORS

2.7.1 Absence of childcare support

Amongst the multiple life roles that women perform today, the most common one is clearly that of mother. Therefore it should come as no surprise that many working women like to, even where they do not have to, rely on social support to assist them with their childcare responsibilities (Franks *et al*., 2006:17). However, as Reskin and Padavic (1994) correctly state, women's increasing participation in the paid workforce has reduced the number of relatives available for childcare substantially. This, in turn, has resulted in a situation where women attempt to deal with childcare demands either by relying on organised childcare facilities, or by undertaking changes in their personal employment style, such as working from home or working part-time. In addition to bearing the responsibility for providing adequate childcare to their children, women may also experience feelings of guilt if they do not at least devote some of their free time to this task. Some women may therefore reduce their amount of sleep or free time, resulting in the accumulation of strain and stress.

Halford, Savage and Witz (1997), who studied women in banking, nursing and local government careers, have found that a substantial percentage (17-45%) of the women in these professions either rely on partners or family members for childcare. For single working mothers, relying on partners is not an option. While some single mothers may leave their children in villages with their grandmothers, many single mothers, perhaps especially the more educated and sophisticated ones, would prefer to have their children living with them for better parental guidance, thus forcing them to rely more on paid helpers or daycare, both of which mean higher financial strain. Gill and Davidson (2001) posit that these conclusions add a useful dimension to the simplistic model explaining

single mothers' low rates of full-time working as being due to lack of available and affordable childcare. Perhaps another contributing factor is the greater workload a single mother experiences in terms of home responsibility, making part-time working, in a lower level job (although less economically advantageous) more achievable in terms of levels of stress and consequent costs to health.

2.7.2 Ethnic barriers

Much of what is said by Gill and Davidson (2001) about single working mothers in the British context is also applicable to the single working mothers in South Africa. However, in addition, single mothers in South Africa suffer other dysfunctionalities which are a long-term result of the discrimination and racial oppression experienced predominantly by black Africans during the apartheid era. Although black African women are encouraged by the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998d) to enter into the formal labour market and into managerial ranks, black African women in particular are more likely to experience high levels of work-related stress because of their lack of training and the negative impact of gender discrimination on the adjustment of women. Using the conservation-of-resources model of stress (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998), Van den Berg and Van Zyl (2008) examined the differences in the experience of work-related stress and exposure to work-related stressors among South African career women of different ethnic groups. Stressors in the South African environment for women, and especially for black African women, are legion. These stressors range from gender-related roles and responsibilities, current financial pressures as they affect living conditions, to the work environment, which is filled with hardships, frustrations and discrimination which women have to face.

Pretty, McCarthy and Catano (1992, cited in Van den Berg & Van Zyl, 2008:18) note that women tend to be more sensitive to the quality of work relationships and that problems with co-workers have a more negative impact on female workers. Exclusion from male-dominated networks, a lack of social support and difficulty in finding same-sex mentors all contribute to additional strain in female

workers. Black African women may experience a greater sense of isolation because of differences between their culture and the dominantly white, westernised culture in many organisations. Van den Berg and Van Zyl (2008) found that in a group of 732 South African women working in administrative, semi-professional, professional and managerial positions there were significant differences in the level of stress reported, with black African women reporting the highest level of stress. Stressors pertaining to a lack of infrastructure and resources in the environment contributed significantly to the stress experienced by black African women. All four groups reported discontent with their remuneration and fringe benefits.

2.7.3   Sexual harassment

The Unit for Gender Research in Law (UGRL) at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (1998:169) states that 'studies in the US and UK have shown that more than 50% of working women have at one time or another in their working lives been subjected to unwelcome sexual advances in the workplace'. This scenario is equally likely in South Africa, where the chances are that the incidence of such harassment may be even higher, and has been estimated to be affect as many as 70% of women (Unit for Gender Research in Law – UNISA, 1998:169).

According to World of Work (1997:9), sexual harassment is defined as 'any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which interferes with the recipient's work; is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment'. Research shows that victims of sexual harassment experience a wide range of emotional reactions, namely, humiliation, self-doubt, self-blame, loss of confidence, anger and severe depression (Fitzgerald, 1993; Landrine & Klonoff, 1997), resulting in negative work outcomes, notably, reduced productivity and team work, all of which have an impact on organisational effectiveness. It also leads to lower morale and reduced employee loyalty, court settlements and a tarnished organisational image.

As a result of the widespread prevalence of sexual harassment and its negative consequences, various authors have recommended both preventative and intervention strategies. These strategies include the early identification and effective management of sexual harassment, as well as strategies for minimising the negative impact of different forms of sexual harassment (see, example, Ramsaroop & Brijball Parumasur, 2007:32-33).

2.7.4 Violence against women

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002), violence against women is a burning issue worldwide. It is an important public health problem, as it is one of the contributing factors to a high mortality rate among women. In a review of the global scope and magnitude of violence against women, Watts and Zimmerman (2002, cited in Oosthuizen & Wissing, 2005) indicate that a minimum of 10%, and up to 50%, of women who have ever had partners have been hit or otherwise physically assaulted by a partner at some point in their lives.

The array of violence perpetrated against women includes physical violence, physical and sexual violence, psychological violence, emotional and financial abuse, intimidation, isolation and rape. Women who are exposed to these forms of abuse and violence are known to suffer many physical outcomes and symptoms of psychological distress, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and a lack of self-esteem (Ramos, Carlson, & McNutt, 2004; Waldrop & Resick, 2004).

In a study aimed at establishing the prevalence of violence and its impact in a sample of women in the North West Province of South Africa, Oosthuizen and Wissing (2005) present some startling statistics. Their results indicated that in a random sample of 387 women, 62.53% indicated that they had experienced some form of violence, while 42.37% reported that they experienced violence regularly to very often. From the various forms of violence experienced, emotional abuse was experienced most often (15.7%), followed by intimidation and isolation (10.75%), physical abuse (9.40%), economic abuse (7.60%),

victimisation (6.12%) and other forms of abuse (4.15%). It was also found that women who have at some point experienced violence showed significantly more distress symptoms than women who had never experienced violence. Women who had experienced violence displayed lower levels of a sense of coherence and satisfaction with life, and scored significantly lower in terms of quality of life in the domains of work, home, neighbourhood, work, play, love, relatives, home and community (Oosthuizen & Wissing, 2005:644-648).

In addition to indicating the seriousness and urgency of this problem to womanhood in the South African context, another important finding of Oosthuizen and Wissing's (2005) study which is consistent with the thrust of this dissertation is that while violence against women seems to be equally prevalent in all socio-economic classes, women who are separated but not divorced experienced the highest frequency of violence. Many single mothers fall into this class. Given the prevalence and the impact of violence against women, as with the problem of sexual harassment, both preventative and intervention strategies are urgently needed.

2.7.5 Women and HIV/AIDS

A study by Outwater, Abrahams and Campbell (2005) concludes that South Africa faces many challenges, of which high rates of violence and HIV are among the most critical. According to them, these two challenges are promoted by gender. While the prevalence of violence against women has already been discussed above, the bases of such conclusions with regard to HIV/AIDS are examined here. No country in the world is immune to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, South Africa stands out as having one of the highest caseloads and rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. More than 20% of the adult population is living with HIV/AIDS (fully 10% of the world's HIV cases), more than half of which are women. It is believed that there are already 420 000 orphans due to HIV/AIDS in South Africa (UNAIDS, 2002). The alarming rate of infection can be gleaned from the rapid rise in HIV seroprevalence among first-time antenatal clinic attendees in South Africa, which rose from 0.76% in 1990 to 10% in 1995 to 24% in 2000 (Abdool-Karim, 2001). There are approximately 4.7 million to 5.3

million HIV-infected South Africans. Outwater *et al.* (2005) attribute this high infection rate to a culture of violence in which intimate partner sexual violence is the norm (Abrahams, 2002), thus linking violence to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The intersection between intentional violence and HIV/AIDS is attributed to historical, socio-economic, cultural and social causes. Each of these is briefly highlighted below.

The creation of the homelands as reserves of labour by the apartheid regime and the necessary migration of labour to cities and the mines for employment meant that migrant labourers left their wives behind, thus encouraging the migrant labourers to engage in extra-marital affairs, leading to a high rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. This is additionally fuelled by socio-economic factors such as poverty, migrant labour, commercial sex workers, the low status of women, illiteracy and a lack of formal education (Republic of South Africa, 2001).

One of the consequences of decades of apartheid state-sponsored violence and reactive community insurrection is that, for many people, physical violence has become a first-line strategy for resolving conflict and gaining ascendancy. According to researchers, violence is used in a variety of settings: in disputes between neighbours, in work settings (Abrahams, 2002), in healthcare settings (Jewkes, Abrahams & Mvo, 1998) and against the elderly (Keikelame & Ferreira, 2000). Intimate partner sexual violence is a common means of asserting masculinity (Leclerc-Madlala, 1997). South Africa had the highest ratio of reported rape cases per 100 000 people in the 1990s, a figure which continued to escalate in the 2000s, as people even turned to raping babies and goats as a cure for HIV/AIDS. The proportion of women raped or subjected to physical violence in 1998 who described themselves as abused ranged from 46% to 68% (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 1999). It was found that male violence and coercive practices dominate sexual relationships, with the conditions and timing of sex defined by males through the use of violence and other means to which especially teenage girls were expected to submit.

Cultural and social relations, intertwined with violence, play a part in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Studies on the sexual behaviour of South African teenagers have shown that many young people are already sexually active in their early teens (14 to 16 years for girls and 13 to 14 years for boys). Also, young women are encouraged to become pregnant by their partners to demonstrate love, fertility and womanhood. Other social relations include the acceptance of cohabitation, where relationships are mostly casual. Some women submit to the double standard that implies that having multiple partners is a man's right. Violence or the perceived threat of violence seems to be a strong deterrent to women's adopting contraceptive measures, compounding the risk of vaginal and/or anal trauma and that of HIV/AIDS transmission (Abdool-Karim, 2001; Maman, Campbell, Sweat & Gielen, 2000).

An evaluation of the Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998b) shows that despite the legislation designed to protect them, women continue to receive very little support from the criminal justice system (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001). The legal aid system needs to be become more accessible and needs to be revised to speed up help for battered women. The police are being urged to be trained in the new legislation and in gender sensitivity. Mathews and Abrahams (2001) also suggest that an understanding of violence against women and strategies for inquiry into the situation of and assistance for abused women must be incorporated into the curriculum for training and clinical practice of midwives, doctors and mental health workers (Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2001). Employing more social workers, building shelters and providing social benefits are additional ways of coping with sexually-related violence. Those affected and infected with HIV/AIDS need access to the full scope of counselling, medication and support.

2.8   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the constraints to the advancement of women, and in particular the problems and stressors that working women in professional and management careers in South Africa experience, were identified and discussed. Furthermore, the possible effects of these constraints and stressors on working women's emotional well-being and performance were examined.

Until the late 1970s, women remained virtually invisible as leaders and managers and their absence was generally considered a non-issue. A comparative review of the literature over the last two-and-half decades shows no new evidence to suggest that the perceptions and expectations by outsiders of the role of mother and executive has progressed significantly (Mclellan & Uys, 2009). Most of the constraints, problems and stressors that female workers experience are deeply entrenched in rigid stereotyped views of the roles of women versus those of men. Stereotyped gender roles remain at the core of modern society's attitudes and philosophies about women and men.

On the strength of the literature review, a model was conceptualised to illustrate the constraints, problems and stressors that have an effect on working women's work performance, family interaction and their physical and emotional well-being (see Figure 2.1, overleaf).

The model demonstrates various barriers and stressors in the micro-, meso- and macro-environment that have an impact on working mothers' work, family and personal behaviour. The stressor variables are interrelated and have the potential to have a negative impact on the individual, team and organisational outcomes. The inter-relationship of the factors is illustrated by means of the systems approach in Figure 2.1.
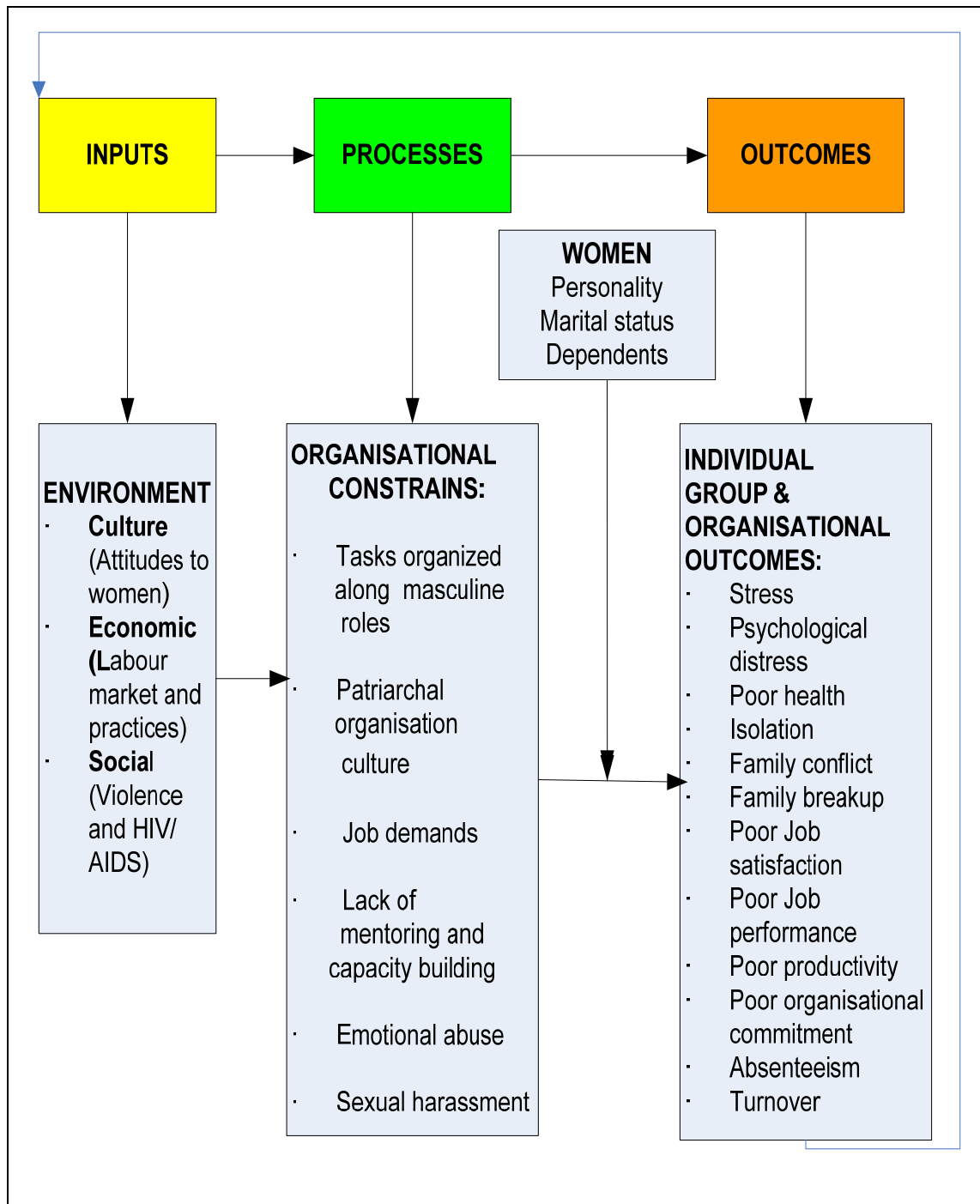
Figure 2.1: Constraints, problems and stressors that affect working women's performance

The micro-factors include individual variables, for example, intrinsic personal traits and beliefs, female and male expectations, family life and marital states and ethnicity.

The meso-factors include organisational variables such as extrinsic organisational barriers, job characteristics and negative work-to-home interference. These include a patriarchal organisational culture, a lack of

capacity building and conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming, a lack of equity targets and the absence of support from management, an insufficient number of female role models, job demands, negative assumptions about women's abilities and their commitment, a lack of social support, childcare problems, sexual harassment and violence against women.

The macro-factors include cultural and societal variables, labour market and labour policy variables, violence and HIV/AIDS.

The macro- and meso-variables can generate high levels of stress-related outcomes. These outcomes can have a significant negative impact on working women's work-related attitudes and behaviour, and may affect their health, personal life, and the overall well-being of working women, their families and society.

The effects of these factors are mediated by the personality of women and their marital status.

In general the findings of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 can be summarised as follows:

The feminisation of the South African labour market poses serious challenges for both the workplace and the home. Studies have shown that both situations interactively affect each other, for good or for ill, especially for more than 40% of working mothers, and, in particular, for single working mothers.

The work-home interface creates conflict for working women with children because of the different role expectations and demands on their time. Single working mothers experience more stress and suffer more from exhaustion (tension and strain) due to family-work expectations than other working women do. A substantial body of literature shows that single working mothers suffer disproportionately higher rates of major depressive disorders and substantially elevated levels of psychological distress, compared to married mothers.

Some studies have shown that in situations where job resources are available, such as autonomy, supervisory support, instrumental support and role clarity, the positive effect created at work may spill over to the home domain. Hence, working mothers in some of the studies indicated that paid work was more important to them than their housework and that working had a positive impact on their families.

Studies have also confirmed that professional women with children at home often experience severe time-based family-work conflicts and stress, and that this applies more to single working mothers than to their partnered counterparts.

Other employment factors such as working for longer hours and being in full-time jobs with heavy responsibilities merely exacerbate the levels of stress experienced by mothers in the workplace. On the home front, the dominance of the husband and the level of trust and respect, and the availability of social support and childcare facilities are factors which can either jeopardise or enhance the careers of women.

There are significant differences in the levels of stress reported by women in the different racial groups in South Africa, with black African women reporting the highest level of stress.

In conclusion, if the hopes placed on women's contributions to development are to be realized, support strategies or interventions should be put in place to mitigate the negative effects of strenuous job demands, hostile organisational climates and a society still steeped in male chauvinism and sexism. Applicable resources must be available and ensured in order to decrease high levels of pressure and stress that may have a negative impact on the performance of working mothers. The next chapter examines the responses by government and organisations in supporting and empowering women in South Africa.