

# **Gordon Institute of Business Science**

University of Pretoria

The advancement of women's careers: Is it a  
core strategic imperative in South African  
organisations?

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science,  
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of

**MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Gender disparities are still prevalent universally, and are often expressly and tacitly condoned, even in highly developed societies. In South Africa, women make up 52% of the population yet, only 44% of working South Africans are women (BWASA, 2012). However, recent trends show that a significant enough number of women do make it to all levels of positions in organisations, and that women generally have a great desire to lead. Conversely, very few women think or believe that their organisations provide them with the necessary and adequate support, in order to be able do so. Thus, in spite of the active efforts and commitments made by many South African organisations to influence women's career advancement, it is still unfortunately not clear if the initiatives and programmes that are implemented are a core strategic imperative, or whether they are merely part of a peripheral agenda.

As a result, this study takes a contingency approach to examine whether the career advancement of women is indeed a core strategic initiative, or whether it is peripheral in South African organisations. The good news is that some organisations are excelling in their commitment to empowering female roles and role-models in the workplace, and this study aims to understand why these organisations are doing exceptionally well, and why others are lagging behind.

A qualitative method, which is exploratory in nature, was adopted to collect and analyse the data for this study. Fifteen individuals, who constitute a sample, were interviewed; and the scope was limited to the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Human Resource executives or any other executives responsible for diversity in the respective organisation.

The main findings in this research were as follows: Firstly, the agenda that is most likely to be framing women's career advancement in the organisations is one that is underscored by moral or ethical imperatives, and this is done in order to attempt to ensure that all forms of inequalities that existed are eradicated, so as to respond to the social pressure for ethical and moral transparency. Secondly, the organisations do understand the critical issues of women's career advancement, but they fail to recognise the significant rewards

of real women empowerment. Thirdly, some organisations seem to be doing exceptionally well, while others are sadly lagging behind. Finally, most organisations do not have clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track their progress and impact in women career advancement initiatives.

**KEYWORDS:** women, career advancement, diversity, empowerment, strategy.

## **DECLARATION**

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

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Sithembile Thusi

10<sup>th</sup> November 2014

## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to God, my family and my friends.

To God Almighty: thank you for carrying me through and for levelling the mountains before me. All the praise, honour and glory belong to you.

To my two beautiful boys: Mlungisi and Phila. You are my heartbeat, this is for you!

To my parents: Mr and Mrs Myeza. You are my pillar of strength. Thank you for your love, support and for always praying for me.

To my siblings: Nqobile Nhlaka, Slindile, Phumzile, Masandie Ntando and Mdu. Thank you for being my cheer leaders.

To my helper: Mam Ngcobo who has become the member of my family. Thank you for taking good care of my kids while I was away.

To my dear friends: Zonke Kunene and Xolile Hadebe, thank you for being my biggest fans, for listening to me, and for being my shoulder to cry on.

To my spiritual mother and father, Ps Mnguni, thank you for your prophecies, prayers and your unwavering faith in me.

**Lastly: To all women have positively converted the insurmountable obstacles in the organisations into inspirational ladders for their success and advancement, Salute!**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the below parties for their instrumental involvement and contribution towards the successful completion of this report.

To my supervisor, Shireen Chengadu: Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for your guidance and support, especially when things got really tough for me. Your wisdom, benevolence and humility are well appreciated. I am grateful for your supervision and for guiding my thought process. We need more women like you in this world.

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To my mentor: Dudu Msomi, thank you for your words of encouragement and support.

To a friend and a colleague Ayanda, it was going to be rather difficult to make it without you.

To the Brazil and Chile team: Thank you for contributing to my greatest and lifelong experience.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	i
DECLARATION.....	iii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM .....	14
1.1 Introduction .....	14
1.2 Background to the research problem .....	16
1.3 Research Motivation and Objectives.....	17
1.4 Research Scope .....	19
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
2.1 Introduction .....	21
2.2 Conceptualising Empowerment and Career Advancement.....	24
2.3 Economics of Women Empowerment and Participation.....	26
2.4 Moral or Ethical Philosophy.....	30
2.5 Regulatory Environment.....	32
2.6 Global Trends .....	33
2.7 Monitoring and Evaluation.....	36
2.8 Mainstreaming as a strategy .....	37
2.9 Conclusion .....	39
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	40
3.1 Introduction .....	40

3.2	Research Question One.....	40
3.3	Research Question Two.....	41
3.4	Research Question Three .....	41
3.5	Research Question Four .....	41
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		43
4.1	Introduction .....	43
4.2	Research Design .....	43
4.3	Population and Unit of Analysis .....	44
4.4	Sampling .....	45
4.4.1	Sampling Technique.....	45
4.5	Research Instrument/ Measurement.....	47
4.5.1	Design .....	47
4.5.2	Reliability and Validity.....	47
4.5.3	Pre-testing .....	48
4.6	Data Collection Tool.....	48
4.7	Interview Guide and Consent Statement.....	49
4.8	Data Analysis .....	49
4.9	Research Assumptions .....	50
4.10	Research Limitations .....	50
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS .....		52
5.1	Introduction .....	52
5.2	Demographics of the participants.....	53
5.2.1	Position.....	53
5.2.2	Gender .....	53
5.2.3	Sizes of the interviewed organisations .....	54
5.2.4	Organisation Type .....	54
5.2.5	Industry.....	54

5.2.6	Geographic Location .....	55
5.3	Results for Research Question One .....	55
7.3.1	Business Case.....	56
5.3.2	Moral or Ethical.....	56
5.3.3	Legislation .....	57
5.3.4	Combination of business case, moral obligation and legislation...	57
5.3.5	Summary .....	58
5.4	Results for Research Question Two .....	58
5.5	Results for Research Question Three .....	62
5.6	Results for Research Question Four .....	71
5.7	Summary.....	72
5.8	Conclusion .....	73
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS .....		74
6.1	Introduction .....	74
6.2	Research Question One.....	74
6.3	Research Question Two.....	79
6.4	Research Question Three .....	80
6.5	Research Question Four .....	84
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....		86
7.1	Introduction .....	86
7.2	Main Findings.....	86
7.3	Recommendations .....	87
7.4	Future Research .....	90
7.5	Concluding Statement.....	90
LIST OF REFERENCES .....		92
APPENDIX 1: CONSISTENCY METRIX.....		99
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT STATEMENT .....		100

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER.....	101
APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES.....	102

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Statistical profile: women workforce representation in % .....	17
Figure 2: Illustration of levels factors that contribute to economic empowerment. .....	22
Figure 3: Average percentage of women at various organisational levels .....	25
Figure 4: Increase women, increase ROI.....	28
Figure 5: Enterprise Value for Intentional Investment in Women .....	29
Figure 6: Diversity powers innovation .....	30
Figure 7: Hypothesised Relationships.....	31
Figure 8: Fortune 500 executive officer positions held by women %.....	34
Figure 9: Proportion of women in senior management.....	35
Figure 10: For better results, add more women .....	37
Figure 11: Gender diversity on top of the strategic agenda.....	39
Figure 12: Development of primary narrative .....	50
Figure 13: Summary of results for moral/ethical reasons .....	75
Figure 14 Summary of results for the business case imperative .....	77
Figure 15 Summary of results for the legislation imperative.....	78
Figure 16: Implementation of the conceptual framework.....	89

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: List of theme and supporting literature .....	23
Table 2: Participants Demographics .....	46
Table 3 : Linking the research questions to the interview schedule .....	52
Table 4 Positions.....	53
Table 5 Gender .....	54
Table 6 Size of the organisation.....	54
Table 7 Organisation Type .....	54
Table 8 Industry .....	54
Table 9 Geographic Location .....	55
Table 10: Possible agendas for women career advancement results .....	55
Table 11 Are the policies promoting women advancement available? .....	59
Table 12 Do the company-wide goals on transformation include gender equality?.....	60
Table 13 Is there a clear articulation of strategy on women empowerment? How is it communicated? .....	61
Table 14 Are there accessible channels for filing grievances on gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence? .....	61
Table 15 Is there a designated board-level individual who champions the organizations gender equality policies and plans? .....	62
Table 16 What level of involvement does the CEO have and how is this translated in everyday practice?.....	62
Table 17: What is the gender composition of the company's board of directors and top management? .....	63
Table 18: Does your company engage in any specific activities that seek to promote women to decision- making roles? .....	64
Table 19: Are there any more concrete actions with a direct link to women empowerment? .....	65
Table 20: Does the organisation pay equal remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value? .....	66
Table 21 Are the equal pay reviews conducted on a regular basis? And how .	66
Table 22: What percentage of the talent pipeline, at both the entry and experienced levels, are women? .....	67

Table 23: Is your company actively identifying and training women to fill gaps? (Describe).....	68
Table 24: Has the company designed flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women? .....	68
Table 25: Are the high potential women being identified, and how? .....	69
Table 26: Is there a financial plan or budget allocation set aside for operationalizing women empowerment? Estimate as a % of sales.....	70
Table 27 Does the company track and analyse promotions by gender, employee category and title. ....	71
Table 28 Is the gender- differentiated impact documented? .....	71
Table 29 Does the company measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using data disaggregated by gender? .....	72
Table 30 What opportunities exist throughout the organisation for review, analysis and discussion of performance? i.e KPI for management.....	72

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

1. B-BBEE- Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
2. CEO- Chief Executive Officer
3. HR- Human Resources
4. ILO- International Labour Organisation
5. KPI- Key Performance Indicators
6. ROA- Return on Assets
7. ROI- Return on Investments

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Gender disparities are still prevalent universally and are often condoned, even in highly developed societies (Gender and Economic Empowerment in Africa, 2009). Despite the significant corporate commitment to the advancement of gender equality and women empowerment, progress appears to have stalled (McKinsey report, 2011). According to the Gender and Economic Empowerment in Africa (2009), the percentage of women on boards and senior executive teams seems to have plateaued at around 15 percent in many countries.

This paper will show that South Africa seems to be experiencing similar situations that are currently being experienced by the developing economies, as revealed by the McKinsey report. The commitment to gender diversity causes deeply entrenched cultural and ethnic beliefs to resurface, and old negative forms of behaviour then emerge. These behaviours are not fact based but rather, are driven by perception. Unfortunately, these perceptions then certainly and continually persist, and this then hampers women from advancing their careers. With that said, most women have positively converted the insurmountable obstacles into inspirational ladders for their success and advancement.

The reality is that, the majority of women do make it to senior roles and further, they also have a great desire to lead. However, very few think they have adequate support to do so. (Chant & Sweetman, 2012) highlight that there is high expectation and agency on women to deliver meanwhile; there is minimal support from the organisations. This reflects the reality that women remain conspicuous by their absence in the leadership positions (Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003). Also, (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009) argue that there is a greater need for organisations to understand the status, possibilities and potential significant contribution of African women in management and leadership.

As this study will show, some organisations have initiatives that are promoting and influencing women's career advancement. However, in spite of these active

efforts and commitments by the said organisations, negative interventions at critical career points have outweighed the impact, and have seemingly mitigated the outcomes. It therefore becomes patently clear that South Africa is not going to have the seismic and radical transformation shift that is necessary to achieve equality, if women empowerment is not on the mainstream agenda of the organisational strategies and goals. Furthermore, career advancement will remain peripheral if it is not conceptualised and adopted by the organisations as part of their core strategic agenda to improve the financial performance and the organisational health.

Women's career advancement initiatives should focus on making women to be independent and self-reliant. Furthermore, empowerment should be earmarked as successful if it is done through the approaches that enable women to make critical and important decisions. To evaluate the impact of women empowerment in the organisations, the empowerment process should be broken down into three dimensions, namely economic, social and political and all three dimensions should reinforce each other. This proposition is put forth because it is clear from the literature on empowerment that exists, that the concept only has meaning within these specific contexts Dheepa & Barani (2009)

Do the organisations alleging commitment to empowerment understand the practical applications of the above mentioned dimensions of empowerment, and are there clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track their progress? The answer to this question is not known; and as a result, this study takes a contingency approach to examine whether women career advancement is a core strategic initiative or whether it is merely peripheral in organisations. The critical view of empowerment will help to identify key issues of empowerment theories that need to be considered by organisations, when they are committing to supporting women's career advancement and empowerment at large.

Moreover, organisations need to understand that the significant rewards of women empowerment include business growth and development. There is empirical evidence that prosperous countries are those where women are free

to pursue career opportunities, with sufficient structures to support them (Wyndow, Li, & Mattes, 2013). Organisations that actively boost the role of women in the running of the economy, and provide the policy, structure and infrastructure to move them up the economic ladder, will reap the rewards of success and prosperity. This then clearly highlights the importance of the possible role of women empowerment in advancing economic growth in South Africa (Wyndow et al., 2013).

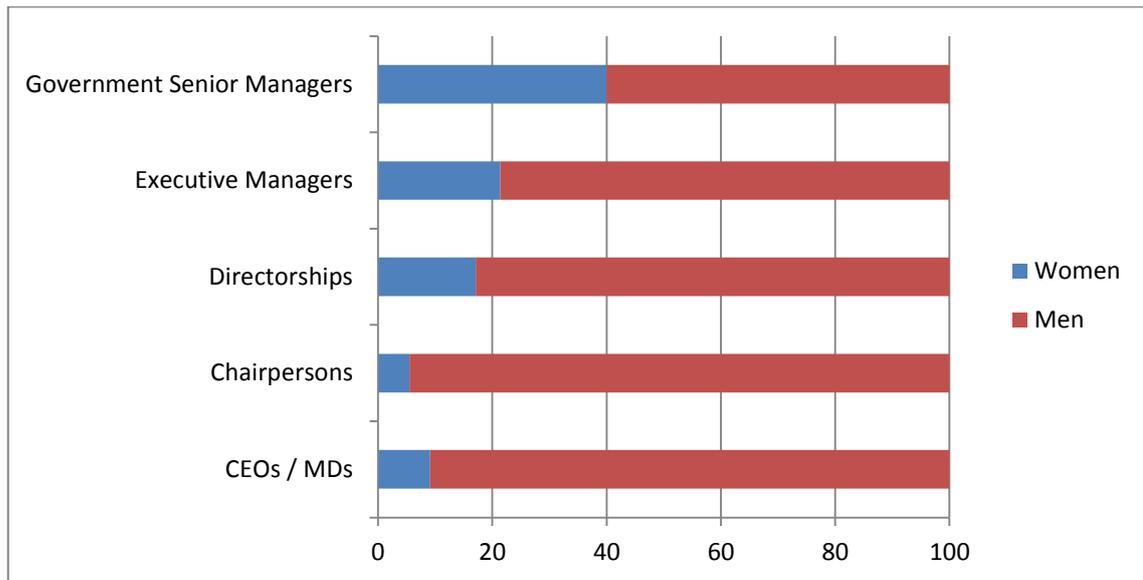
As previously intimated, some organisations are excelling in their commitment to empowering female roles in the workplace. Those organisations tend to have process focused objectives, and measurable goals and targets to achieve those stated objectives. As further intimated, other organisations are lagging behind because of deeply entrenched forces which are negatively influencing the implementation of women empowerment processes.

## **1.2 Background to the research problem**

The Business Women's Association of South Africa (BWASA) publishes an annual census of women in corporate leadership in companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange JSE, as well as state owned enterprises. This report states that although women make up 52% of the population yet, only 44% of working South Africans are women (BWASA, 2012). Furthermore, women constitute only 21.4 % of all executive managers and as low as 17.1% of directors in the country (BWASA, 2012). The statistics therefore clearly indicate that women in leadership positions remain a minority within a minority, and this patently appears to be a serious under-estimation of women's contribution as workers (Dheepa & Barani, 2009)

. Despite this realisation, the statistics indicate the imbalance in gender equality and the stark reality that women in leadership positions are still a minority amongst the male counterparts, Figure 1 below, illustrates the findings.

**Figure 1: Statistical profile: women workforce representation in %**



Source: BWA South African Women in Leadership Census 2012

While at first it may appear that the existing women empowerment initiatives that are carried out by the organisations are sufficient, the theoretical analysis shows that this is not the case. Specifically, the unanswered question is; what are the motives behind the women empowerment initiatives in the organisations?

If we are to change the landscape of the economy in South Africa, it cannot be business as usual. Market forces cannot on their own dissolve the inequalities in norms and rules that perpetuate the established disadvantages of women (World Bank, 2006). Organisations need to draw from the entire pool of all the South African available human resources, and women account for a sizeable portion of this potential talent base. (Dheepa & Barani, 2009) believe that there is potential for women everywhere, and that it is time to work realistically towards their greater contribution.

### 1.3 Research Motivation and Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to determine the intensity of the commitment levels and the involvement of leadership of South African organisations in gender diversity and women empowerment. Based on the studies that exist, most companies have committed to alleviating gender inequality but, what is unclear, are the reasons for their commitment. There are

a number of possible explanations. It could be that entities are committing to women's empowerment initiatives because of the legislative requirements, that is, to be compliant with the laws and regulations. It could be that organisations commit because of moral or ethical reasons, in order to fulfil the need of doing the right thing. Or else, there could be a need to understand the business case for women. There are many possible explanations hence; this study explores the reasons to determine if the initiatives are core strategic imperatives.

The methods for systematically tracking and measuring empowerment are not very well established (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005). Therefore, some organisations take an easy route of parachuting women into leadership positions in order to be considered compliant in meeting regulatory requirements. This results in women having influential positions of leadership, but with no real impact. (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010) p560 refer to this phenomenon as marginalising. Marginalising is described as "a practice in which women are given a "token" of management positions, or management positions are created so that women are titled as managers but in the absence of power or influence. In particular, it is imperative to ask whether the goal of women empowerment is to promote gender equality or whether other reasons prevail.

The significance or motivation of this study is three-fold. Firstly, using the empowerment models, it is important to interrogate the paradigms that have been applied by the organisations that are allegedly committed to women empowerment. Secondly, what agendas are the women being developed for in the organisation i.e. pure business reasons, moral or ethical reasons, legislation reasons, or are it still positioned a peripheral issue? Lastly, in the extant literature, the conceptual frameworks on measuring women empowerment are less well developed. The study will look at what monitoring and evaluation frameworks can be used to measure the impact of women empowerment initiatives in the organisations.

Within the broader context, this study therefore seeks to contribute to the extant literature, and further attempts to overcome the limitations of the existing

studies in a number of ways: It aims to encourage those agendas for women career advancement efforts in the organisations to become a variable that is incorporated and adopted into theory building on women in leadership. Also, most research on diversity or women career advancement does not indicate the clear measurements for women empowerment. The organisations require tools that provides a 'gender lens' through which business can analyse current practices, benchmarks, and reporting practices (Gaare Larsen, 2013) and make strategically sound decisions based on objective and accurate information. The latter is therefore the further aim.

#### 1.4 **Research Scope**

This study will focus on all women, including women in management positions. The scope of this study will be limited to South African CEO's Executives in a medium to large organizations. (BWASA, 2012) defines this group in one of four ways:

- Have a significant leadership role in the organisation,
- Have control over day-to-day operation,
- Have decision-making powers, and
- Usually, but not necessarily, report directly to the board of directors.

BWASA (2012) states that individuals who fall in the above categories have a wide range of experience and are more likely to provide answers required in the study. For the purpose of this study, medium to large corporates will be defined as:

- Companies listed on the JSE,
- companies that have more than 150 employees, or
- State owned enterprises.

For the purposes of this report, woman empowerment and gender equality will be used synonymously. In most instances empowerment resonates with power and transformation, whereas gender equality is more static and mostly used for strategic reasons. (Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009) found that preference for women empowerment or gender equality accords with the context and the meanings about the strategic utility of the two concepts.

Through the process of this research paper and the literature review, it is shown that the rationale of investing in women is very common in organisations, but that it is nevertheless critical to ask some hard questions about the principle and practices. Moreover, proposed guidelines and clear recommendations will be uncovered to ensure that the apparent stagnant status of women's empowerment is given sufficient momentum to affect real change in the South African workplace.

In a broader view: "Very fundamentally, no country can get ahead if it leaves what amounts to half the population behind. Secretary Clinton has underscored this repeatedly— that women need to be at the core of our efforts."

**- Melanne Verveer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues**

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will build on from the previous chapter which presented a general overview of the existing women career advancement initiatives in South African organisations. Moreover, this section will introduce and discuss the key themes of women career advancement in the organisations.

The literature reviewed in this section further defines the concept and principles of women empowerment and involves the discussion of the factors that are to be considered for empowerment. From the existing literature, it is clear that empowerment is a multidimensional process and that it only has a meaning within three specific contexts namely; economic, social and political. (Dheepa & Barani, 2009a) states that these dimensions should reinforce each other in all circumstances.

The understanding of these dimensions is crucial when designing the frameworks of empowerment in organisations. Moreover, one explanation drawn from these dimensions suggests that there are significant possible rewards of women empowerment.

The point argued above is whether organisations understand these critical issues of empowerment. Whatever the processes or initiatives may be, empowerment should enable women to have control over circumstances. (Dheepa & Barani, 2009a), emphasizes that the focus should be to make women independent and self-reliant.

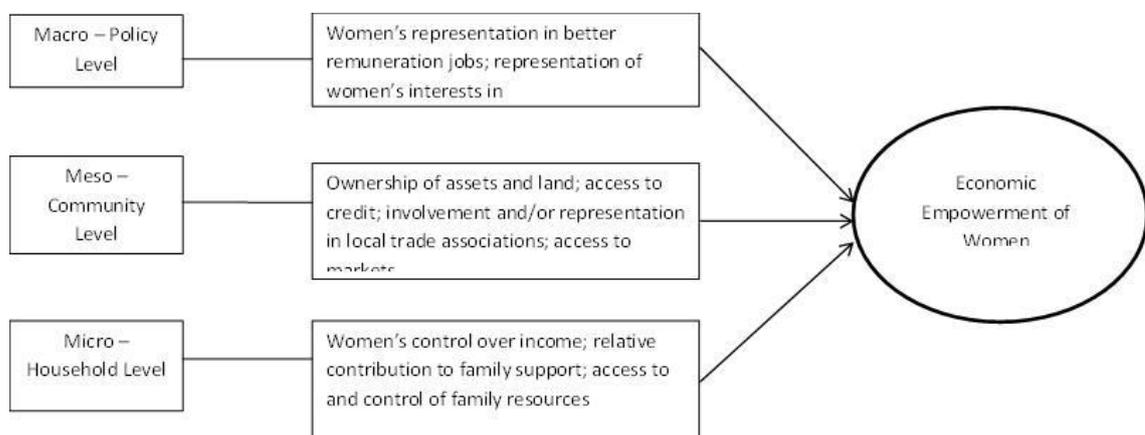
According to (Golla, Malhotra, Nanda, & Mehra, 2011) , “a woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed, advance economically and the power to make and to act on economic decisions”. Economic advancement could also be linked to fair and equal compensation for both men and women. In the past few decades women were earning approximately 59% less as much as men do, for the work of equal value (Bose, Pal, & Sappington, 2010). However, the recent studies reveal that women are being compensated well compared to their male counterparts with similar experience and skills (Datta, Guha, & Iskandar-Datta, 2013). The world

economic forum gender report (2013), states that this rate of 59% has dropped to only 33% in South Africa.

To emphasise, organisations that are enhancing women economic empowerment focus on the financial autonomy of women with the understanding that with more economic power, women gain more control. (Blumberg, 2005), reinforced that women with economic power gain more equality and control over their lives. Moreover, they contribute directly to the wealth and well-being of the nation. Seemingly, this is now a long overdue evidence-based statement that shows how important women are for economic survival, stability and growth (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). Then, organisations who fail to commit fully will not unleash the potential benefits of empowerment.

Interestingly, (Dheepa & Barani, 2009a) point out various levels of factors that contribute to economic empowerment. Literature reviewed does not identify a single program that can address all the factors that contribute to economic empowerment and, as such, organisations should concentrate on where they can make the most difference given their resources. As shown in Figure 2:

**Figure 2: Illustration of levels factors that contribute to economic empowerment.**



**Source:** Dheepa, T., & Barani, G. (2009). Emancipation of women through empowerment. *SIES Journal of Management*, 6(2),

This shows that empowering women results in dynamic and democratic change in perception and expectations leading to the enrichment of the country's development, as a result, at a macro level, the organisations should empower women and thereby pave a path which supports the growth of the country's economy. (Jamali, 2009) highlights that macro level engagement involves

structural conditions that motivate women inclusion to pursue high level of economic growth. Those structural conditions are said to include social values, social satisfaction, conception of law and family and work security (Dheepa & Barani, 2009a).

Moreover, (Jamali, 2009) suggests that micro level engagements include all those factors that influence an individual’s capabilities and opportunities. Those factors are further analysed to include resource or finance accessibility, motivation and performance. Interestingly, the meso level interlinks with the exploration of this study where it explores the organisational processes that mediate employment opportunities according to individual abilities and contextual circumstances namely; gender diversity.

The framework above indicates that it is highly possible to define women empowerment purely in economic terms however; the scope for spillover effects in social domains should also be noted. That is, there is a need to understand and integrate insights in a specific socio-economic aspect.

In conclusion, this discussion draws upon the conceptual frameworks in understanding critical issues of real women empowerment. Likewise, the theory above indicates that women empowerment is fundamentally a human right and social justice issue but is also an important factor for economic growth and human development.

The Table 1 below provides the summary of flow of contents found in this chapter as well the supporting literature

**Table 1: List of theme and supporting literature**

Theme	Literature
2.1 Conceptualising Empowerment and Career advancement	Thota, V., & Reddy, K. M. (2012). Women empowerment: A means not a destination. <i>Asian Pacific Journal of Research in Business Management</i> 3(4) 1-1.  Hewlett, S.A., & Rashid, R (2011). <i>Winning the war for talent in emerging markets: why women are the solution</i> . Harvard Business Review Press.
2.2 Economics of Women Empowerment and Participation	Carroll, A. B., & Shabana, K. M. (2010). The business case for corporate social responsibility: A review of concepts, research and practice. <i>International Journal of Management Reviews</i> , 12(1), 85-105.  Desvaux, G., Devillard-Hoellinger, S., & Meaney, M. C. (2008). A business

	case for women. <i>The McKinsey Quarterly</i> , 4, 26-33.
2.3 Moral or Ethical Philosophy	Belk, R. W., Devinney, T., & Eckhardt, G. (2005). Consumer ethics across cultures. <i>Consumption Markets &amp; Culture</i> , 8(3), 275-289.  Valentine, S., Godkin, L., Page, K., & Rittenburg, T. (2009). Gender and ethics: Ethical judgments, ethical intentions, and altruism among healthcare professionals. <i>Gender in Management: An International Journal</i> , 24(2), 112-130.
2.4 Regulatory Environment	Humborstad, S. I. W. (2012). Institutional effects of empowerment: A comparison between the anglo-saxon and scandinavian contexts. <i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i> , 23(11), 2221-2237. doi:10.1080/09585192.2011.633276  Duflo, E. (2012). Women empowerment and economic development. <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i> , 50(4), 1051-1079. doi:10.1257/jel.50.4.1051
2.5 Global Trends	Deloitte Report (2011). Women in the boardroom: A global perspective.
2.6 Monitoring and Evaluation	Williams, O. F. (2004). The UN global compact: The challenge and the promise. <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i> , 14(4), 755-774.  Kilgour, M. A. (2007). The UN global compact and substantive equality for women: Revealing a 'well hidden' mandate. <i>Third World Quarterly</i> , 28(4), 751-773. doi:10.1080/01436590701336630
2.7 Mainstreaming as a Strategy	International Labour Organisation. (2002) Gender mainstreaming. Retrieved <a href="http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm">http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm</a>

## 2.2 Conceptualising Empowerment and Career Advancement

Thota & Reddy (2012) define empowerment as the “means to inspire women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting beliefs, patterns and societal or religious conditions that have traditionally kept them suppressed and unable to realize their true beauty and power”. However, there are many theories around and there are multiple theoretical perspectives of women empowerment. This study will develop an integrated explanation and highlight the implications for organisations,

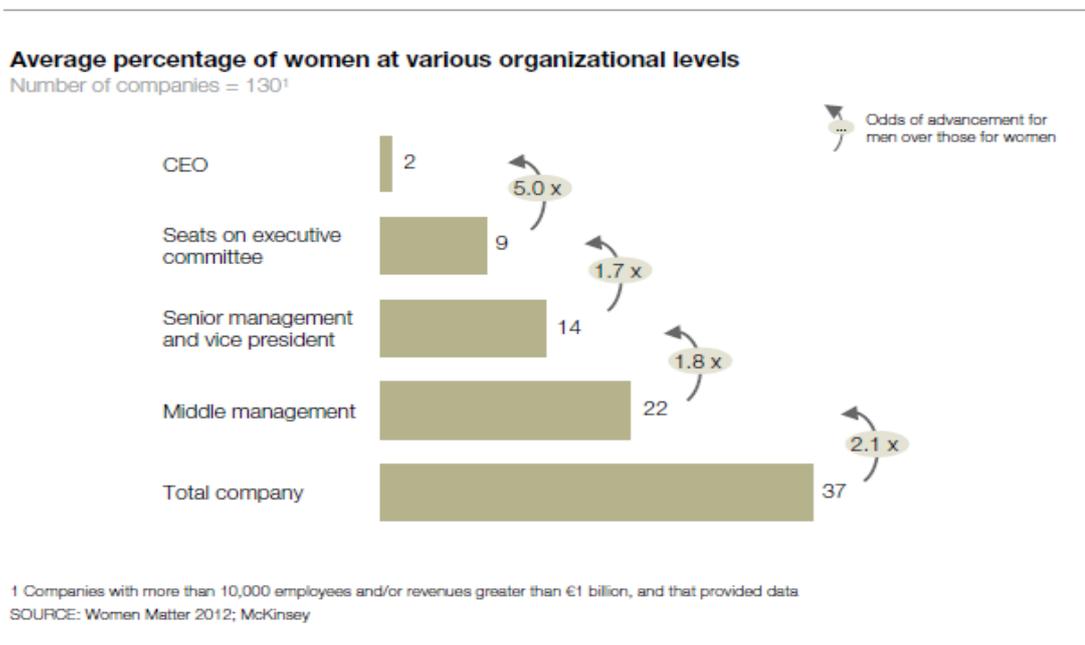
Empowerment can be used as an essential device to elevate women status in organisations. Interestingly, most women empowerment principles have been derived from negative experiences such as not being heard, recognised or valued, specific knowledge and experience not being leveraged, and women being blocked to perform to their highest potential Pless & Maak (2004). In short, this school of thought recognises that most principles and conceptual

analysis of women empowerment were learned from unfortunate events that took place in organisations and society.

Then again, women career advancement could be viewed as the practices that create new approaches that encourage women to succeed in the dynamic markets. In some cases, women career advancement serves as models for managing female talent (Hewlett & Rashid, 2011). Burke & Mattis (2005) have found that there is encouraging evidence that is showing a slow steady progression in women’s career advancement and also, that women are preparing themselves for significant roles in the corporates.

McKinsey (2012), report that despite their potential and skill, women are still unable to see a clear route to advancement in their organisations. Moreover, on their study they observed that women are consistently blocked while climbing higher at every step of the career ladder. Their findings, as shown on the Figure 3 below, show that women become increasingly under-represented as they move up the career ladder and the odds of advancement are always more for women compared to their male counterparts.

**Figure 3: Average percentage of women at various organisational levels**



Source: Women Matter 2012; McKinsey

Considerable evidence indicates that the institutionalised gender norms can coexist with the women career advancement initiatives (Ezzedeen & Ritchey,

2009). This means that, despite the pragmatism from the tradition-based biased organisations can still present the strategies for leveraging the available female talent.

Paradoxically, at work environment level and organizational level the key factors that impact on women career advancement include amongst others; a supportive work-life culture, mentors and sponsors, a supportive supervisor, critical job assignments, objective HR processes and flexible working hours (Wichert, 2012).

Inevitably, women themselves should assume responsibility for the management of their careers. Some research indicates that women should seek to cultivate their negotiation skills because real gender distinction exists in a negotiation setting (Barkacs & Standifird, 2008).

Drawing from the above review of theoretical literature on the definition of empowerment, (Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009) reasonably associated the meaning of empowerment with participation, power, equality and social justice. Therefore the critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances in the organisations.

### **2.3 Economics of Women Empowerment and Participation**

In the rapid changing global economy, gender is an economic factor that cannot be ignored. The economics of women empowerment refers to the financial bottom line and other economic benefits that organisations can expect to gain by improving and pursuing women empowerment policies (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Therefore, the business case views women as the key to economic growth. Catalyst (2013) research confirms four benefits of women career advancement initiatives namely; improving financial performance, leveraging talent, building reputation and increasing innovation and group performance. However, in order to reap the benefits it is imperative for the organisations to clarify the connection between the women empowerment initiatives and the business goals.

Most literature on business case for women including (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Meaney, 2008) states that companies that hire and retain more women can gain a competitive edge and, a correlation between high numbers of women executives and strong financial performance has been identified. This shows that the focus on gender diversity issues has shifted from the glass ceiling theories and equality to how much women can lead to higher organisational performance. From these findings it can be concluded that working with women makes business sense, and most organisations recognize the benefits of a more inclusive culture.

Specifically, the view based on the emerging literature demonstrates that companies that focus and place priority on hiring and retaining women manifest high financial performance. (McKinsey, 2012) study on women matters, found that the Fortune 500 companies that had at least three woman directors manifested an increase in the Return on Investment (ROI). Specifically as shown in figure 4 below, the McKinsey survey shows an increase of at least 66% on return on invested capital, at least 42% increase in return on sales, and at least 53% average returns on equity. These statistics clearly show that companies that promote women careers benefit through superior economic performance. Moreover, the report says that this is because women bring a complementary set of interpersonal management skills, such as inclusiveness.

(Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009) also brought an interesting discussion on this issue of the economics of women participation. They stated that linking women career development to organisational growth highlights a broader shift back to women working for development rather than development working for women. This is a crucial paradigm shift that every organization should be working towards to.

Moreover, (Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009) stated that women career development is also a means to a complementary end, such as economic growth, poverty reduction, democracy, human rights, peace, conflict prevention, HIV/AIDS reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

**Figure 4: Increase women, increase ROI**



Source: The case for investing in women. (2014). <http://anitaborg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-Case-for-Investing-in-Women-314.pdf> (Accessed 02 April 2014)

Some organisations approach gender equality through the principle of smart economics. Smart economics is concerned with building women capacities in the interest of development rather than promoting women for their own sake (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). Hence, the critics of the diversity model are sceptical about the extent to which the above-mentioned benefits are real. Furthermore, they argue that diversity can incur significant potential loss which is linked to emotional conflict among co-workers (Herring, 2009). These intense emotional conflicts tend to be provoked by the politically charged ideas such as affirmative action and quotas.

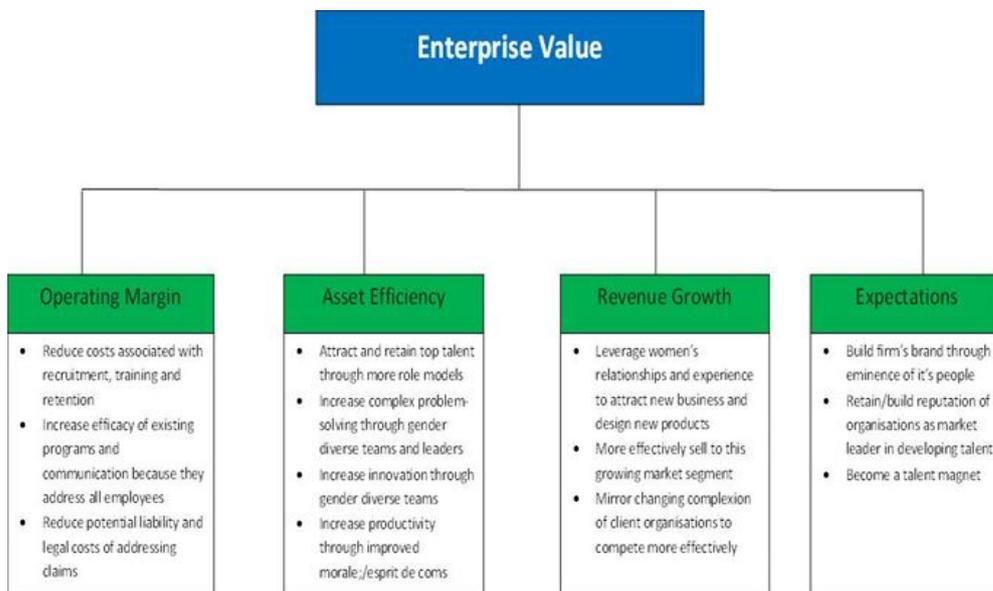
Therefore, in assessing the relationship between women empowerment and business outcomes, the literature suggests that there are several organisational strategies that might be influential. These factors include organisational environment that embodies the goals and the culture of the organisation, the organizational size and the employment practices.

Another interesting view based on emerging literature is the gender dividend. Pelegriano, D'Amato & Welsberg (2011) p 33 on the Deloitte gender dividend report state that "For many, promoting women is still a "soft" issue that is often intangible and viewed as a matter of "personal virtue" rather than a business imperative." This resonates with the credence that some companies do not understand the significant rewards of real women empowerment. Therefore,

the gender dividend can be understood as the great reward for the initiatives of retention and advancement of women in the organisations.

(Pelegriano *et al.*, 2011) developed a useful tool (shown in figure 5 below) to help frame the economic benefits of investing in women. The tool is referred to as the enterprise value for the intentional investment in women. The tool emphasizes that the powerful business case for investing in women will always emerge if the critical issues and important questions are asked.

**Figure 5: Enterprise Value for Intentional Investment in Women**



Source: Deloitte Report 2011. The gender dividend

To support the above, The case for investing in women report (2013), the research revealed that women are critical for innovation and organisations that include and advance women unlock the innovative potential. Another interesting key finding was by the London Business School (2013) where they studied the effects of women on knowledge transfer, experimentation and task performance. Their key findings are shown in Figure 6 below:

**Figure 6: Diversity powers innovation**



Source: The case for investing in women. (2014). <http://anitaborg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-Case-for-Investing-in-Women-314.pdf> (Accessed 02 April 2014)

Figure 6 above, illustrates that at least fifty percent women presentation should exist in all organisational levels in order to achieve psychological safety, team self-confidence, team experimentation and team efficiency

## **2.4 Moral or Ethical Philosophy**

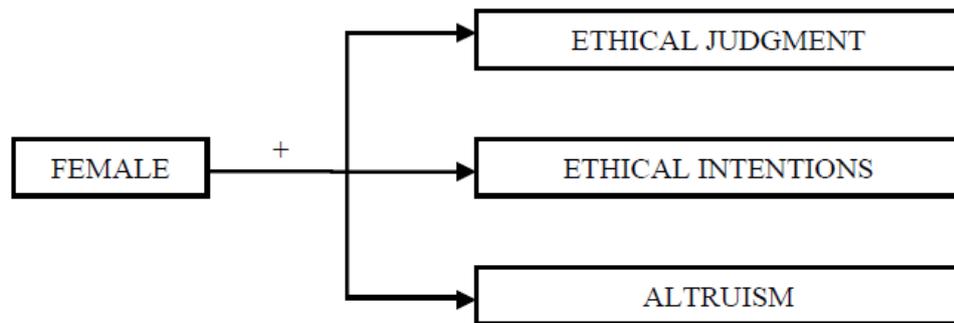
In the new economy the pressure for ethical or moral transparency has increased. Some organisations are involved in the women empowerment initiatives because they believe that it is a right, proper and just thing to do. (Stedham, Yamamura, & Beekun, 2007) note that the intention to behave will produce a positive outcome if one engages in that particular behaviour, hence the concept of behavioural intention emerges. Specifically, depending on the issue of consideration it could be highly possible that organisations are only engaging in women empowerment initiatives as a response to social pressure and with the hope of benefiting from the positive outcomes.

The lack of initiatives that promote women's representation in organisations imposes a huge cost on society. Moreover, other studies have found a connection between gender and a comprehension of workplace ethical issues. Explicitly, (Valentine, Godkin, Page, & Rittenburg, 2009) reinforced that the number of past studies suggests that women exhibit higher ethics than men in the workplace. As evidenced by the research done by the Business Women's Association of South Africa (BWASA, 2012), women form a larger part of the workforce, therefore, even though the levels are questionable, some organisations see an opportunity to maximise their ethical endeavours by

promoting women in order to absorb the ethical transparency pressure from the society.

(Valentine et al., 2009) also found that women are more ethically sensitive to socially based questionable business situations than men. Considering the numerous examples of the collapse of some organisations due to ethical transgressions, organisations commensurate with women empowerment initiatives mitigate this risk (Belk, Devinney, & Eckhardt, 2005). As shown in figure 7 below, most studies show that women are associated with an increased level of ethical judgement, ethical intentions and altruism.

**Figure 7: Hypothesised Relationships**



Source: Valentine, S., Godkin, L., Page, K., & Rittenburg, T. (2009). Gender and ethics: Ethical judgments, ethical intentions, and altruism among healthcare professionals. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 24(2), 114

Therefore, most organisations have spotted the link between particular ethical sensitivity that women have, and the way these contribute to stronger organisational health and performance (Valentine et al., 2009).

Women have the natural need for freedom and safety and because of the societal expectations that lead us to believe there are differences between males and females, women tend to be more relational than task specific (Barkacs & Standifird, 2008). Consequently, organisations should strive to have a single principle of behaviour that is right, proper and just towards women (Stedham et al., 2007). Therefore, they must fulfil the ideal of 'doing the right thing'

## **2.5 Regulatory Environment**

Policies can serve as a significant instrument for advancing the role and economic contribution of women. (Humborstad, 2012) states that without coercive institutional government policies, government policies cascaded from management could be disempowering because power still resides with the top management. However, the legislation can only achieve its intended objectives if women are proactive, take responsibility, assert themselves and refuse to be tokens (BWASA, 2012).

(Metz, 2009) found that country's policies have an important impact on the level of implemented empowerment practices in organisations. Moreover, (Humborstad, 2012) posed an interesting discussion on the role of trade unions in fostering women empowerment. He states that the role of trade unions should be widened to include issues that cultivate an empowering work structure such as, education and training.

(Debebe, 2011) argues that an environment conducive to transformational learning is created with gender-sensitive teaching and learning practices. Thus, it should be the aim of policy to teach and set the laws on general practices on empowerment.

Interestingly, (Duflo, 2012) found that there are things that policy makers can do to shift power to women. That said, in South Africa the rules have changed and access to equal opportunities has been streamlined. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act and Employment Equity reporting requirements have played a major role. (April, Dreyer, & Blass, 2007) highlight that the passing of the Employment Equity Act in 1998 has created an institutionalised structure that provides a legitimate space for women to be included in all levels of the organisational structures.

South Africa seems to be moving to the right direction as the Gender Equality Bill has recently been passed in parliament. The Bill calls for the progressive realisation of at least 50% representation of women in decision-making structures. This Bill reinforces and also strengthens the provisions of the Commission on Gender Equality Act (1996), the Skills Development Act (1998),

the Employment Equity Act (1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000).

However, some cross-sectional studies suggest that corporates are responding to either internal or external calls for diversity (Farrell & Hersch, 2005). Although the companies may have internal tastes for promotions, however, diversity has been receiving a tremendous amount of attention externally that could not be ignored. It is therefore crucial that each firm should detect any market reactions towards gender diversity issues.

(Duflo, 2012) concluded that in order to bring about equality between men and women, it will be necessary to take policy actions that continue to favour women at the expense of men, to compensate for the cost of gender discrimination that existed in the past.

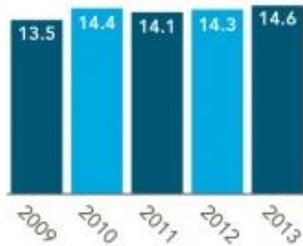
## **2.6 Global Trends**

Suddenly, all around the world, the perspective on the issue of women's career advancement has changed significantly. The pressures of the global financial crisis and other competitive pressures have caused the economy to look slightly at the different lens of productivity (Pelegriano *et al.*, 2011). The banking study on Australian businesses reported that productivity can be increased to up to 12%, if gender imbalances were eliminated.

Interestingly, beyond South Africa, specifically in Fortune 500 companies in the United States, women's representation at executive management has stagnated over recent years, moving from 13.5% in 2009 to 14.6% in 2013 (Catalyst, 2013) as per Figure 8. However, it is important to note that these figures do not hold true if you look at upper levels of the management because only 4.6% of CEO's in those companies are female (Center for American Progress, 2014).

**Figure 8: Fortune 500 executive officer positions held by women %**

FORTUNE 500 EXECUTIVE OFFICER POSITIONS HELD BY WOMEN (PERCENT)

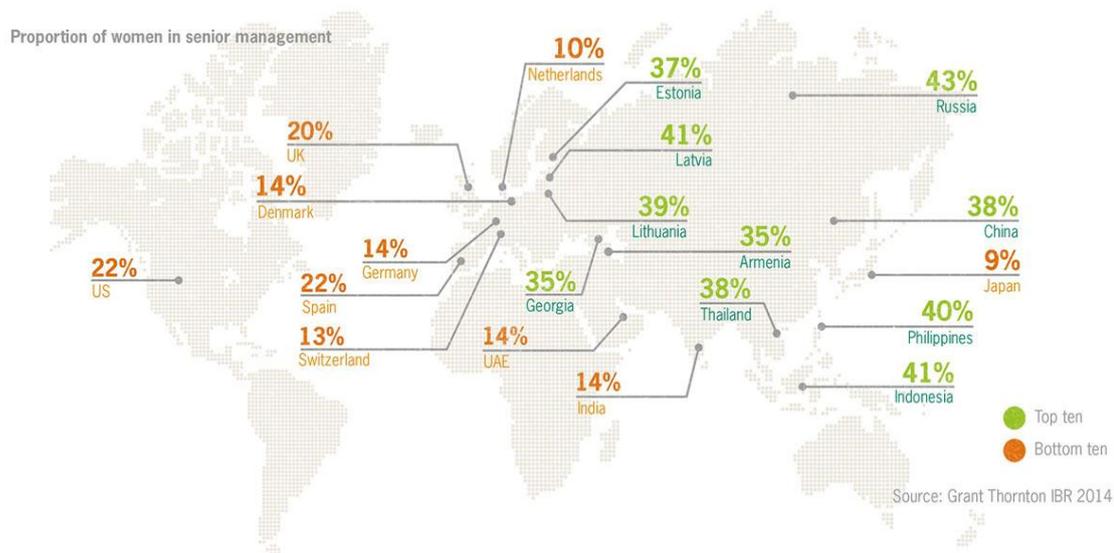


Source: Catalyst Report, 2013

The World Economic Forum (2013) p 35, on the global gender gap report states, “No country in the world has achieved gender equality. The four highest ranked countries—Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden—have closed between 81% and 87% of their gender gaps, while the lowest ranked country—Yemen—has closed a little over half of its gender gap.” Interestingly the report also shows that there is a positive correlation between countries’ gender gaps and their global competitiveness that is to say, the smaller the country’s gender gap, the more competitive the country is.

Globally, women held 24% of senior management roles in 2013, the exact same percentage as in 2009, with China leading the way at 51% representation (Grant Thornton International Business Report, 2013). According to the study, Canada ranks number one with a striking 50%. The Philippines and the US are tied for second with 41% and Thailand is third, at 40%. The country with the worst record: Japan, with women making up just 8% of leaders. The second-worst country is India at 14% and Taiwan is third-worst, at 21%. This is shown in Figure 9 below

**Figure 9: Proportion of women in senior management**



Source: Grant Thornton IBR 2014

In India and South America, visionary organizations like the Grameen Bank and Pro Mujer have specific initiatives towards women advancement and they even extend microloans to women (Pelegriño *et al.*, 2011). The results of these initiatives are significantly impacting the greater economy of these countries. Also, in the United States, the changing face of business belongs to women, and not just because of women’s recent emergence as the majority of the United States workforce. Most countries are taking a stand and forming organisations like, the UN solidarity movement for gender equality which brings one half of humanity i.e. men in support of the other half of humanity UN Women, (2014).

In summary, gender inequality has been one of the most enduring forms of inequality that has ever existed across the world (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to understand that at a macro level, countries also have the responsibility of enforcing sufficient policies and structures that are promoting women career advancement. As stated by the (Global Gender Gap Report, 2013) countries can be more competitive if they develop, attract and retain the best talent, both men and women. While organisations have an important role to play in improving women’s opportunities, it is also the imperative of countries to create policies that will enforce the workplaces to flourish best talent.

## 2.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

Women have a significant impact on firm performance thus; organisations should be strengthening women's positions as economic actors. Moreover, to progress, organisations need to scale, set targets and trace performance towards the women career advancement initiatives. As suggested by the UN Global Compact's principles, organisations need to understand and evaluate the opportunities that exist throughout the company for review, analysis and discussion of performance.

The UN Global Compact established seven women empowerment principles which specify how to measure progress. However, they also stipulate that the most powerful assessment tool could be derived from the organisation's own culture. (Williams, 2004) indicates that Compact member companies not based in the U.S. who subscribed to these principles seem to have a clear strategic case for advancing women within the organisation. (Williams, 2004) also states that these companies include five of the top ten Fortune Most Admired Companies (outside the U.S.): BMW, Nokia, Nestle, BP, and Royal Dutch/Shell Group. (Kilgour, 2007) suggests that the UN Global compact has a stronger gender equality mandate. The seven women empowerment principles are:

- Principle 1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work - respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.
- Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5: Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

Thus, there is a clear compelling logic from the above principles which may be summarised as follows:

- A clear measurement framework can be derived through including the companywide goals for progress towards women empowerment in the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and in the job description.
- There is a need for a committed board level individual who champions the organisation's women empowerment initiatives and plans and
- Lastly, training and mentoring programmes for women career development are crucial at all stages.

Therefore, promoting women economic empowerment facilitates other important public policy goals such as economic growth and improved human development. Hence, tracking the pace of implementation is critical. Also, lifting women up lifts up our economy and women of the world (UN Women, 2014)

In conclusion, as shown in figure 10 below, the meta-analytic approaches determined that collective intelligence of groups rises when women are present

**Figure 10: For better results, add more women**



Source: The case for investing in women. (2014). <http://anitaborg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-Case-for-Investing-in-Women-314.pdf> (Accessed 02 April 2014)

## **2.8 Mainstreaming as a strategy**

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy and approach to achieve gender equality and social change. It has been established and adopted by International Labour Organisation (ILO) as a global strategy to promote gender equality. Gender mainstreaming emphasises women empowerment as a primary goal in social

and economic development. According to Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women gender mainstreaming principles include the following:

- Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established.
- The initial identification of issues and problems across all area(s) of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed.
- Assumptions that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective should never be made.
- Gender analysis should always be carried out.
- Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into practice.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making.
- Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes, and positive legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.

To a certain extent, it appears that most South African organisations have adopted some of the women advancement principles that were established by the UN division. However, the progress appears to have stalled. Interestingly,(Davids, van Driel, & Parren, 2014) argue that gender mainstreaming is considered to be a very slow evolution, which must be reason for the levels achieved so far. The analysis by (Chant & Sweetman, 2012) emphasises that change takes place differently in organisations. Consequently, it will take sound public policies, a holistic approach, and long-term commitment from all participating organisation and strategic change management processes.

Cummings and Worley (2008) suggest the Integrated Strategic Change (ISC) as the most useful and productive. This process improves the functioning and the performance of the organization in a changed event. Cummings and Worley

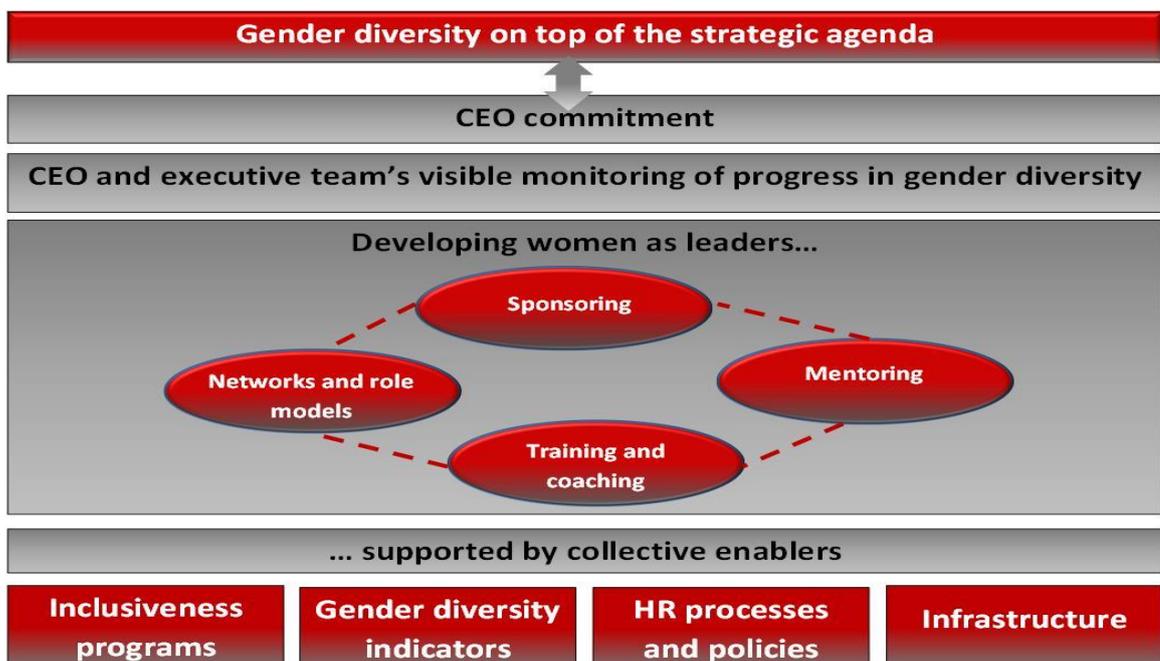
(2008) define Integrated Strategic Change (ISC) as the coordinated process that leads gradually or radically to systems realignments between the environment and a firm's strategic orientation. The ISC process is highly participative and it involves every member of the organisation. Cummings and Worley (2008) define the three key features of the ISC are:

- The organisation's strategic orientation, comprising its strategy and its design.
- Creation of the strategic plan and gaining commitment and support for it.
- Analysis, planning and implementation which involves every member of the organization.

## 2.9 Conclusion

Drawing from the above review of theoretical and empirical literature on women career advancement, there appears to be a general agreement on factors that cover main components of women career advancement in organisations. (McKinsey, 2013) summarises these factors to be the ecosystem of measures that foster women participation in the workplace. As shown in Figure 11 below, McKinsey (2013) established a model that can assist organisations to address the corporate culture and mind-set for women career advancement initiatives.

Figure 11: Gender diversity on top of the strategic agenda



Source: McKinsey Reports 2010 and 2013. Women Matter

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

From the literature reviewed on the previous chapter it is evident that most organisations are investing in the women career advancement initiatives yet, the aspect of the reasons for commitment are unclear. As a result, the primary purpose of this study is to determine the intensity of the commitment levels and the involvement of the leadership of South African organisations in gender diversity and women empowerment

The objectives of this study are concise and are as follow:

- To interrogate the paradigms that has been applied by the organisations that are allegedly committed to women empowerment.
- To assess the reasons for women career advancement in the organisations.
- To determine the monitoring and evaluation frameworks that can be used to measure the impact of women empowerment initiatives in the organisations

The research questions below were developed to answer and fulfil the objectives outlined above.

### **3.2 Research Question One**

- What agendas are women being developed for in South African organisations?

Like any other transformational intervention, woman empowerment initiatives require radical redesigning to be seen as a core strategic matter. According to the Mckinsey (2013), gender diversity should be recognised as an important strategic goal that is rigorously planned and executed. Amongst others, the initiatives should include a visible commitment from the CEO and clear set targets, and clear evaluation of progress and impact.

### **3.3 Research Question Two**

- Do corporates understand the critical issues and the significant rewards of real women empowerment?

(Pelegriano *et al.*, 2011) state that “For many, promoting women is still a “soft” issue that is often intangible and viewed as a matter of “personal virtue” rather than a business imperative.” Therefore, corporates need to understand the significant rewards for the initiatives of retention and advancement of women in the organisations.

There is empirical evidence that prosperous countries are those where women are free to pursue career opportunities with sufficient structures to support them (ref). Organisations that actively boost the role of women in the running of the economy, and provide the policy, structure and infrastructure to move them up the economic ladder, will reap the rewards of success and prosperity.

### **3.4 Research Question Three**

- Which corporates are doing this exceptionally well and what are the reasons for their success.

Some organisations are excelling in their commitment to empowering female roles in the workplace. Other organisations are dragging behind because of deeply entrenched forces which are influencing the implementation of the women empowerment processes.

McKinsey (2012a) report distinguished the best performers, concentrating on companies that are ‘making progress with diversity’, and found that companies with woman advancement on the strategic agenda of the CEO perform well in terms of advancing women to senior management level.

### **3.5 Research Question Four**

- Are there clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track the organisation’s progress and impact in women career advancement initiatives?

Successful organisations tend to have process focused objectives and measurable goals and targets to achieve those stated objectives. The UN Women, (2014) stated that tracking the pace of implementation is critical because women advancement lifts up the economy of the country.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the details and the defence of the methodology used, the definition of the unit of analysis, the population, the sample size, the sampling method and the details of how the data was collected and analysed. Lastly, this chapter will explore the limitations of this study.

The study aims to explore and assess whether the initiatives undertaken by the South African corporates defined as the activities supporting women empowerment are part of the core strategic agendas or whether they are merely a peripheral issue. In addition, the study aims to determine if the matters identified in the literature review hold true in the context of current state of women career development initiatives.

### **4.2 Research Design**

A qualitative method, exploratory in nature, was adopted for this study. (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) define the exploratory study as 'the research that aims to seek new insight, ask new questions and to assess topics in a new light'. Consequently, this method is appropriate for this study, relative to the objectives which were defined in chapter three.

(Carcary, 2011) recommends a qualitative design when a researcher requires a deeper understanding of behavior and the meaning and the context of the phenomena. The rationale behind the proposed qualitative approach of this study was to achieve depth and breadth to uncover the level of commitment of the organisations in women career advancement. Once detected and understood, the study can be used to assist organisations in their quest make gender equality a core strategic issue.

To develop deeper theoretical insight and to ensure the positive contribution to the body of knowledge on this discipline, theory elaboration was applied. (Fisher & Aguinis, 2013) explain theory of elaboration as the concept advancement that builds on and integrates the strengths of both inductive and deductive theories. (Cooper, Schindler, & Sun, 2006) describe the process of combining the

inductive and deductive theories as the double movement of the reflective thought process.

This methodology has prompted the formulation of the research questions stated in chapter three. Furthermore, semi- structured individual, in-depth interviews were conducted for the study. (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) state that, in a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of themes to be covered during the interview process but the order varies depending on the flow of the interview. The researcher can also decide to ask additional questions to explore the objectives more in depth.

To generate primary data, the interviews were conducted in the form of the phenomenological approach. (Polkinghorne, 1989) defines the phenomenological research methods as an approach to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena, that translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods. The phenomenological study was used because the purpose of the study was to understand organisations behaviour in terms of women career advancement.

### **4.3 Population and Unit of Analysis**

(Saunders & Lewis, 2012) p 132 define a population as the complete set of a group of members. This study mainly focused on women career advancement in South African corporate organisations. The population scope of this study was limited to individuals that have a decision making roles within medium to large South African organisations (BWASA, 2012) defines this group in one of four ways:

- Have a significant leadership role in the organisation,
- Have control over day-to-day operation,
- Have decision-making powers, and
- Usually, but not necessarily report directly to the board of directors.

Specifically for this study, the scope was limited to the CEOs, Human Resource executives or any other executive responsible for diversity.

BWASA (2012) states that individuals who fall in the above categories have a wide range of experience and are more likely to provide answers required in the

study. For the purpose of this study, medium to large corporates will be defined as:

- Companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, or
- companies that have more than 150 employees, or
- State owned enterprises.

This study looked at women, throughout companies' organizational structure, from the C suite all the way down to supervisors of production and manufacturing teams and lower level staff.

Zikmund (2003), state that the unit of analysis indicates what or who should provide the data. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the unit of analysis were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Human Resources Executives and any other executive responsible for diversity.

## **4.4 Sampling**

### **4.4.1 Sampling Technique**

Sampling frame is defined as the complete list of all members of the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Non-probability sampling was considered more appropriate for the study because it is not possible to obtain the complete list of CEOs and Human Resource executives for all South African organisations. (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) state that if you do not have a complete list of the population, you cannot select a sample from that population hence, this study used non-probability sampling which does not require a complete list of the population.

In addition, a purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher's judgment was used, to select the sample members based on a range of possible reasons and premises (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) p.138. Specifically, for the purposes of this study the researcher undertook two phases of data collection using the judgement for selecting the sample. An early decision was made to include both men and women in the sample to ensure that gender bias does not skew the results.

In phase one, two contacts were interviewed to gather the expert opinion on the discipline. The purpose of this phase was twofold: firstly, to establish their opinion on South African's organisations commitment to women career advancement. Secondly, it was to obtain recommendations for possible interviewees. The respondents in this phase only included the influential women in South Africa. For the scope of this study, the influential women can be defined as someone who has impact an influence, and who practices and commands women career advancement as a core strategic imperative in their current organisations.

In phase two, thirteen organisational representatives were interviewed to uncover the research aims of the study, three of whom were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and eight who were Human Resources Executives and two who were executives with the responsibility for gender diversity. Purposive sampling was used for this group of participants. However, in some cases participants recommended other organisations in that case, snowballing sampling was used to locate those organisations (Cooper et al., 2006).

Table 2, below illustrates the demographics of the participants.

**Table 2: Participants Demographics**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Position</b>	CEO's	3	20%
	HR Executives/Experts	10	66%
	Other	2	14%
<b>Number of Employees</b>	Less than 150	5	33%
	Greater than 150	10	67%
<b>Organisation Type</b>	Private	14	93%
	Public	0	0%
	State Owned	1	7%
<b>Industry</b>	See Table 8 Section 5.2		
<b>Geographic Location</b>	KwaZulu-Natal	10	67%
	Gauteng	5	33%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	8	53%
	Female	7	47%

It is evident from the above table and Table 9 in section 5.2 that the interviews were drawn from various industries in major South African cities.

## **4.5 Research Instrument/ Measurement**

### **4.5.1 Design**

The dependent variable is the women career advancement practices used in the organisations based on the theoretical empirical review above. Moreover, some principles for women empowerment suggested by the UN Global Compact and other women empowerment theoretical reviewed frameworks were used to measure the impact of the women empowerment initiatives in the organisations. These theoretical themes can be described as the independent variables and these can include succession planning, mentoring, training and flexible working options.

### **4.5.2 Reliability and Validity**

Despite its inherent bias, purposive sampling can provide reliable and robust data (Tongco, 2007). Also, (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) define reliability as the extent to which data collection methods and analysis procedures will produce consistent findings. Where data appears to be incoherent or implausible (Tongco, 2007) recommends that the cross checking and validation methods such as triangulation be used. Furthermore, (Tongco, 2007) emphasises that quality control measures should always be part of the study whenever the researcher runs into some inconsistencies and data needs to be verified.

In order to reduce the researcher's bias and to introduce rigor into the study, an expert in qualitative data analysis was consulted. Moreover, the selected interview recordings were transcribed in order to assist the research to analyse the data. The transcriptions enabled the researcher to manage the quantitative data. (Carcary, 2011) found that the use of transcribed data improve the research project's internal validity and also enhances transparency of the researcher's interpretation.

Furthermore, another validation tool was used to mitigate bias, namely: the initial findings were discussed with an individual who is the expert in the field of women empowerment and gender diversity.

### **4.5.3 Pre-testing**

Pilot testing was used ensure that the participants does not encounter problems in answering the questions and that their responses are recorded correctly. Pilot testing is the trying out of the method of data collection with a small group of participants who are similar to those who will be used in the actual research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

To detect weaknesses and to reveal errors in the design (Cooper et al., 2006), one pilot test interview was conducted with a colleague who is a Human Resource Executive in the researcher's organisation. This proved to be the best opportunity for the researcher to eliminate factors that might confound the results.

### **4.6 Data Collection Tool**

Interviews are an efficient way of generating rich primary data moreover; in-depth interviews encourage participants to share much information (Cooper et al., 2006). To assess the organisation's commitment on women career advancement requires in-depth and detailed discussion. For this reason, semi-structured interviews served as a means of collecting primary data for this study.

Depending on the geographic location of the participant, interviews were conducted at the participant's offices or at a location that was convenient for the participant and where he or she felt comfortable and where there were no chances of being disturbed. The interviews lasted for about an hour and the interview process was concluded at saturation (Zikmund, 2003). The redundancy of ideas started to occur around the 13<sup>th</sup> interview and the process was concluded at the 15<sup>th</sup> interview.

The participants agreed to have the interview recorded and they also agreed to complete a short demographic questionnaire with the exception of one participant who refused to be recorded. Also, one more interview could not be recorded due to technical problems during the interview process. However, research notes were recorded and researcher's observations were noted during these interviews. The interviews were conducted over the period of one and a half months.

#### **4.7 Interview Guide and Consent Statement**

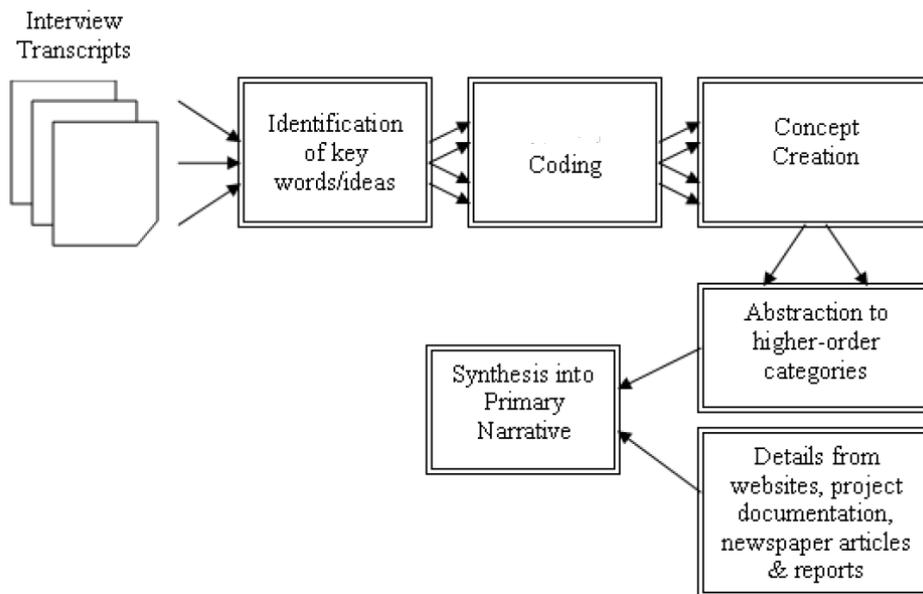
The researcher contacted the likely participants, either by telephone or email to determine the willingness to participate in the study. Once permission was granted, the researcher arranged the date and the time for the interview. At the start of the interview the participant signed the consent form attached in Appendix 2.

Because this study was exploratory in nature, an unstructured interview schedule was prepared. However, the researcher guided the topical direction and the scope of coverage. For additional insight and more enlightening information, open-ended probed questions were asked. For deeper insight, some questions were adapted from UN Global Compact Organisation, Women' Empowerment Principles.

#### **4.8 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an iterative process and it requires reflection and interpretation on the researcher's part on several levels (Carcary, 2011). Furthermore, (Carcary, 2011) state that the challenge of the qualitative researcher lies on analysing the body of knowledge gathered. Interestingly, technological improvements are playing an extensive role in data analysis processes (Zikmund, 2003). The recorded interviews were transcribed using specific themes, while preserving participant anonymity. To increase high theoretical implication (Carcary, 2011) suggests the below process as outlined in figure 12. The process proved to increase the potential for the researcher to consolidate the emerging themes.

**Figure 12: Development of primary narrative**



Source: Carcary, M. (2011). Evidence analysis using CAQDAS: Insights from a qualitative researcher. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 9(1) p 21

## **4.9 Research Assumptions**

It was assumed that the participants were familiar with the concept of women career advancement and the key words of this paper.

## **4.10 Research Limitations**

In interpreting the results of this study, certain limitations need to be considered. First, the sample was rather small, and more conservative thus, not representative of the overall population. Furthermore, the sample was drawn from one country only however, significance was achieved, which is more difficult with smaller sample sizes. Secondly, the study was exploratory in nature which lends itself to a subjective material. Thirdly, the participant's possible defensiveness might have interfered with the accuracy of the information which is a short coming inherent in in-depth interviews. Finally, the sensitivity of the topic might have exacerbated potential biases or prevented the participants from being completely honest in a country like South Africa where most organisations attempt to be politically correct.

Consequently, it may not be possible to draw a broad-spectrum from the findings of this study. However, the findings of this study may be used as a foundation to explore and discover new themes on this discipline.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave details of the methodology used to collect the research data. This chapter presents the results of the data collected from a sample of 15 participants in the study. All the participants provided insightful, rich and meaningful data.

As discussed in chapter one, the primary objective of this study is to determine the intensity of the commitment levels and the involvement of leadership of the South African organisations in achieving gender diversity through specific women empowerment initiatives. Hence, the significance of this study is three-fold. Firstly, using the empowerment models, it is important to interrogate the paradigms that have been applied by the organisations that are allegedly committed to women empowerment. Secondly, what agendas are the women being developed for in the organisation, that is to say, pure business reasons, moral or ethical reasons, legislative reasons, or is it still positioned as a peripheral issue? Lastly, because in the extant literature the conceptual frameworks on measuring women empowerment are less well developed, the study aims to look at what monitoring and evaluation frameworks that can be used to measure the impact of women empowerment initiatives in the organisations.

In particular the interviews assessed the number of initiatives to promote women career advancement and how well they were implemented.

The following research questions were mentioned in chapter three; they are repeated here for further clarification of the research aim. The research questions and corresponding interview questions are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 : Linking the research questions to the interview schedule**

	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Schedule</b>
1	For what agendas are women being developed in the South African organisations?	Section 5
2	Do corporates understand the critical issues and the significant rewards of real women empowerment?	Section 1.1, 1.2,&1.3 Section 2.7 Section 3.1& 3.2
3	Which corporates are doing this exceptionally well and what are the reasons for their success?	Section 1.4 Section 1.6

		Section 1.7 Section 2.1,2.2,2.5, 2.8,2.11,&2.12
4	Are there clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track the organisation's progress and impact in women career advancement initiatives?	Section 4

## 5.2 Demographics of the participants

The demographics profile and the overview of participants is provided first. The results are then grouped and discussed under each research question.

### 5.2.1 Position

Because the quality of the findings was highly dependent on the insight and knowledge of the respondents therefore from Table 4 below, it is evident that the majority of the participants were HR executives, these included HR directors and HR Leads. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the level of leadership involvement in the women career advancement initiatives, which is described in literature as an important factor in empowerment principles. The two other participants were executives with specific interest or responsibilities in women career advancement initiatives. The two demonstrated similar characteristics with their strong passion for transformation and the need to make a difference in their organisations.

**Table 4 Positions**

Position	Number
CEO's	3
HR Executives/ Experts	10
Other	2
Total	15

### 5.2.2 Gender

The majority of the participants were females however; the responsibility for underrepresentation of women and all the gender imbalances does not lie entirely with women. Men should also be the influencers of women's roles in the organisations; hence, both genders were interviewed.

**Table 5 Gender**

Gender	Counts
Female	8
Male	7
Total	15

### **5.2.3 Sizes of the interviewed organisations**

**Table 6 Size of the organisation**

Size	Number
Less than 150	5
Greater than 150	10
Total	15

### **5.2.4 Organisation Type**

**Table 7 Organisation Type**

Type	Number
Private	14
Public	0
State Owned	1
Total	15

### **5.2.5 Industry**

**Table 8 Industry**

Industry	Number
Consulting	3
Manufacturing	5
Asset Management	2
Auditing	1
Banking and Security	1
FMCG	1
Packaging	1
Information Technology	1
Total	15

### 5.2.6 Geographic Location

Table 9 Geographic Location

Location	Count
KwaZulu Natal	10
Gauteng	5
Total	15

### 5.3 Results for Research Question One

#### For what agendas are women being developed in the South African organisations?

The aim of this research question was to determine the main agenda for women empowerment and career advancements in the organisations. The majority of the participants provided frank and straight forward answers based on their opinion on what is most likely to be framing the women empowerment initiatives in their organisations. During the interview the participants were asked to give possible reasons and to elaborate. Moreover, probing questions were asked if the participant mentioned the key words such as culture, environment, work ethic, skill, diversity and transformation.

The results were aggregated to determine the overall agendas behind the women empowerment initiatives and the results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Possible agendas for women career advancement results

Reasons	Counts
Business Case	4
Moral or Ethical	6
Legislation	3
Combination of all three- with moral or ethical on top.	2
Total	15

### 7.3.1 Business Case

The proponents for the business case argued that there is an economic drive for more women participation in the organisation however, that should be aligned with skills, experience and potential. As one participant stated:

*“I am not going to take somebody just because they are female and it makes my picture look right. If I know I have a responsibility towards ensuring that we deliver what we have to in this company I owe it to the our “shareholders” at the same time. So I am not going to take someone just because on paper it says, I have got this kind of look here but at the end of the day I am going to fail because this one cannot do the job”- Moreover, “I would look **merit** for me is very important, yes, but at the same time when you look at merit you have got to look at two things, you look at **experience** and you look at **potential**”*

Another participant reiterated this by saying the following:

*“You know first of all it’s the best person for the job and to be honest with you, the women are getting the positions because they’re the **best persons** for the job. It’s as simple as that.”*

### 5.3.2 Moral or Ethical

As seen in Table 10 above, the majority of the participants stated that the moral and ethical reasoning is shaping the women empowerment initiatives in the organisations. On this topic one respondent replied:

*“I think it’s the middle one. I think we recognise the strength and the need for that diversity and the power that a diverse group gives and I think you know therefore it’s the right thing to do. It’s not an outburst game for us, it’s not about because we have to meet legislative requirements and it’s not there’s not really an economical drive to do it. It’s that knowing that women can contribute and they should be contributing and we need to get in and make sure that we can get the environment that they can contribute in.”*

Another stated:

*“It is the moral obligation, having come from a very patriarchal society and I think 52% of women form part of the total population, so it is in their best interest to have women participate in the workplace”*

In addition comments were made regarding the need to eradicate all forms of inequalities, in the organisations:

*“To be honest with you, I can say I can be very proud to tell you that my organisation, in terms of **transformation**, we are not doing it for compliance reasons..... So we are doing it because it’s **the right thing to be done** in terms of ensuring that we **eradicate all form of inequalities**.”*

Some comments indicated that there is no correlation between economic performance and employing more women, stating the following:

*“From an economic perspective I don’t understand how employing women would have an impact on our bottom line.”*

### **5.3.3 Legislation**

One participant admitted that women empowerment is only done to fulfil the compliance requirements for the organisation, stating:

*“I think it’s around a mixture of what you just mentioned around the legislative requirement. I mean we all have that **audit every year** around Employment Equity BB-BEE on how well we are doing. So it’s also for diversity and I would believe them having a diverse work force which compromises of gender and that being equal. **I think no company is going to ever be in an ideal situation where they have 50% of each**”*

### **5.3.4 Combination of business case, moral obligation and legislation**

Two participants indicated that initiatives are done for the combination of the moral and legislation obligation. Interestingly, the moral obligation tends to have more weight when compared to the other two. Both participants indicated that the reason for this is that they want to be perceived as an organisation with a balanced view in decision making. Hence stating that:

*“I’d have to say to the first one is that, I think, from a corporate culture point of view we would want to be seen as an equal opportunity organization. That is fair to everybody, and gives everybody equal opportunities. So that would certainly be the first thing from this company’s point of view. The second thing is I have to say is that, I think that if you have an environment that is only male dominated then I think you will probably underperform as an organization because you never get the other view and you are insensitive to gender issues and I think you will then, as an organization, prejudice in your decision making because you will not get a balanced view on your balanced decisions. Therefore, I think from this company’s point of view, we have for a long time seen, that if you transform your race and gender, you get a more balanced perspective of the impacts and the influences on your organization.”*

### **5.3.5 Summary**

Finally, in terms of evaluating the strategic intent behind the reasons for the woman career advancement initiatives, a participant made the following comment.

*“As I say in South Africa it’s almost, we are more than 50 % women in this office, so it’s almost not that much of a strategic priority to be honest. It’s not like we’re thinking we’ve got to get another senior women on our leadership team. What we are thinking is we need to have another black person on our senior leadership team. So looking at the kind of BEE element is more of a strategic intent for us than the female because we’re actually quite empowered as an organisation.”*

It was interesting to note the participant’s comments on black people being underrepresented rather than women.

## **5.4 Results for Research Question Two**

### **Do corporates understand the critical issues and the significant rewards of real women empowerment?**

To assess the understanding of critical issues and the understanding of the significant rewards of the real women empowerment the following questions

adapted from UN Global Compact Organisation, Women' Empowerment Principles were asked.

1. Are the policies promoting women advancement available, if so, are they effective? Give examples
2. Do the company-wide goals on transformation include gender equality?
3. Is there a clear articulation of strategy on women empowerment? How is it communicated?
4. Are there accessible channels for filing grievances on gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence?
5. Is there a designated board-level individual who champions the organizations gender equality policies and plans?
6. What level of involvement does the CEO have and how is this translated in everyday practice?

The results were aggregated to determine the overall understanding of the critical issues and the understanding of the significant rewards of the real women empowerment and the results are shown in Table 11 to Table 26.

**Table 11 Are the policies promoting women advancement available?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	6
No	9
Total	15

*"I wouldn't say we've got something specific or tailor-made to address the – I would say, to address the under-representation of women. All I can say is, we've got – I would say, we've got an effective Transformation Management Committee"*

Another participant reiterated by saying:

*"We don't, we don't have anything that is very specific to women except for obviously we need to, from an employment equity perspective focus on women and we need to account for it and also broad based black economic empowerment, those are the two that we actively manage"*

Another stated:

*“Well, firstly, is what we do have. We do have a very specific policy on career advancement and employment of skilled African ladies. This is our strategy at the moment hey”*

Another interesting comment was:

*“We don’t have policies, you know why, because we have our management driving it. So I haven’t found the need to actually put a policy in place to force people. It’s part of the **culture**”*

All participants were vocal about their policies and they all indicated that they either have the women specific policies to promote or not. The key emerging themes were then redefined into the following subjects: Employment Equity plan, B-BBEE codes, gender diversity, culture, environment and organisational structure.

**Table 12 Do the company-wide goals on transformation include gender equality?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	10
No	5
Total	15

To evaluate the strategic intent for the career advancement initiatives, the inclusion of women career advancement initiatives in the company wide goals or main agenda was assessed.

One participant replied:

*“We give it back to the board on a quarterly basis in terms of how we’re doing against our targets. We do recognise that there’s a shortfall of women at senior manager level as well as exec level.”*

Another stated:

*“It is very much our transformation objectives. Its in-line with our employment equity plan and it is very much a plan that has been put in place from a succession point of view as well within .....”*

**Table 13 Is there a clear articulation of strategy on women empowerment? How is it communicated?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	8
No	7
Total	15

*“I would say without sounding otherwise that my organisation is one organisation that is very effective when it comes to communication. Because, you know, the language that we sing in our bottle, even if we were to go to the shop floor, the shop floor employee will tell you what we are doing. The shop floor employee will also tell you about what we are doing in terms of employees’ career advancement. So I would say we are corporate aligned in terms of our communication.”*

*“It’s been adopted by the executive and it’s contained in the succession plan. It’s contained in the employment equity plan, and it is contained in the skills development plan. Yes, they are aware of it. It has been communicated as well.”*

Another replied:

*“Of course they will know safe to say that, yes, maybe they might not understand the concept.”*

**Table 14 Are there accessible channels for filing grievances on gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	12
No	3
Total	15

*“We’ve had one or two instances, and in those instances the intervention has varied from dismissal towards, basically, an agreement on resolution, but it has*

varied. We have had, I'd say probably, off the top of my head, I'd say probably three cases."

"Where we felt it was serious we would have dismissed because we felt the need to protect the lady. Where it was less serious, we addressed it on the basis of agreement between the parties."

**Table 15** Is there a designated board-level individual who champions the organizations gender equality policies and plans?

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	9
No	6
Total	15

"Yes. Me. While I say me, it's all the leaders of this company. I mean any women which is really nice."

"So this year is the first time where I really pushed female targets in terms of employment equity quite hard, and with our CEO as well, we pushing it."

**Table 16** What level of involvement does the CEO have and how is this translated in everyday practice?

Percentage	Counts
Less than 50%	10
More than 50%	5
Total	15

"Our CEO, I would say, he is highly operational. You hardly find him in his office. And he interacts more with shop floor employees than any other Executive member."

### **5.5 Results for Research Question Three**

**Which corporates are doing this exceptionally well and what are the reasons for their success?**

The following questions adapted from the UN Global Compact Organisation, Women' Empowerment Principles were asked:

1. What is the gender composition of the company's board of directors and top management?
2. Does your company engage in any specific activities that seek to promote women to decision- making roles?
3. Are there any more concrete actions with a direct link to women empowerment?
4. Does the organisation pay equal remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value?
5. What percentage of the talent pipeline, at both the entry and experienced levels, are women?
6. Is your company actively identifying and training women to fill gaps? (Describe).
7. Has the company designed flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women?
8. Are the high potential women being identified, and how?
9. Is there a financial plan or budget allocation set aside for operationalizing women empowerment? Estimate as a % of sales

The results were aggregated to examine the organisations that are doing exceptionally well and the reasons for their success and the results are shown in Table 17 to Table 31.

**Table 17: What is the gender composition of the company's board of directors and top management?**

Percentage	Counts
Less than 50%	13
More than 50%	2
Total	15

The comments from participants were as follows:

*"I don't have it off hand but basically on the board we've got no women. It's 100% men"*

*"In the board of directors at the moment there is zero women"*

*“Yes our board of directors are consisting of six people, five of them are executive and one of them is non-executive, and the one that’s non-executive is a female”*

*“More than 40% females, ja. Then the rest is males. And I would say something without trying to justify anything”*

*“In the executive management the gender composition when you say the real top one explain to you is 2 males and me. So that’s it. And then below us we’ve got 2 women and 4 men, And then below that you start having more women so then below it’s more of an equal split.”*

Interestingly on the issue of the impact made by the numbers on the gender composition, the following comment was made:

*“I think it would make an impact if we had more women on the board. We know that women have value to add in terms of the values at exec level. And women are also far more practical and they have a different perspective on addressing issues. So yes I think it would have a greater impact if we had that gender equality”*

**Table 18: Does your company engage in any specific activities that seek to promote women to decision- making roles?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	6
No	9
Total	15

The comments were as follows:

*“We certainly have incorporated it into our succession plan, our skills development plan, our employment equity plan and our recruitment strategy.”*

*“In the board of directors at the moment there is zero. This is where specifically if you talk to our succession plan, and I give you an example, in HR an African lady has been identified to take over from me. So we have specifically targeted the replacement of the executive with, with women”*

**Table 19: Are there any more concrete actions with a direct link to women empowerment?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	5
No	10
Total	15

The comments from different participants were as follows:

*Global women’s leadership meeting. And it’s programmed in October. As leaders in the firm we are all committed to show high impact and responsible, it didn’t say much it’s just...Let’s see if we got more in this one. Our agenda will be focused on our bill, our agenda to advance diversity as part of our vision 2020, building external networks and relationships, and coming in as women leaders.*

*“So there’s this sponsorship program, we our local women’s network in South Africa, just all the women consultants, and we meet once a month and we discuss anything that might be of issues that people might be having for example we discussed this thing of the power of women and how you, you know how much you use your feminine influence or not and when is it crossing the line and when is it professional and when is it just, you know being a friendly or...”*

*“We obviously have our clinics that do family planning. We have an EAP program that is available specifically, and I see a lot of the cases coming through are ladies with family related problems. So that certainly is available.”*

*“So that’s the EAP program. Then obviously we have a campaign on the sixteen days of activism against women and children. Then we have a CSI initiative, where we specifically target rape victims with the Jes Foord Foundation. So we have that on an external basis as well.”*

*“Yes, we’ve got one of our non-executive directors based in – I think she’s based in Johannesburg. And she’s a champion of women issues. Because every time we present she wants to know what we have done*

*for women, including, you know, an initiative of trying to come up with an initiative of building a crèche to accommodate females because half the time they are not at work because of child care issues.”*

**Table 20: Does the organisation pay equal remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	14
No	1
Total	15

*“For an example, when we appoint women or when we promote women, we don’t look at gender. They are entitled to all the benefits that we give to male employees without any form of discrimination. Even if it means, you know, as you correctly pointed out that equal pay for work of equal value, it does happen, I will be the first one to kick a bit fussy if it’s not happening because I know it’s illegal. It’s not supposed to be like that.”*

**Table 21 Are the equal pay reviews conducted on a regular basis? And how**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	15
No	0
Total	15

*“The official salary review is annually. And in exceptional circumstances every half year like I said to you like these guys that...”*

Interestingly, one participant remarked on the issue of retention by saying:

*“Retention is quite easy because we generally try and make sure that on an annual basis we review our market related salaries and we try and make sure that we stay abreast of market demands for them.”*

**Table 22: What percentage of the talent pipeline, at both the entry and experienced levels, are women?**

Percentage	Counts
Less than 50%	10
More than 50%	5
Total	15

Participants stated the following:

*“Yes, it’s quite interesting because in the **environment** of this business, as you have said, it’s more females than males and if that is... it’s changing from it was in the past and then the dynamics now are turning to be... so it’s kind of interesting to evaluate that balance”*

*“let me just finish off that question that you asked me about within my company We are in a security environment, law enforcement working close to law enforcement and the perception would be that and maybe to some extent the truth as well is that it is a quite male dominated area but within our company we do not draw distinctions between male and female. There is no hard physical labour that is involved so there is no reason why a female cannot do any of those jobs that we have within our company though there are no limitations, there are no jobs that are earmarked for men or for women.”*

*“If one would accept our **environment** again, it’s more – I would say it’s more technical, sort of. So as a result now you would find that most of the skills again, it is still a challenge to get most of the skills in order to balance our ratios”*

*“Yes and probably the reason for that is because we’re in manufacturing and most of the positions we have looked for are technical it is really difficult to find black women”*

*“You know, to be honest, in the past we have been recruiting more males and the reason for that, you know, is because most of the positions that we have had somehow attracted more males than females. But there was no specific clause in the adverts now to say, preference will be given to male employees. **By default**, yes, we’re then left with more males than females.”*

*“Because at the moment right now our numbers of, our representative numbers of African women relative to the demographics, is understated. So, therefore, we have got a very specific target in that to rectify our demographics in terms of our employment equity plan”*

Contradicting Comment to the rest of the responses:

*“We have seen, we have seen quite a few ladies come through in engineering by the way. We have employed, I’d have to say to you, probably at least ten ladies in engineering in the last three years. That number certainly is increasing. The amount of ladies coming into engineering is increasing, and when we do find them we do employ them. In fact right now we probably have about three or four ladies currently employed in engineering.”*

**Table 23: Is your company actively identifying and training women to fill gaps? (Describe).**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	5
No	10
Total	15

*“That’s easy because you know first of all, like I told you it sounds crazy but we have men in management position that will identify them, and grow them and develop them. We’ve a got **succession plans** in place, we’ve got key man reliance plans in place, those where is it identified, we’ve got assessments that we can identify learning potential”*

**Table 24: Has the company designed flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	8
No	7
Total	15

The comments were:

*“We do have flexi time within the company. So we do allow people to flex their time in accordance with the, I mean I take the lady next door, the payroll manager. She, in the last week has had a baby in hospital, and I have allowed her to start a little bit later and leave a little bit earlier, so that she could take care of her family. So we do have flexi time.”*

*“Unfortunately, I think you’ve still got a lot of old-school partners that... yes, it’s very tough, because you’ve also got to realise that we charge out time. So we’ve got to be here for eight hours and that’s where this concept of working flexi-time becomes very difficult. Because the thing is that you might have finished your job in six hours and gone home, but then what happens to the two... other two hours? Whereas if you’re here for eight hours, then there’s a good chance that you’re going to go and look for something else to do to charge the other two hours.”*

*“We have something like; I think I mentioned the success with flex. And it’s a program of part time working to suit your needs. But the important thing about that was, that’s why it’s called success with flex, it’s what’s really important that people will still have a career trajectory up until partner level even if they work part time.”*

*“But then you get like the extremes, like .....has changed their maternity leave policy to six months as opposed to the four months, so I have to be honest, that from the feedback that I get, that .....is quite forward thinking in terms of things like for maternity leave and all of that, but they’ve got a lot of negative publicity recently about the overtime that they were making, like, some of the pregnant women work long hours, obviously trying to finish...”*

**Table 25: Are the high potential women being identified, and how?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	12
No	3
Total	15

Some responses were:

*“Basically, you know, we rely on information that we get from their immediate managers.*

*“Yes. We are funding them for studying; we are funding them for whatever they request in terms of their career development.”*

**Table 26: Is there a financial plan or budget allocation set aside for operationalizing women empowerment? Estimate as a % of sales**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	8
No	7
Total	15

Interesting comments from the participants:

*“Yes it’s a lot of money. I don’t want to exaggerate but it’s a lot of money that we invest in. I don’t want to play with numbers but you just take 230 people on the scholarship, with tuition, books, accommodation...230 people. That’s through the Michelle’s scholarship fund you can read about that. And then over and above that the investment in training of education of our people it’s got to at least be 2 % of our turnover which is massive”.*

*“The second thing is, is we’ve got a very specific objective of achieving no less than thirty percent of our training budget towards the development of, of women. I’d like to say to you in this, in total this year our training expenditure will be about R 3 500 000.00. So if you had to take thirty percent of that, it will be about R 1 000 000.00”*

*“No. We’ve got one budget. And again, it’s not like a cherry-pick exercise.”*

## 5.6 Results for Research Question Four

**Are there clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track the organisation’s progress and impact in women career advancement initiatives?**

To assess the monitoring and the evaluation in women career advancement initiatives the following questions adapted from UN Global Compact Organisation, Women’ Empowerment Principles were asked:

1. Does the company track and analyse promotions by gender, employee category and title.
2. Is the gender- differentiated impact documented?
3. Does the company measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using data disaggregated by gender?
4. What opportunities exist throughout the organisation for review, analysis and discussion of performance? i.e KPI for management

**Table 27 Does the company track and analyse promotions by gender, employee category and title.**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	4
No	11
Total	15

*“Yes we do, we track it by gender as well as by race. That is published on a monthly basis.”*

**Table 28 Is the gender- differentiated impact documented?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	6
No	9
Total	15

*“But the thing is that naturally, being female, I think you do keep a lookout for it to make sure that it is equal, but it’s not documented, it’s not... Yes.”*

**Table 29 Does the company measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using data disaggregated by gender?**

Yes/No	Counts
Yes	7
No	8
Total	15

*“Yes, certainly internally on a monthly basis.”*

*“I wouldn’t know where we would report it externally other than our employment equity stance.”*

**Table 30 What opportunities exist throughout the organisation for review, analysis and discussion of performance? i.e KPI for management**

	Counts
Some	3
None	12
Total	15

*“We have a performance management system. Which basically KPI’s are defined, measures are defined against those KPI’s, so that happens twice a year. We do have a performance management twice a year. We obviously have our various committee forums, like employment equity for example. We have our skills committee, so yes, that’s just how I’ve had to say, I think, from a reporting point of view, there are various forums for performance review.”*

*“Transformation, transformation is a KPI. Not specifically gender transformation but transformation is a KPI, for everybody”*

## **5.7 Summary**

*“I think just what I’ve said already is, is I think that if you go with your eyes closed and you think transformation will happen just because we live in South Africa then you have a big surprise coming your way. If you don’t adopt a culture of change and you don’t get your executive to buy*

*into a cultural change and you rigidly fight your battles in the beginning days in terms of getting everybody to accept that we live in a company that is transforming.”*

Addressing the area of gender inequality, one participant said:

*“you know, to be honest with you, yes, I understand that we’ve still got challenges in terms of equitable representation of women, especially at senior level. And again, with the initiatives that we have in place, to be honest with you, I will be embarrassed if I’m talking about that with no plan in place. We do have a plan in place because as an organisation we have identified that as a problem and the risk”*

Another honest opinion was as follows:

*“You know, to be honest with you, as a company we don’t specifically talk about gender issues but we talk about transformation”*

*“So basically that also impacted on our operational requirements, especially when women employees are unable to work overtime. It’s not a question of them being unreasonable. It was more of a safety issue which had to be addressed.”*

*“And you generally find that you have like the boys club and for a female, as a CA trying to get somewhere, it becomes very difficult. So the questions that you’re asking me are very relevant to industry because, as I said, there are certain industries where it is still very male dominated”*

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Briefly, in response to research questions, the results show that the majority of persons interviewed stated that the moral or ethical reasoning is the main agenda for the women’s career advancement. Also that, some organisations does understand the critical issues of women career advancement and some are lagging behind.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the research findings in chapter five are discussed in detail. These results are linked with the problem statement in chapter one, the literature review in chapter two and the research questions that were proposed in chapter three. This chapter will also confirm the links between the findings of the study and the literature reviewed. The research questions and the interview questions used in this study were constructed from the existing body of literature. Furthermore the data was collected through the interviews of the CEO's, Human Resource executives and content industry experts in the discipline of women in leadership. The results are discussed per each research question.

### **6.2 Research Question One**

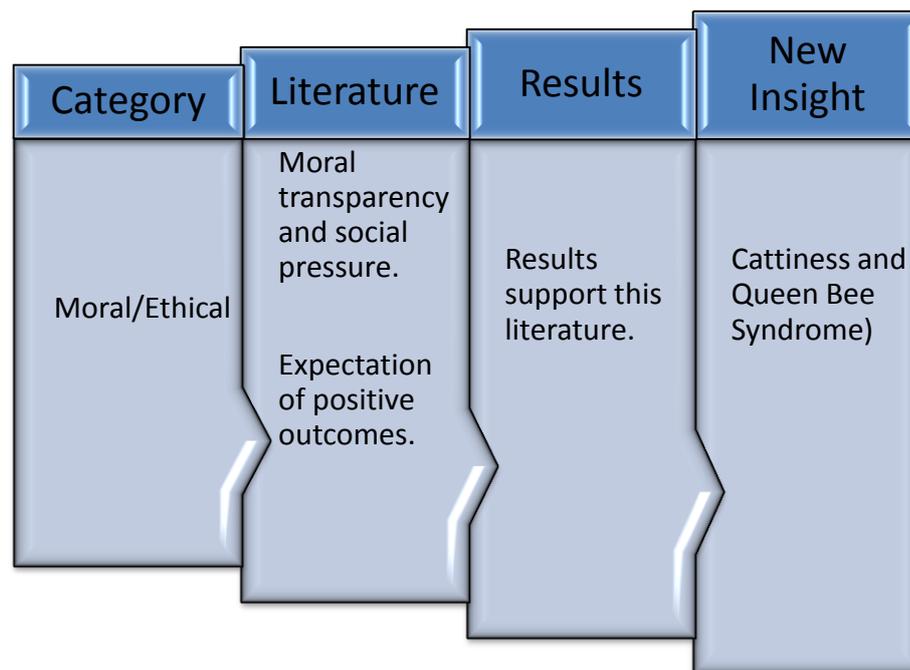
For what agendas are women being developed in the South African organisations? The corresponding interview question sought to identify three agendas that are most likely to be framing the career advancement of women in the organisations; a purely business imperative, for moral or ethical reasons or for meeting legislative requirements.

Based on the results, Table 10 indicates that the agenda that is most likely to be framing women career advancement in organisations is for moral or ethical reasons, as it is indicated by 40% of the participants to be the case. This is aligned with literature found in section 2.4 of this study by (Stedham et al., 2007) who concluded that organisations should strive to have a single principle of behaviour that is right, proper and just towards women.

Therefore, leadership in organisations should invest in the development of women because they have been side-lined for the patriarchal society and they should recognise that it is unethical to side-line women because of their genderised identities. Moreover, some participants cited that career advancement initiatives are undertaken as a response to eradicate all forms of inequalities.

However, this contrasts with one of the comments by one of the participants who stated that too many women in the organisations can be a problem. The participant mentioned that sometimes, having more women can cause a lot of fighting within women themselves, which is due to “catty syndrome” and “Queen Bee Syndrome”. She described catty syndrome as being threatened by another woman based on their beauty, career or relationship. Whereas, Queen Bee syndrome was described as a phenomenon where women are not willing to assist other women to advance their careers (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Remarkably, this was the view of just one female participant, and not a single male participant suggested this as a thought, thus the validity of the comment may require further exploration. Therefore, these results can be summarised in figure 13 below as follows:

**Figure 13: Summary of results for moral/ethical reasons**



As indicated by 26% of the participants in Table 10, the second most possible reason for implementing women career advancement activities is the business case imperative. This confirms the findings by (Desvaux et al., 2008) who state that companies that hire and retain more women can gain a competitive edge and, a correlation between high numbers of women executives and strong financial performance has been identified. This agrees with one of the

participants comments when he stated that there is definitely an economic drive for advancing women's careers.

Remarkably, a theme of merit and potential emerged and this was cited by the most proponents of the business case imperative. They emphasized that organisations should not be trapped on the above finding and theory by (Desvaux et al., 2008), however, they should also consider merit and potential as a core-driver for women career advancement. However, the finding by the McKinsey (2012), as per section 2.2 of this paper, the report states that despite women's potential and skill, they are still unable to see a clear route to advancement in their organisations Therefore, if this is the case, it is clear that women still the need to walk an extra mile in order to reach a status level that is the similar to their male counterparts.

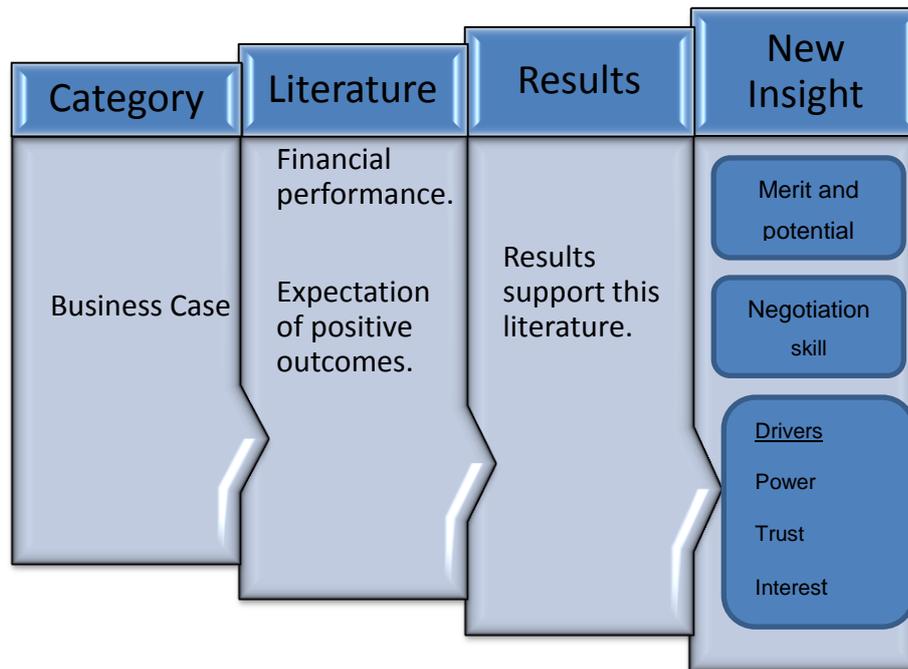
Therefore, women should understand that the main responsibility still lies with them. This is supported by (Barkacs & Standifird, 2008) when they said women should assume responsibility for the management of their careers and women should seek to cultivate their negotiation skills because real gender distinction exists in a negotiation setting.

To assist women in developing their negotiation skill (Alavoine, 2014) identifies three main driver forces of the negotiation skill, namely: power, trust and stakes combined with interest. Therefore, women should understand these dimensions in order to assist the organisations in their quest for the business case for investing in women.

An insightful comment by the expert who was validating this result was noted, she stated that: "*women, have a duty to make sure that all women know about these factors and how they can assist in the development of careers with women*". Therefore women need to focus on the above mentioned drivers in order to survive and stay afloat in the corporate world.

Therefore, these results can be summarised in Figure 14 as follows:

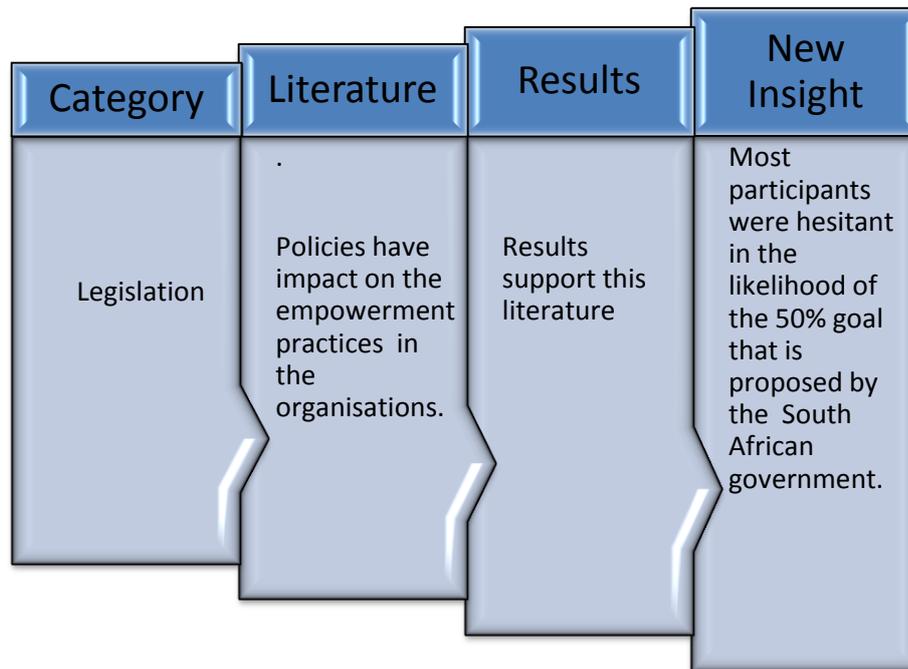
**Figure 14 Summary of results for the business case imperative**



Lastly, as indicated in Table 16, only 20% of the participants are implementing women career advancement activities for regulatory purposes. Most participants cited The Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act as the core driver for complying. As noted in section 5.3.3 of this paper, some organisations are involved in the women career advancement initiatives to fulfil the compliance requirements. Unpardonably, one participant self- confessed that there is no company that is going to ever achieve a 50% goal as required by the proposed bill.

Therefore, these results can be summarised as shown in figure 15 below:

Figure 15 Summary of results for the legislation imperative



In summary, the answer to research question one, i.e. the agendas for women being developed in the South African organisations strongly favours the case for moral or ethical imperative. Furthermore, to validate this finding, this result was discussed with an individual who is an expert in the field of women empowerment and gender diversity. An expert raised a very insightful comment by stating *“The African continent with its history of colonization, gender inequality and with the violation of women’s rights fostered by a patriarchal society, the advancement of women cannot happen by chance. The empowerment agenda has to be structurally supported holistically if efforts are to result in meaningful outcomes”*.

Finally, aligning with the literature reviewed, it is clear that the social pressure for ethical or moral transparency has increased. Therefore, it appears that most South African organisations are striving to take a correct political moral stand on redressing the gender inequalities of the past.

### 6.3 Research Question Two

Research question two sought to evaluate the strategic understanding of the significant rewards for developing women in the organisations. The research question was as follows: Do corporates understand the critical issues and the significant rewards of real women empowerment? As shown in section 5.4 of this paper, six questions were asked to determine the level of understanding of the significant rewards by the organisations. The common themes for this research question were; availability of policies, company goals on transformation, articulation of strategy, board-level individual and CEO involvement or championship of the inclusivity agenda.

Based on the results, in Table 11, 60% of the participants acknowledged that they do not have specific policies in place to promote women's advancement. Yet, in contrast the literature found in section 2.5 (Farrell & Hersch, 2005) stated that diversity is receiving tremendous amount of attention and firms are detecting market reactions towards gender diversity issues. If this is the case, should firms not be paying greater attention to their policies to strengthen women's empowerment?

Interestingly, these findings indicate that the majority of the organisations are still ignoring the external calls for diversity and they are not responding to the social pressures which requires the compensation for the cost of gender discrimination that existed in the past (Duflo, 2012).

This finding was further validated with an expert, who remarkably raised a different opinion by stating: *"We are living in a time where more responsibility and power is being given to women. Even in male dominated environments such as the boardroom and in certain environments, gender diversity is a must. I do not think that most major corporates are ignoring the call for gender diversity, it is such an important facet in order for companies to move forward."*

Notwithstanding, 40% of the participants did acknowledge that that they do have specific policies that promote women empowerment. However, it was interesting to note that these organisations place the development of women as a core strategic imperative and it is coupled with a detailed strategic plan, commitment and support for it. This is in line with Cummings and Worley (2008)

suggestion for the strategic process of implementing transformational change in the organisations.

Also as shown in Table 12, 66% of the participants did admit that their company-wide goals on transformation do include gender equality. However, as shown in Table 13, only 53% of the participants acknowledged the availability of clear articulation of these goals. Therefore, because these goals are not translated into policies, it is clear that the organisations do not provide the collective enablers that are suggested by the McKinsey, (2013) women matter report as per section 2.9 of this paper. The collective enablers are suggested to be; inclusiveness programs, gender diversity indicators, HR processes and policies and infrastructure.

In summary, these findings suggests that the majority of the organisations do include gender diversity in their company-wide goals, however these are not supported by any policies or procedures and these are not translated in everyday practices of the organisations. These findings are consistent with (Chant & Sweetman, 2012) when they highlighted that there is high expectation and agency on women to deliver meanwhile; there is minimal support from the organisations. Also these findings agree with (Wyndow et al., 2013)found in section 1.1 who stated that the organisations that provide the policy, structure and infrastructure to move women up the economic ladder, will reap the rewards of success and prosperity.

Furthermore, to validate these findings results were discussed with an individual who is the expert in the field of women empowerment and gender diversity who concluded by stating the following: *“Policies will not help if not supported from the top i.e. the Board and Executive committee. It is also interesting to note that HR policies have existed for a long time but the gender issue in corporates is still not addressed. Corporates need to be more creative on how to bring women and young professionals on board.”*

#### **6.4 Research Question Three**

Research Question three sought to determine those organisations that are excelling in their commitment to empowering women roles in the workplace.

The research question was as follows: Which corporates are doing this exceptionally well and what are the reasons for their success?

To assess this phenomenon nine questions were asked (as shown in section 5.5.) related to the issues addressed in literature review. The common themes for this research question were: gender composition, specific activities to promote women to decision making roles, equal pay, and percentage of talent pipeline, training and identification high potential women, flexible work options, budget allocations.

Firstly, based on the results in Table 17, only 13% of the participants have women representation on their boards. These findings does not reinforce the findings of the (BWASA, 2012) report which stated that women representation on boards is as low as 17.1% of directors in the country (BWASA, 2012). Moreover, these findings are also in contrast with the global trends as per the Catalyst, (2013) report, which stated that the representation of women on boards has moved from 13.5% to 14.6% as indicated in section 2.6 of this report.

In summary, these findings indicate that the women representation on boards has not only have stagnated (Catalyst, 2013) but it has also stalled (McKinsey report, 2011). Interestingly, all participants acknowledged that it is crucial to have more women representation on the boards. What was highlighted by the majority of the participants was the fact that women possess natural interpersonal skills namely; caring, nurturing, team building, empathy and collaboration. This agrees with literature by (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010) who said that the feminine characteristics such as being team orientated, caring, compassionate, being interpersonally oriented should not be viewed as negative, therefore women should not be afraid to use these attributes in their leadership styles.

To reinforce the above literature and finding an expert mentioned the following: *“Women are caring by nature. We are the mothers of the nation, and give birth to the future. The characteristics that women encompass are not negative, I think that they allow people to view and see things differently. Women bring different attributes into the Boardroom. It is known that they are caring by*

*nature and their EQ is better than men. Progressive companies are increasing female participation in the Board rooms and at executive level”*

Secondly, as shown in Table 18 of section 5.5 of this paper, only 40% of the organisations are engaged in specific activities that are seeking to promote women to decision-making roles. As (Dheepa & Barani, 2009b) stated in section 2.1 of this paper, women empowerment initiatives should enable women to have control over circumstance and organisations should focus on making women more independent and self-reliant.

All participants who engage in specific activities to promote women cited that these are incorporated into their succession plans, skills development plans, employment equity plans and on their recruitment strategy. Additionally, as shown in Table 19, the successful organisations which are only 33% of the participants have more concrete actions with the direct link to women empowerment. The participants cited these initiatives to include women leadership meetings and forums, sponsorship programs for women networks, on site clinics to address women related health issues and provision of crèche facilities.

Thirdly, as shown in Table 20, 93% of the participants pay equal remuneration for the work of equal value. This finding produced a notable discrepancy between previous research findings and this study. These previous studies including findings by (Bose et al., 2010) found in section 2.1 states that women are still being paid less for the work of equal value compared to their male counterparts. The wage gap was as big as 59% in two decades ago.

To confirm the above, the expert mentioned the following: *“This needs to be corrected. The difference in the pay gap sometimes is shocking. People should be compensated, on what they bring to the company, and not what their gender is.”*

However, these findings are in line with (Datta et al., 2013) found in section 2.1 of this paper who stated that women are being compensated well compared to their male counterparts with similar experience and skills. The majority of the participants cited that in some of the cases women are even paid more than the

market related pays in order to compensate for the costs of inequality that existed in the past. This agrees with the suggestion by (Duflo, 2012) in section 2.5 of this paper who stated that in order to bring about equality between man and women, it will be necessary to take policy actions that continue to favour women at the expense of men to compensate for the cost of gender discrimination that existed in the past.

In summary, this finding suggests that majority of the organisations have fought their way through to eradicate all forms of inequality which existed in the form of imbalances in salaries between men and women. Interestingly, as indicated in Table 21, the majority of the participants acknowledged that pay reviews are conducted on regular basis namely; annually or bi-annually. Moreover, the majority cited that they use independent parties as means to eliminate any form of bias.

Fourthly, based on the results shown in Table 22, 66% of the participants have less than 50% of women in the talent pipeline at both entry and experienced levels. Notably, the majority of the participants noted environment of business as the limiting factor in considering women in some of the positions in the workplace.

This finding suggests that most organisations do not create the environment that is conducive enough for women to participate successfully at all levels of management and leadership. Furthermore, the majority of the participants did acknowledge that women are mostly being promoted to “pink collar” roles where they gravitate only to human resources, finance and administrative positions. This means that males are still dominating more in technical fields and women are relegated to jobs that offered little opportunity for advancement.

Last but not least, as shown in Table 23, only 33% of the participants are actively identifying and training women to fill gaps. Remarkably, those organisations are using men in management to identify and to train high performing women, as also shown in Table 24. This finding correlates with literature found in section 2.2 of this paper by Wichert (2012) who stated that the critical factors that impact on women career advancement include amongst

others; mentors and sponsors, supportive work-life culture and a supportive supervisor.

Finally, based on the results shown in Table 24, only 53% of the participants admitted to having designed the flexible work options that incorporate the specific different needs of women. The participants cited the flexible work options to include flexible working hours, part time and extended maternity leave. The other 47% of the participants acknowledged not to be offering the flexible working options due to the nature of business, where they charge out time and the concept of flexi-time is perceived to be difficult and not feasible.

As per Table 26, again, only 53% of the participants have a financial plan or budget allocation set aside for operationalizing women career advance initiatives. Once more, this finding reinforce the findings by (Chant & Sweetman, 2012) when they highlighted that there is high expectation and agency on women to deliver meanwhile; there is minimal support from the organisations.

In summary, these findings are consistent with observation outlined in section 2.3 of this paper that the organisational strategies such as the organisational environment which embodies the goals and the culture and the employment practices might be influential in making the organisation do exceptionally well and succeed in making the women's career advancement a core strategic imperative.

## **6.5 Research Question Four**

Research Question four sought to determine if there are clear measurements and monitoring frameworks that exist in the organisations since tracking along the benchmark for advancing women can demonstrate that the organisation is moving positively. Hence, the research question was as follows: Are there clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track the organisation's progress and impact in women's career advancement initiatives?

To assess this phenomenon four questions were asked (as shown in section 5.6) related to the issues addressed in literature review. The common themes for this research question were: tracking of promotions by gender,

documentation of gender differentiated impact, internal and external reporting on progress and discussion of performance in the form of KPI's.

Based on the results in Table 27, only 26% of the participants track and analyse the promotions by gender, category and title. Secondly, as shown in Table 28 and 29, the majority of the participants do not document the gender-differentiated impact and they do not measure and report on the progress.

These findings are aligned with (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005) who stated that the methods for systematically tracking and measuring empowerment are not very well established. To validate, an expert mentioned the following: *“What is monitored gets done. Through the Learning and Development departments, and through the various audits (BBBEE, Employment Equity); a progressive company should monitor progress, highlight challenges and put in place systems to achieve the desired results. Not just HR, but all managers should be made accountable for the progress of their unit.”*

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, major findings on women's career advancement as a core strategic imperative in the organisations are discussed. Moreover, this chapter includes recommendations to the stakeholders based on the findings, as outlined in Chapter 1. The chapter will then conclude with the recommendations for future research.

### **7.2 Main Findings**

Whereas some themes were consistent with previous findings, others were not. This suggests that trends among women in the workplace may be continuously changing and evolving. However, it is crucial to understand that the focus of this study was to not only confirm or refute previous findings, but it also aimed to reveal the unclear reasons, and to unearth and understand the agendas behind the women career advancement initiatives in South African organisations. Moreover, this study assessed if these initiatives are positioned as core strategic imperatives in the organisations.

As has already been stated, the main finding of this study is that the agenda that is most likely to be framing women's career advancement in organisations is a moral and ethical one. In this study, the participants validated that the organisations commit to women career advancement initiatives because of moral or ethical reasons; that is, they believe that they must fulfil the ideal of 'doing the right thing'. The majority of the participants cited that this is done in an aspiration to ensure that all forms of inequalities are eradicated, and to respond to the social pressure for ethical and moral transparency.

Further, although some of the previous studies might have indicated that most organisations understand the critical issues and the significant rewards of real empowerment, as Burke & Mattis (2005) have found, even though there is encouraging evidence, it is nonetheless showing a slow progression in women's career advancement. On the upside, this study has found that the majority of the organisations do include gender diversity in their company-wide goals. However, the downside is that these goals are not supported by any policies or

procedures, and they are further not translated into everyday practices of the said organisations. In summary, this can then be interpreted to simply mean that the organisations do understand the critical issues, but they fail to recognise the significant rewards of real women empowerment.

Also, the organisations which seem to be doing exceptionally well are those with the following characteristics:

- women representation on their boards;
- strategic plans to increase these numbers;
- more percentage of women are in the talent pipeline, at both entry and experienced levels;
- provide equal pay remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value;
- identify and train high potential women;
- use male managers to mentor and support women;
- design flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women;
- financial plans or budget allocation are set aside for operationalising women empowerment and
- high levels of involvement and commitment by the CEO.

Finally, most organisations do not have clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track the organisation's progress and impact in women career advancement initiatives. On the other hand, those that do seem to have a clear strategic case for advancing women; also seem to have adopted most of the seven principles established by the UN Global Compact, as outlined in in section 2.7 of this paper.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

Firstly, South African organisations who are desirous to tangibly improve their agenda for women's advancement and empowerment, are advised to join the UN Global Compact and to contribute to the shaping of these new expectations of business in society. As indicated by (Williams, 2004), on subscription to the seven UN Global Compact principles, as outlined in section 2.7 of this paper, the organisations will then have a clear strategic case for advancing women.

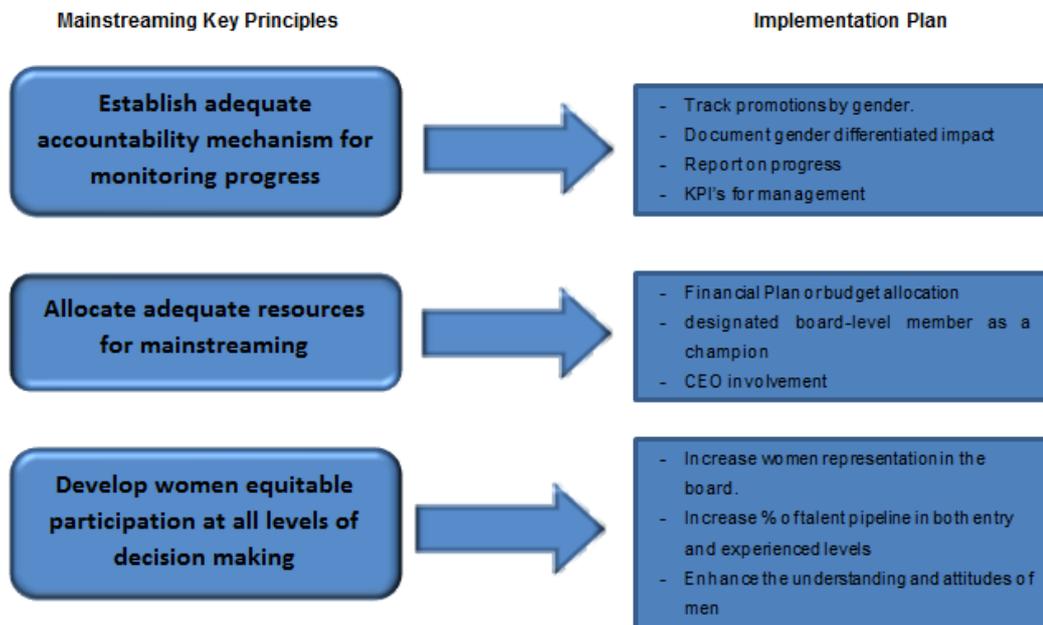
This will provide them with a strong strategic plan which will incorporate the following:

- A clear measurement framework;
- Companywide goals including the KPI's for progress towards women's career advancement;
- Committed board level individuals or CEOs who champion the women career advancement plans and initiatives;
- Training, development and mentoring programs for women.

Secondly, organisations should be involved in gender mainstreaming processes. As discussed in section 2.8 of this study, gender mainstreaming is a strategy and approach to achieve gender equality and social change. Furthermore, mainstreaming involves gender specific interventions to enable women to participate and benefit equally to eradicate any forms of gender inequality that existed in the past.

As adapted from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the key three gender mainstreaming principles have been identified and the implementation plan, as shown in Figure 16 below, has been developed to assist the organisations in their quest to implement women career advancement as a core strategic imperative.

**Figure 16: Implementation of the ILO mainstreaming conceptual framework**



Finally, for the organisations to be recognised as the ones which are doing exceptionally well in this discipline of women career advancement, it will be useful to incorporate the main findings of this study as outlined in section 7.2 which can be summarised as follows:

- Have detailed and strategic plans to increase the percentages of women representation in the board of directors.
- Increase the percentage of women in the talent pipeline at both entry and experienced levels,
- Provide equal pay remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value,
- Identify and train high potential women, furthermore use male managers to mentor and support them,
- Design flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women,
- Provide financial plans or budget allocations that are set aside for operationalising women empowerment,
- Have high levels of involvement by the CEO.

In conclusion, it is crucial for the organisations to focus on where they can make the most difference, given the reality of each institution's limited resources. However, with that said, the holistic approach, which is underscored by a long-term commitment that is supported with collective enablers, as outlined in the above-stated recommendations, will accelerate the evolution of women's career advancement as a core strategic imperative.

#### **7.4 Future Research**

The following future research is recommended:

- Investigate if the interpersonal skills of the CEO have any significant impact in the levels of career advancement initiatives in the organisations.
- Some consulting organisations who participated in this study indicated that flexible working options for women are not feasible in particular environments, due to the fact that they charge income based on time. It will be interesting to investigate if this holds true for the entire spectrum of professional services firms.
- It goes without saying that a study that will aim to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the women career advancement in South African organisations; is necessary for the short, medium, and long term future.
- Future research should replicate this study, but tweak it by focusing on determining which sectors in South Africa are achieving greater gender equality and it should provide further detailed reasons that arguably underlie their success.

#### **7.5 Concluding Statement**

Women career advancement has become an organisational imperative and an economic factor that cannot be ignored. This study has brought insight on how the organisations can strategically implement and commit to the initiatives, which are currently promoting women's empowerment. The rewards for women's career advancement have been widely publicised (Belk et al., 2005) , and this study has sought to restate and reinforce the clear business case that forms the basis of the said findings.

The good news, of course, is the fact that South African organisations, taking into consideration the realities of how the present has been significantly skewed by the past of apartheid, clearly seem to have a deep sense of conscience and a reverberating understanding of the need and responsibility, to personally redress the wrongs the past. Thus, the fact that the interviews determined that the moral or ethical commitment is the underlying base reason; is cause for celebration.

What would however, from a better vantage point, further propel economic growth, is twinning this moral and ethical base, with a clearer understanding of the real value of investing in women in the workplace. This would then ensure that there is a deepened commitment to guaranteeing that women are adequately supported, so that even more of them can advance at either excelling at their current responsibilities, or at being propelled to even higher positions of leadership. Simply put, what can and will ensure a winning recipe for women's advancement in South African organisations, is a commitment to doing the right thing, in the right way; simply because the continued empowerment of women, not only addresses the negative legacies of the past, but it also is a clearly viable and compelling business case.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONSISTENCY METRIX

Title: The advancement of women's careers: Is it a core strategic imperative in the South African corporates?

Research questions	Literature Review	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
<b>Question 1:</b> What agendas are the women being developed for in the organisations?	(Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011)	Interviews- phenomenological approach	Content Analysis
<b>Question 2:</b> Do corporates understand the critical issues and the significant rewards of real women empowerment?	(Dheepa & Barani, 2009b; Malhotra & Schuler, 2005)	Interviews- phenomenological approach	Content Analysis
<b>Question 3:</b> Which corporates are doing this exceptionally well and what are the reasons for their success?	Williams, O. F. (2004). The UN global compact: The challenge and the promise. <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i> , 14(4), 755-774.	Interviews- phenomenological approach	Content Analysis
<b>Question 4:</b> Are there clear measurement and monitoring frameworks to track the organisation's progress and impact in women career advancement initiatives?	Williams, O. F. (2004). The UN global compact: The challenge and the promise. <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i> , 14(4), 755-774.  Kilgour, M. A. (2007). The UN global compact and substantive equality for women: Revealing a 'well hidden' mandate. <i>Third World Quarterly</i> , 28(4), 751-773. doi:10.1080/01436590701336630	Interviews- phenomenological approach	Content Analysis

## APPENDIX 2: CONSENT STATEMENT

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled “***The advancement of women’s careers: Is it a core strategic imperative in the South African organisations?***” which is being conducted by ***Sithembile Thusi***, an MBA student at Gordon Institute of Business Science, under the supervision of Shireen Chengadu .

The purpose of the study to explore and assess whether the initiatives undertaken by the South African corporates that are defined as the activities supporting women empowerment are part of the core strategic agendas or a peripheral issue. The interview is expected to last about an hour. All data will be kept confidential. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview process serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to *Sithembile Thusi* at 083 708 9133 or [sithembile@bmanalysts.com](mailto:sithembile@bmanalysts.com) and *Shireen Chengadu* at 083 324 3188 or [chengadus@gibs.co.za](mailto:chengadus@gibs.co.za) . The Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) research committee is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the GIBS research committee @ [MBAResearch2014@gibs.co.za](mailto:MBAResearch2014@gibs.co.za)

Please select your choice below:

I agree

I disagree

Signature of a participant -----

Date-----

Signature of a researcher-----

Date-----

## APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER



Dear Mrs Sithembile Thusi

Protocol Number: **Temp2014-00677**

Title: **The advancement of women's careers: Is it a core strategic imperative in the South African organisations?**

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been APPROVED.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards,

Adele Bekker

## APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

### Section 1: Status Quo

The aim of these questions is to assess the status quo of the women empowerment initiatives in organizations.

1. Are the policies promoting women advancement available, if so, are they effective? Give examples	
2. Do the company-wide goals on transformation include gender equality?	
3. Is there a clear articulation of strategy on women empowerment? How is it communicated?	
4. What is the gender composition of the company's board of directors and top management?	
5. Assessment of Impact	
i. How do these numbers impact decision-making and bottom line results?	
ii. Does your company engage in any specific activities that seek to promote women to decision-making roles?	
6. Compensation Structures	
i. Does the organisation pay equal remuneration, including benefits, for work of equal value?	

## **Section 2: Forward Looking Strategies**

The aim of these questions is to evaluate the structures in place to accelerate women's career advancement.

Evaluation of HR policies	
Recruitment policies to attract talented women	
1 What percentage of the talent pipeline, at both the entry and experienced levels, are women?	
2 Is your company actively identifying and training women to fill gaps? (Describe).	
3 How successful have you been in attracting women with the education and experience to meet your business needs? Why?	
Employment efforts to retain women	
4 How many women voluntarily leave your organization each year compared to men?	
5. Has the company designed flexible work options that incorporate the specific and different needs of women?	
6. Are there accessible channels for filing grievances on gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence?	

7. What is the distribution between women and men of training and professional development opportunities?	
Evaluation of succession planning	
8. Are the high potential women being identified, and how?	
9. Are the career opportunities being created for them, and how?	
10. Are the opportunities being reinforced through sponsorship?	
11. Is there a financial plan or budget allocation set aside for operationalizing women empowerment? Estimate as a % of sales	
12. Are there any more concrete actions with a direct link to women empowerment?	

### **Section 3: Leadership Involvement and Commitment**

This section aims to determine the level of leadership involvement

1. Is there a designated board-level individual who champions the organization's gender equality policies and plans?	
2. What level of involvement does the CEO have and how is this translated in everyday practice?	

#### **Section 4: Monitoring and Evaluation**

1. Does the company track and analyse promotions by gender, employee category and title.	
2. Is the gender-differentiated impact documented?	
3. Are the equal pay reviews conducted on a regular basis? And how	
4. Does the company measure and report on progress, both internally and externally, using data disaggregated by gender?	
5. What opportunities exist throughout the organisation for review, analysis and discussion of performance? i.e KPI for management	

#### **Section 5: Agenda**

This section aims to determine the main agenda for the women empowerment initiatives in the organisation.

1. Out of the three imperatives, which would you say is most likely to be framing the women empowerment initiatives in this company, and why?
  - i. Business Case
  - ii. Moral/ethical reasons
  - iii. Legislative requirements