

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**An investigation into the organisational and
behavioural factors that influence the advancement of
women to senior positions in the workplace**

Amelia van Heerden

14453232

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Abstract

Women in South Africa and across the world remain under-represented in the workforce. Female representation at board and senior executive level is necessary to bring awareness to the boardroom of the importance of female transformation in the workplace, as well as to prepare organisations to attract future talent and increase their competitiveness. The main aim of the research was to identify and test the factors that shape an enabling environment in favour of the advancement of women. The research studied the individual behavioural factors, organisational structures and metrics, legislation and international pressure or trends.

Purposeful and snowball sampling methods were used to identify twelve senior executive men and women who manage diverse groups of employees and each has more than five years' senior executive-level experience. All the respondents serve on the main or executive boards of their respective organisations. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. The feedback was analysed using a combination of narrative, content and comparative analysis.

The research found that women mostly remain under-represented in the workplace. The main themes that emerged from the research as limiting factors – in order of frequency cited – were gender bias, corporate culture, skills shortages, the queen bee syndrome, the requirement for mindset change, mentorship, equality imbalance, female advancement policies and the requirement for female board and executive level representation. According to the respondents, female board and executive-level representation is critical to bring awareness to boardrooms in order for companies to implement structures in support of female advancement in the workplace. In addition to the aforementioned ten factors, it is clear that the majority of companies do not have adequate structures in place to drive and support the advancement of women, and that legislation, although it acts as a driver, fails to address the invisible barriers, such as gender bias, corporate culture and stereotypes, that hinder female representation. Finally, the social context, education and economic environments of South Africa were found to be underlying contributors to the failure of the advancement women. Chapter 7 contains a model that was devised to complement the Hay Group (2014) factors and guide organisations on female talent management and advancement in the workplace in the South African context.

Keywords

Glass ceiling, gender bias, gender equality, mentorship, stereotypes, culture, queen bee, women leadership

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in 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.

Amelia van Heerden

Date

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List of Abbreviations

BBBEE	-	broad-based black economic empowerment
BIAC	-	Business and Industry Advisory Committee
BWASA	-	Business Women's Association of South Africa
CEO	-	chief executive officer
EE	-	employment equity
EEA	-	Employment Equity Act
FTSE	-	Financial Times Stock Exchange
GCC	-	Gulf Cooperation States
GIBS	-	Gordon Institute of Business Science
JSE	-	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
MD	-	managing director
ROE	-	return on equity
SA	-	South Africa
SABPP	-	South African Board for People Practices
STEM	-	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TRS	-	total return to shareholders

Glossary

C-Suite	A term used to collectively refer to companies' most important executives. C-suite gets its name because most top job titles begin with the letter C.
Decision-maker diversity	A term used to describe decision-making by a group in which many viewpoints are considered and that informs better decision-making.
Double bind	A term used when women attain senior positions and just cannot win, no matter what.
Glass Ceiling	The glass ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing because they are women.
Old Boys Club	A society or group of former male school pupils or work colleagues that have formed a social or business connection.
Queen Bee	A women with a particular dominating or controlling position in a group.
She economy	A term used to refer to women as a particular group contributing to the economy of a country.
Saviour effect	A term used to describe someone who is brought into a bad performing company to act as the white knight to pull the company out from distress.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem

1.1 The context of female transformation

“Equality is no longer an optional extra or about being on the right side of history. Diversity on boards brings extensive business benefits and boosts economic success. FTSE companies need to be more effective at finding and harnessing talent. A board is a dynamic team which needs new viewpoints and different skills, not a group of people of similar backgrounds who follow the same thought patterns.”

Belinda Phillips (The Fawcett Society, 2015).

Women in South Africa and across the world remain under-represented in the workforce. Women are needed to bring awareness to the boardroom of the importance of female transformation and participation in the workplace.

It is important that the organisational structure supports female advancement in the boardroom, and according to the Hay Group’s survey in 2014 (Hay Group, 2014), companies who successfully manage female talent do it in a structured manner and take the following impact factors into account:

1. Individual behavioural factors
2. Organisational structure and measurements within the organisation
3. Legislative enabling environment
4. International pressure/trends

The Hay Group (2014) states that companies of the future will need a stronger customer focus, global expertise, capacity to manage complexity, skill to drive innovation and increased collaboration to grow and remain relevant in business.

Ellemers, Rink, Derks, & Ryan, (2012) focus on women in leadership positions; how women as a group add diversity to management teams, as their leadership styles are different to those of men. On the other hand, individual women are expected to ascend to leadership positions by showing their ability to display the competitiveness and toughness typically required from those at the top. The article covers gendered leadership beliefs and how these interact with women’s self-views to determine the effectiveness of female leaders. The article covers an integrative model that aims to

explain the interplay between organisational beliefs and individual-self definitions and its implications for female leadership (Ellemers et al., 2012).

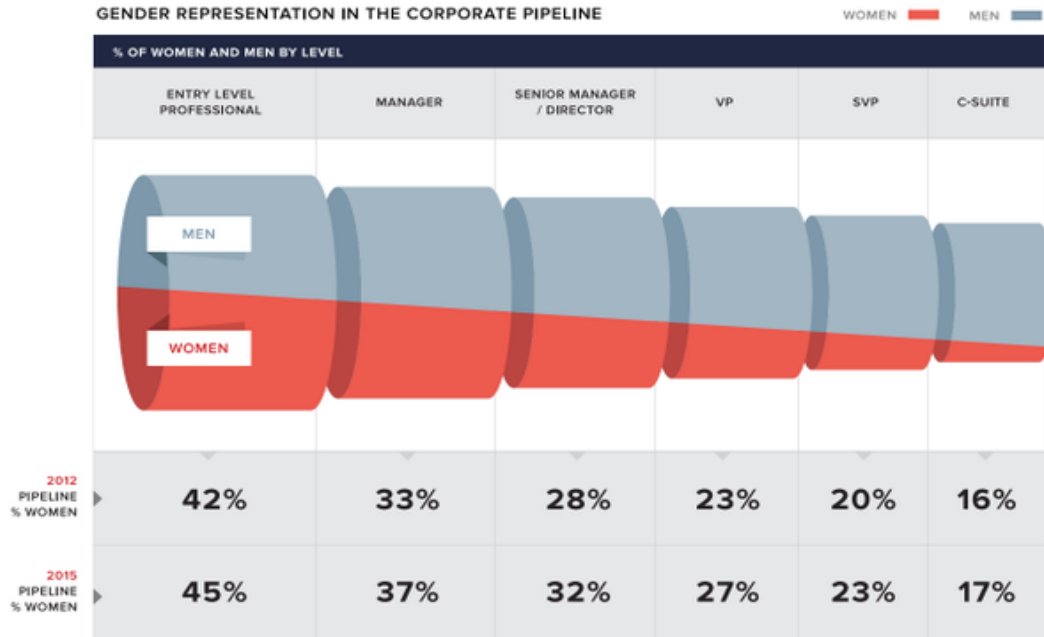
The international landscape

“To keep on track we also need to ensure that women are well represented at senior executive level too, making them ready to take up board level positions. In the FTSE 100, the total number of female senior executives has increased from 19.9% to 21%, which is to be welcomed, but we need to keep up the pressure to see this increase still further. “This is not only good for women, but good for businesses too. Boards which reflect their customers and clients are better able to understand their needs and respond to them.”

Nicky Morgan, Minister for Women and Equalities in the United Kingdom (Cohen, 2015).

Figure 1 below, shows the result of a 2015 study by Leadin.org and McKinsey, published in the Wall Street Journal, which conducted research on the promotions, attritions and trajectories of 118 companies and surveyed approximately 30 000 men and women. The study included North American companies and North American units of global ventures with headquarters in other areas. The research revealed an almost equal split between men (78%) and women (75%) who wanted to be promoted. The study found that as the desire for big jobs intensified, only 43% of women, compared to 53% of men, said they wanted top executive jobs. A concerning statistic showed that almost 25% of women felt that their gender has been the main impediment to reaching top-level jobs. The study showed in the end, that women are 15% less likely to be promoted to the next level, and at this pace, it would take a century before C-suite equality is achieved (Waller & Lublin, 2015).

Figure 1: Gender representation in the corporate pipeline



Source: (Waller & Lublin, 2015)

In Europe, Reuters reported in March 2015 that German Chancellor Angela Merkel had gone the route of passing legislation that will force companies to reach a 30% female board participation (Copley, 2015).

Women make up just 14% of executive committees of Fortune 500 companies and only 4.8% of these companies are led by women (Meister, 2015). Moreover, only 21 out of the 500 companies have female chief executive officers (CEOs) (Meyer, 2013).

Women are playing an increasingly significant part in today's economy. The salaries they receive and their spending ability are critical to a successful economy. In the "she economy", women are referred to as the chief purchaser. Women account for 85% of household spending (Johns, 2013).

Women remain under-represented in top executive positions (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). The female quotas system implemented across Europe aimed to address the inequality and under-representation of women on corporate boards. Although there has been advancement in female education and inclusion in the workforce, the imbalance still persists. The top 300 companies in the European Union have only 9.7% female board

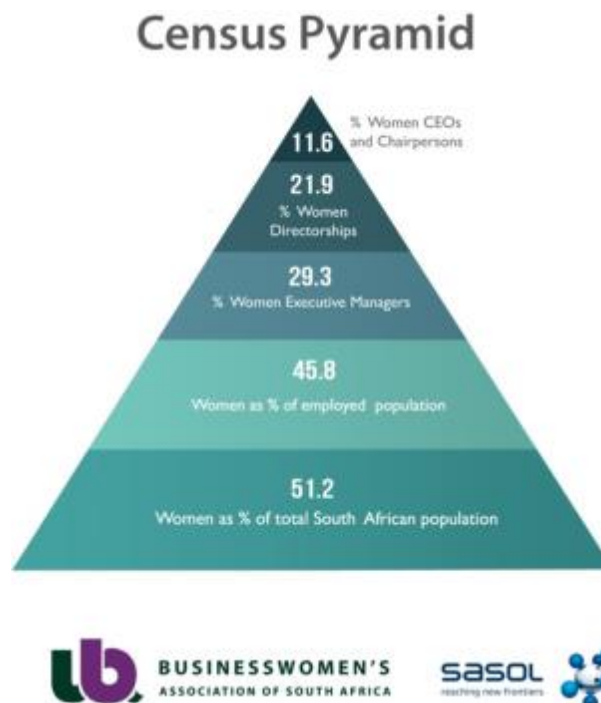
representation (Sweigart, 2012). Moving to America, a similar problem exists, where women make up fewer than 15% of all Fortune 1000 directors (Sweigart, 2012).

The South African landscape

According to the 2015 Census, as reported by the Business Women’s Association of South Africa (BWASA), women represent 51% of the population in South Africa. Women make up 45.8% of the working population, and 29.3% of women have executive management roles. Figures 2 and 3 below show that this number, decreases the higher one moves up with the seniority pyramid, with only 21.8% of women holding directorship positions and 11.6% holding CEO or chairperson positions (BWA Women in Leadership Census, 2015).

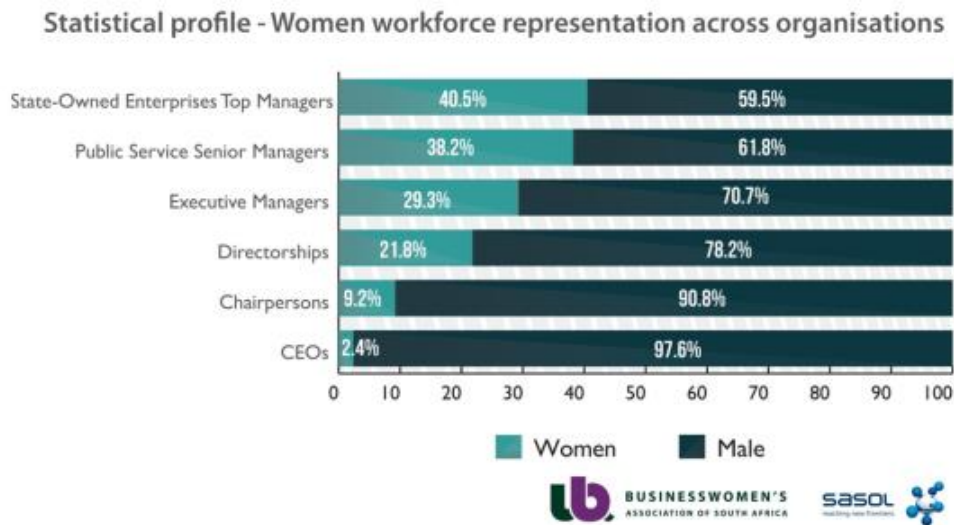
According to the 2015 PWC Executive Director Report, only 16% of executive board members were women in the 355 companies listed on the JSE (PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited (PWC), 2015).

Figure 2: BWASA women representation in the workplace



Source: (BWA Women in Leadership Census, 2015)

Figure 3: Women workforce representation according to BWASA



Source: (BWA Women in Leadership Census, 2015)

The benefits of having women in top structures of the organisation

For female advancement to gain a strong foothold in the business world, leaders of organisations should understand the benefits of having females in the top structures of the organisation.

Adler conducted an empirical study in 1998, (as cited by Johns 2013), which showed a strong correlation between a company's consistent record of female promotion into the executive level and high profitability. Adler's study investigated the practices of 215 Fortune 500 companies over a 19-year period, from 1980 to 1998. Longitudinal and historic performance data was analysed. The author evaluated four indicators of profitability, namely, profits as a percentage of revenue, assets, shareholders' equity, and the firms' competitiveness in relation to their industry median counterparts. The results showed a clear correlation in that those companies with high female executive participation outperformed the industry median on all profitability measures. Furthermore, the results indicated that the companies with the best scores for promoting women consistently outperformed those with good scores (Johns, 2013).

Similar findings were reported in a study conducted by Catalyst in January 2004 (as cited by Johns, 2013). This study evaluated 353 companies on the areas of gender diversity in top management and the relation to their financial performance. The study included five different sectors and two financial measures were applied – return on equity (ROE) and total return to shareholders (TRS). The results revealed a link

between gender diversity and higher financial performance. Companies with a higher number of women in top leadership positions thus showed better financial performance than those with the lower female representation. The ROE was 35% higher and the TRS was 34% higher (Johns, 2013).

The McKinsey 2014 Women Matter report states that companies with female representation at executive committee level outperformed those with no women at the top. The statistics quoted reveal that these companies have, on average, a 47% greater return on equity and a 55% higher average earnings before interest and tax (Sperling, Marcati, & Rennie, 2014).

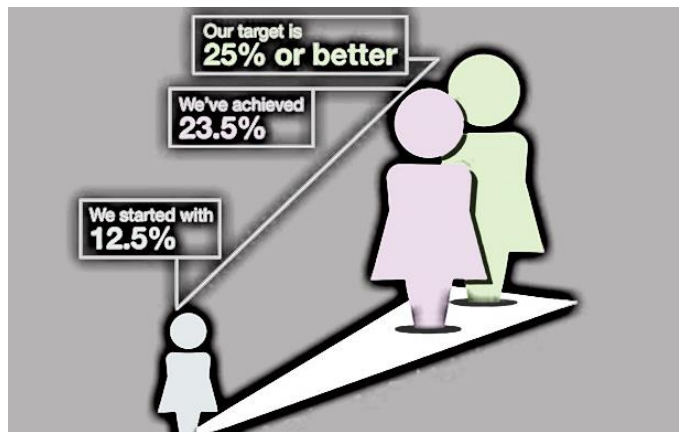
All the above studies indicate that including women in the top echelons of organisations has a direct influence on company performance, including bottom line and risk management.

Below is another quote from the 2015 Lord Davies review, which links to the above findings.

“The evidence is irrefutable: boards with a healthy female representation outperform their male-dominated rivals. I am confident we will reach our target this year, but our work is not complete. British business must keep its eye on the long game, as we strive to achieve gender parity. We have made good progress in the last four years, and if we continue this trend in the next parliament, I would expect to exceed a third of female representation by 2020.”

Vance Cable, Business Secretary, Lord Davies (Cohen, 2015).

Figure 4: The 2015 Lord Davies review women on boards of British companies



Source: (Cohen, 2015)

The need for a better understanding

There is a definite lack in contextual research in respect of South Africa's corporate environment. Furthermore the following questions apply:

- How do South African corporates with diverse boards accelerate female participation throughout the company? Does female board participation make a difference to whether female transformation is on the strategic agenda and how female transformation and advancement filter through the organisation? Does it influence the pace of female advancement?
- How do women contribute to this acceleration?
- Which individual behavioural variables (age, education, flexi-hours, job, title, and experience) drive women who advance?
- Do companies with active senior and executive-level female participation have a faster and more successful rate of female transformation (Latu, Mast, Lammers, & Bombari, 2013)?

1.2 Research objectives

The main aim of this research was to identify what strategies could be implemented to support business in more effectively enabling women progress and transforming the workplace. Furthermore, it aimed to understand the influence that females at board, executive and senior management levels had on the rate of female transformation in their workplaces.

The research aimed to determine the key factors that limited female advancement in the workplace from the personal behavioural perspective of women and their male colleagues (Millon & Lerner, 2003).

A further aim was to understand how organisational structure and culture played a part in successfully supporting female advancement.

It has to be kept in mind that legislation and international trends influence the enabling environment in which female executives operate. The environment must be conducive to female advancement as this influences the extent to which women in senior positions are able to drive female transformation and participation.

1.3 Research purpose

The research purpose was to identify the key factors in organisations that drove female transformation. The researcher wanted to identify, in particular, whether the females in senior roles in organisations had an impact on the involvement and advancement of other women in the organisation. It was important to understand whether senior women were actively participating in female advancement. This related, in particular, to areas of sponsorship, mentoring, policy formation and acting as role models.

The scope of the research included senior men and women at executive level in organisations, mainly in the Gauteng area, who worked for companies with 100 or more employees.

This research paper has been structured as follows: Firstly, the literature of the available material that addresses the various aspects relating to female advancement is reviewed. Secondly, an overview is provided of the qualitative methodology that

underpinned the data gathering and processing. Thirdly, the conclusion highlights the key findings from the research interviews in support of the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction to the literature review

The approach to the literature review was firstly, to ensure that the research questions in Chapter 3 would be answered in as much detail as possible. The aim was to broadly study the behavioural factors that influence the advancement of women; how organisational structure, from the viewpoint of board composition, culture, and policy and practice enabled women to advance. Moreover, the literature investigated looked at how legislation inhibited or enabled female advancement, and, lastly, how quota systems, from an international policy perspective played a role in the workplace and how it would impact the South African work environment if implemented.

South Africa is a highly gender-unequal society, according to the 2013 SABPP Women's Report conducted by the South African Board of People Practices (SABPP) (Bosch, 2013). The report highlights the fact that the Employment Equity Amendment Act (EEA), No. 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1998), aimed to correct the imbalance.

Women make up 42.2% of the workplace population in South Africa, however only 4.4% of CEO positions are held by women. According to this report, men verbalise that they will allow women on their boards, but 37% of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) do not have women on their boards yet. The report highlights the "old boys clubs" as a contributing factor to this imbalance as many decisions are taken outside of the boardroom where policies and Employment Equity have little influence (Bosch, 2013).

Linked to the issue of the slow rate of transformation, the research included this theory to ascertain whether females in South African companies are affected by male inclusivity. If so, it would be advisable for women to play a more active role in female entrepreneurship, where female-led businesses should provide better opportunities to women (Bosch, 2013).

Both internal and external factors affect the rate of female advancement in the workplace. Biases in systems, structures and processes need to be eliminated. According to Hoyt (2012), there is a discrepancy between what is expected from a role

and what is actually required to effectively fulfil the job requirements. This results in gender-based discrimination. Powell and Butterfield (1994) state that the issues of organisational process, uniformity and promotion from within the organisation may lead to shattering this phenomenon (Powell & Butterfield, 1994).

2.1 Individual behavioural factors

Research question 1 addressed the individual behavioural attributes of successful women and how these factors impact the advancement of women.

Sperling et al. (2014) cite nine organisational behaviours identified by the 2014 McKinsey Women Matter Report on companies in the Gulf Cooperation Council States (GCC) where women's impact is most evident. It was found that women scored the highest in effective behavioural factors, such as people development, expectations and rewards, role modelling, inspiration, participatory decision-making, intellectual stimulation and efficient communication. The same report indicated that men scored higher in two factors; individual decision-making and control and corrective action (Sperling et al., 2014).

The quotes below are from Donna Rachelson's book, *Play to Win: What women can learn from men in business* (Rachelson, 2015). These quotes position the female characteristics and leadership styles, and link them to the theory highlighted under networking, culture and some of the existing biases addressed further in the literature review.

"First and foremost, women are authentic – they are true to who they are, but they can also be vulnerable and sensitive. Women are great at relationship building, at bringing people into the fold. But they also aren't anyone's doormat or servant. And they're not prepared to compromise who they are."

"As I interviewed the contributors to the book, a few themes emerged. One was women's warmth and their ability to nurture. But nurturing doesn't mean soft or weak. It means caring and approachable. As Koo Govender, CEO of the VWV Group, puts it, "women's nurturing skills are not about mothering. They nurture in the sense that they empower others, developing them and helping them to rise to their full potential."

Bowles (2012) looks at how women legitimised their claims to top authority positions by following well-institutionalised paths of career advancement (e.g. high performance in line jobs) and self-advocating with the key influencers and decision-makers of the social hierarchy (e.g. bosses, investors). The article emphasised how woman articulated a strategic vision and cultivated a community of support around their strategic views and leadership. The career stories suggested that, when the women's authority claims were not validated, they engaged in narrative identity work to revise their aspirations and legitimisation strategies. This article also covers specific aspects of individual qualities that could enrich the research.

Cook and Glass (2014) aims to address some of the institutional aspects affecting female leadership and transformation. Not much research has explored institutional-level mechanisms that may increase women's ascension to top positions. The analysis focuses on testing three institutional-level theories that may shape women's access to and tenure in top positions: the glass ceiling, decision-maker diversity, and the saviour effect. The 2013 Lord Cohen Annual Report on FTSE 500 companies showed that diversity among decision-makers – not firm performance – significantly increases women's likelihood of being promoted to top leadership positions (Cohen, 2015). Moreover, contrary to the predictions of the saviour effect, diversity among decision-makers increases women leaders' tenure as CEOs regardless of firm performance.

In an article by Warfel, the work of Morrison, White, and Van Velsor's (1987), informed by the work of Pichler, Simpson, and Stroh (2008), it was mentioned that women need to portray macho, male type characteristics in order to qualify for executive- and board-level positions (Warfel, 1987).

2.1.1 Female transformation on the strategic agenda

Research questions 2 and 3 relates to how the country and organisational leaders view the importance of female transformation. Whether this topic is important enough, therefore enjoys a high priority on the agendas.

The organisations who seemed to make visible progress in attracting, developing, advancing and retaining suitable qualified persons, black people, woman and people with disabilities, the designated groups in terms of the Act, were those who saw affirmative action in favour of these groups as one of their key strategies for pursuing

corporate goals such as achieving and maintaining productivity, excellence and global competitiveness. These are employers who saw employment equity as a business imperative rather than simply an issue of complying with the law. In many of these companies accelerated human resource development is a critical part of the affirmative action measures (SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014).

According to McKinsey (Barton, Devillard, & Hazelwood, 2015), the issue of gender gap parity has become a strategic priority. A study conducted by McKinsey (Barton et al., 2015), showed that gender diversity was a top ten priority for only 28% of the companies surveyed in 2010. For a third of the companies surveyed, gender diversity was not even on the strategic agenda at all. McKinsey has done its own internal study on gender diversity as found itself to be meagrely transformed. They specifically implemented a top down targets approach. The company has never set specific gender goals for itself, until 2014. After doing so, McKinsey experienced a five-percentage points improvement in their intake of female consultants (Barton et al., 2015).

2.1.2 Equality

McKinsey acknowledges the fact that there are multiple interrelated factors that impact gender equality (Barton et al., 2015). As stated in the Hay Group study (Hay Group, 2014), the factors that impact gender diversity must be addressed as a collective.

Female leadership and equal representation at senior management and executive level should be a government, organisational design and corporate strategic agenda issue to make a significant impact on the advancement of women in the workplace. With reference to the SA legislative environment the potential conflict between the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act, No. 46 of 2013 (RSA, 2013) and EEA (RSA, 1998) removes the protection under the EEA (RSA, 1998) for white females in respect of the definition of designated groups.

According to Robbins and Judge (2013), employees have a perception in the workplace that what they get from a job is in relation to what they put in. They then compare the outcome-input ratio to those of other relevant employees. The perception is that the ratio is equal to that of relevant other employees with whom they compare themselves. A state of equity exists when the perception is that that one's situation is equal to the relevant others, and that it is fair and just in this case. However, in a

situation where the perception is that one's specific situation is not fair and justice does not prevail in relation to other relevant employees, it creates tension and anger. Employees who perceive an unequal situation will make one of six choices, one of which is to leave the organisation.

2.1.3 Bias

Gender bias still plays a role in the advancement of females in the workplace. According to a study by Pichler et al. (2008), gender stereotypes have consistently portrayed men and women as opposites. This has led to men being seen as masculine and achievement-oriented in contrast to women as being nurturing and facilitative. Women are often affected by this view, and are negatively impacted when it comes to performance reviews. Moreover, gender bias affects decisions about the selection, placement and promotion of women, especially in managerial positions.

Social identity theory suggests that individuals more positively evaluate in-group members than out-group members (Millon & Lerner, 2003). Furthermore, Robbins and Judge (2013) caution on in-group bias, which occurs when members of a group favours members in their group, regardless of whether they deserve it or not. Race, gender and nationality are common causes of in-group bias. This bias exists due to people looking for similarities to themselves in others.

Gender bias still exists in the workplace and holds women back from career advancement. The existing literature refers to first and second generation gender bias. First generation gender bias refers to the denial of equality, where second gender bias refers to holding women back from reaching higher echelons or power. Grover (2015) recommends actions women can take to overcome the bias that hold them back, namely recognition of the bias, thinking like a leader, feeling like a leader, acting like a leader, establishing oneself as a leader, promoting other women as would-be leaders, looking for 360-degree feedback, and creating synergy (Grover, 2015). These recommendations link back to research questions 1 and 2 of this study.

Oakley (2000) cites findings from a study by Broveman and Heilman, in which senior male managers were asked to categorise the styles of male and female managers. They described women as less confident, less analytical, less emotionally stable, less consistent and not possessing such good leadership qualities as their male

counterparts. This study also showed that for the male respondents, the male style of leadership was more desirable than the style of female leadership. In light of this stereotyping, it is not surprising that there are fewer female CEOs than male ones, and that femininity is associated with incompetence. Oakley's research (2000) further reveals that women at the top often report that men feel threatened by them, as if the men have somehow failed at competently filling the positions they find themselves in.

Affinity bias plays a significant role in the advancement of women. Within the structures of organisations, it is critical that recruitment practices eliminate the possibility of affinity bias as far as possible. Affinity bias in recruitment is defined as interviewers showing a preference for candidates who are similar to themselves (Turnbull, 2014). According to Turnbull (2014), many organisations have implemented the practice of panel interviews to mitigate unconscious or affinity bias.

Affinity bias is a part of human conditioning. It is important for individuals to be aware of such bias. Managing affinity bias seems to hold the same challenges as being an inclusive leader, in that in order to feel more comfortable with people who are different to us, we need to get to know them to become comfortable with them. Robbins and Judge (2013) state that people will naturally move towards a mentor with similar characteristics than them and can more easily communicate with those they identify with most closely. Senior males will most likely select male protégés to reduce the risk of sexual attraction or gossip.

A research study by Easterly and Ricard (2011), published in the *Journal of Research Administration* on why women leave academia, showed that gender bias exists, through gender schemas or unconscious bias. Unconscious bias occurs in all parts of daily life, however when it impacts hiring and reward practices, it must be dealt with. Being aware that such biases exist and making a conscious effort to overcome them will benefit women and the organisations they work for.

According to Ross (2011), unconscious bias occurs due to the way people encounter the world, which is driven by a hard-wired pattern of making unconscious decisions about others based on what feels safe, likeable, valuable, and competent.

2.2 Organisational structure and metrics

Transformational change involves re-shaping the organisation's strategy and design elements to effect change. An organisation's design includes the structure, work design, human resource practices, and management processes in support of the business strategy. Therefore, unless diversity is on the strategic agenda, the required changes to drive the change in the organisation will be hampered. A fragmented approach to change results in misaligned design elements, which in turn, sends mixed messages about the desired behaviours. Typically, when change is driven by the senior executive team, it happens more rapidly, which eliminates or mitigates the risk of it being mired in politics, individual resistance and other forms of organisational inertia (Cummings & Worley, 2015).

2.2.1 Leadership and senior management

The 2013 BIAC and Deloitte report confirms that the board, CEO, senior managers and managers play the biggest role in female advancement. The report highlights that business leaders should take charge of the issue of female advancement and not make it a human resources department (HR) responsibility. The report clearly states that leaders must understand the business case for female transformation and that the necessary structures and metrics must be in place to support the objective (BIAC & Deloitte, 2013).

The theory of position power is relevant when considering how leaders and senior individuals in the workplace play a role in female advancement. Robbins and Judge (2013) define position power as influence that is derived from one's formal structural position in the organisation. With this position comes the power to hire, fire, discipline, promote, and give salary increases (Robbins & Judge, 2013). According to the statistics cited in the introduction, corporate South Africa is still a male-dominated environment. It requires a position of power to be able to make a real difference in the decisions taken that will influence the advancement of women in the workplace.

Leadership and the way in which talent is managed throughout the organisation plays a key role in female advancement in the workplace (Meyer, 2013). According to a Hay Group (2014) study, various factors lead to successful talent management. The essence of this work is about the culture that an organisation creates that ensure

sustainable growth through a diverse and efficient workforce (Hay Group, 2014). Cummings and Worley (2015) claim that organisations react with appropriate but narrow responses, for example, maternity leave being added to benefit packages as women in the workforce have increased. The impact of these narrow responses does not create the necessary conducive conditions for an enabling environment for female participation and career advancement.

Success in respect of diversity is dependent on three key factors, pressure for diversity, the type of diversity in question and managerial attitudes (Dass & Parker, 1999). Dass and Parker (1999) use a framework to summarise the internal and external pressures facing organisations, which include age, gender, race, culture and values, and sexual orientation. With specific reference to women, Dass and Parker (1999) highlight the responsibility of women as caregivers in the home environment, and that these needs must be addressed to accommodate women. Moreover, they correctly identify the fact that many organisations put superficial practices in place without first, understanding and then addressing the root of the problem.

Cummings and Worley (2015) state that senior executives and line managers are responsible for initiating change. These individuals are responsible for maintaining the organisation's character and performance. Senior managers therefore decide when to initiate significant changes, what the changes should be and how to implement them. Moreover, these individuals direct and set the pace for change throughout the organisation. Furthermore, executive leadership's involvement in large-scale and transformational change is critical, especially when the change is required at a fast turnaround time.

2.2.2 Culture

The issue of culture plays a significant part in the how companies are able to transform. Culture takes between seven and ten years to change. Cummings also states that if an organisation truly believes in diversity, then diversity must be a strategy that fuels innovation and economic progress. Cummings states that "the seeds of organisational responsiveness and successful change are in the innovative possibilities that exist when multiple viewpoints, values, and beliefs are heard and nurtured over time" (Cummings & Worley, 2015).

According to the McKinsey Global Survey (2013) (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, & Werner, 2014) of 1 421 global executives, corporate culture is a significant inhibitor of female advancement. However, 69% of female respondents were confident that they would reach the C-suite (Devillard et al., 2014).

Kotter (1996) defines change as a set of norms and behaviours, and shared values among a group of people. Norms and behaviours are common and pervasive ways of acting by a group. This behaviour persists, as the group tend to behave in a certain way and transfers this behaviour to new members. Usually those who conform are rewarded, while those who do not, are punished. Shared values are shared important concerns and goals. These shared values, as with norms and behaviours, will persist over time, even if group members change. Therefore, the first step is to change the norms and values. Kotter (1996) further states that culture is something that is not easily manipulated.

Culture changes only once people's actions have been successfully altered, and after the new behaviour has produced consistent benefits over time. Once people see the benefits and performance improvement they are more likely to accept the change (Kotter, 1996).

According to Stainback, Ratliff and Roscigno (2011), work environments with supportive cultures and histories are least likely to have women interpreting work-related experiences and tensions as gender discrimination. Workplaces with a supportive work-family environment are more likely to be perceived as embracing equal opportunity concepts and therefore reduce women's perceptions of gender discrimination.

In the study conducted by Oakley (2000), respondents raised the issue of the "old boys' club". This phenomenon occurs because of men perceiving women or diversity as a threat to the status quo. One way in which women are kept out of these "clubs" or networks is the way in which men tend to transfer skills, power and competence to those in their network. These networks operate on a basis of reciprocity and become a closed loop that is hard to penetrate.

Another way to keep women out is through competency testing, where women need to prove themselves repeatedly. The study highlights that when layoffs occur, it is often women at the top who suffer, as the old boys networks protect those they feel will have

their backs. The perception that too much change could threaten their positions is what keep women from career advancement (Oakley, 2000).

According to an article by Deborah May (2014), published in *Governance Directions*, the first step to achieving cultural change is to help organisational leaders see how unconscious bias manifests in their organisations. In the article, she proposes that leaders conduct a formal cultural audit to identify the underlying bias that exists in their organisations. This audit will enable business leaders to understand the unconscious bias and other diversity barriers within the organisation (May, 2014).

2.2.3 Formal and informal networking

This brought the researcher to the issue of networking and the importance of this concept. For women in the working world, a strong support network is of critical importance.

According to McDonald (2011), gender-homophilous contacts offer greater job finding assistance than other contacts. The results from the study shows how social capital flows through gendered and racialised networks (McDonald, 2011).

Networks in the workplace often become an inhibiting factor for female advancement. According to a study by Ajrouch, Blandon, and Antonucci (2005), networking between men and women differs in complex ways and relates to particular life stages. The study states that groups of support are gendered, and expectations and roles differ between men and women. General tendency also shows that even women who experience poor health out-live men, and are more likely to lose their spouses. This general tendency means that women have the ability to contribute longer in the workplace. Additionally, women have larger, more diverse social networks than men, with more people they consider very close.

During midlife, however, women take on roles as caregivers to their young or elderly, and often have less contact with their networks during this time. However, men who fulfil the breadwinner role rely mostly on their spouses to manage family relations.

The study shows that men have a higher number of co-workers in their social networks than women do, whereas women have more family members in their networks. This is

a result of women taking more responsibility, in general, for familial contact; for example, regardless of social class, women report more in-person contact with their children than men.

Women in high status occupations often work a second shift due to family responsibility at home although they have a full-time job. The additional responsibilities and obligations on women affect the time they have available to build relationships with co-workers. A result for some women is that these additional responsibilities often cause them be unable to focus on a career and be financially independent (Ajrouch, Blandon, & Antonucci, 2005).

2.2.4 The queen bee and glass ceiling phenomena

The 'queen bee' syndrome and the glass ceiling phenomenon (Broughton & Miller, 2009) are other factors in organisations that hinder the rate of transformation. Broughton and Miller (2009) cite factors such as gender stereotyping, perceptions of female management style, personal style, tokenism, difficulties in networking and over confidence as prohibiting female advancement. The glass ceiling phenomenon refers to an invisible barrier that prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder once they have researched a certain level in the organisation.

Research has consistently recommended that the proportion of women in an organisation should positively relate to the proportion of women in top management positions. The study conducted by Pichler et al. (2008) proved, however, that the proportion of women in the non-managerial labour pool is more strongly related to the portion of women in lower managerial positions and least related to the proportion of women in top management positions.

The study (Pichler et al., 2008) concludes with three proposed approaches to the management of diversity in organisations and attempting to break down the glass ceiling barriers: (1) training women to be successful in a male-dominated environment, (2) assimilating and accommodating women-supportive policies and practices, and (3) valuing gender diversity. Pichler et al. propose that by adopting female-friendly work policies, such as employer-sponsored childcare, could positively contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

Oakley (2000) states that the glass ceiling is not one ceiling or one spot in the wall, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias. Oakley's study highlights the fact that corporate practices as well as cultural and behavioural factors are the key contributors to unequal workplaces. Behavioural and cultural factors include issues of stereotyping, tokenism and preferred leadership styles. Furthermore, corporate policies and practices in training, career development, promotion and compensation contribute to the glass ceiling phenomenon.

Oakley (2000) continues by stating that from a behavioural and cultural perspective, double bind becomes an issue faced by women in senior positions. Double bind is a term used when women attain a senior position and just cannot win, no matter what. This behavioural norm, typically applicable to women, means they have to be tough, like men, to be taken seriously. However, they are then perceived as "bitches". Throughout history, double binds have been used to oppress others by way of power, and women were the most likely victims. Femininity/competency is a particular double-bind problematic for women, where women may adopt masculine traits, but are then seen as un-feminine.

Gender and communication styles also affect female participation and advancement. Boys learn from a young age to play up their abilities and knowledge, and to challenge others directly. In contrast to this, girls are more likely to discourage other girls who dare to play themselves up too much. As a result, girls behave in a way that balances their needs with those of others. In the workplace, linguistic style could mean the difference between a promotion or no promotion (Oakley, 2000).

2.2.5 Mentoring and sponsorships

Mentoring and sponsorship are furthermore necessary to assist women in career advancement. A mentor is a senior employee who sponsors, in some cases, and supports a less-experienced employee. Mentoring relationships serve both career and psychological functions. Career functions include areas of lobbying, coaching, providing exposure, sponsoring by nominating a less-experienced employee for potential career advancing opportunities and acting as a sounding board for ideas. Psychological functions include counselling, sharing of personal experiences, providing friendship and acting as a role model (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Affinity bias as referred to in 2.1.3 again plays in on mentorships and the selection of candidates.

Unfortunately, not all employees in an organisation have an equal chance to be selected for mentorship programmes. In the United States, upper managers in most organisations have traditionally been white males, and mentors tend to select people like them, with similar educational backgrounds, and of similar gender, race and ethnicity. Minorities and women are less likely to be selected. Robbins and Judge (2013) furthermore conclude that having a mentor is only valuable if there is a good supportive network of resources. If a mentor is not a strong performer, the success of the protégé may be jeopardised.

2.2.6 Gender diversity and future organisational challenges

According to the PricewaterhouseCoopers Next Gender Diversity Report (Flood, 2014), a survey of 40 000 respondents across 18 countries, the lack of women in senior leadership is and will continue to take its toll on companies from a competitive and financial perspective.

The report highlights the fact that, not only do companies grapple with the issue of female diversity and gender equality, but the entering of the millennial generation into the workforce requires companies to review practices, as this generation re-shapes the workforce. The current conversation around gender equality needs to broaden to incorporate the issue of gender diversity from a sustainability perspective. This means that organisations must think about the young talent needed to fill the pipeline. The report highlights the fact that female millennials matter, as they are highly educated and entering the workforce at a faster and greater pace than any of the previous generations. The millennials consider opportunities for career advancement the most attractive aspect in employer selection.

The study continues that for organisations, this means that more inclusive cultures and talent strategies should be implemented to capitalise on this. The issue of equality is top of mind, and millennials seek out companies with strong equality records. Third on the list is work-life balance. Ninety-seven percent of millennials said this was a critical consideration in selecting a company. Furthermore, although this generation has an affinity for technology, they welcome regular and direct face-to-face feedback.

Organisations will need to find the balance between technology and communication strategies to accommodate this requirement. The fifth highlight from the report touches

on global careers. Millennials are highly mobile and their ability to travel internationally is higher than those of previous generations. Organisations that wish to attract this generation must provide international opportunity and have a modern mobility approach.

Finally, the aspect of company reputation is another key consideration. This generation wants purpose in their work. They want to contribute to the world and want to be proud of their employers. Twenty-two percent of respondents in this study are reluctant to work in the financial services industry, as they are concerned that this industry does not have a good image. This is concerning, as statistics from 20 global markets show that women make up 60% of this market. Companies in this sector should focus on attraction and retention strategies. Moreover, leadership diversity and female advancement strategies must move to the top of the strategic agenda.

Oil and gas is the second worst performing industry, at 17% of respondents stating reluctance to work in, or be associated with this industry. Cited issues include male domination, challenging remote work locations and physical labour requirements. Globally, engineering positions are ranked second hardest to fill, with only 27% of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates from G20 countries being female. Nearly four times as many 15-year-old boys consider a career in engineering or computing than girls (Flood, 2014).

2.3 Legislation, quotas and international trends

Although legislation plays an important role in achieving a balance, if not implemented effectively, it harms the particular gender more than benefiting them (Bosch, 2013). The EEA has failed women in South Africa. The 2013 SABPP Women's Report (Bosch, 2013) states that it is now the challenge of business to achieve female equality, as government has failed. It is clear that forced methods of levelling the playing field seldom prove successful in areas of transformation.

In contradiction to the last statement above, forced methods have been the route some European countries have taken. The implementation of quotas for female membership on corporate boards has become a legislated requirement. The quotas intend to correct gender imbalances on corporate boards, which persist despite female advancements in education and workforce participation. In the European Union, women represented only

9.7% of the board members at the top 300 companies in 2008 (Sweigart, 2012). There is a clear lack of progress in women's corporate leadership and it is not a European problem alone. The numbers in the United States show that women make up less than 15% of all Fortune 1000 directors (Sweigart, 2012).

According to the SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board (2014), two areas affect South African EE, namely government's performance in basic and higher education and organisations' mindsets and processes. Other factors that contribute to the low rates of female advancement in our country include poverty, limited education and slow economic growth (SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014). The conclusion of this report is that the major constraint on the achievement of EE is the slow economic growth rate of South Africa. In order to achieve appropriate levels of representation, white males should be replaced, instead of achieving representation through the actual growth in jobs at the required levels. Another constraint is the inability of government to increase performance in basic and higher education to ensure a strong skills pipeline for businesses. The report leaves it up to human resource departments to change and drive recruitment practices and policies to achieve EE.

Conclusion to the literature review

The literature review highlighted various factors that influenced female participation and advancement, or the lack thereof, in the workplace. This research aimed to validate how prevalent these factors were among the respondents. It was important to understand the limitations from a structural and legislative perspective, as these could hinder the extent to which women would be able to influence and drive female advancement in the workplace. In accordance with the Hay Group (2014) survey factors, which formed the basis for the development of the research questions, the literature review provided adequate supporting information relating to the four factors highlighted in the survey – which must be collectively considered and addressed – for effective female advancement.

Chapter 3: Research questions

Introduction to the research questions

The research questions specifically investigated the factors mentioned in the Hay Group (2014) report that influence the extent to which female advancement is enabled in organisations. The questions below are in accordance with the proposed factors the group mentions in its report.

Research questions enable easier understanding of what the issues are that create complexity and indicate the issues that need to be resolved. A research question is the researcher's version of the problem for a specific inquiry (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010).

3.1 Research question 1: What are the individual behavioural factors that affect female transformation in South Africa?

Women need to understand the role they play in respect of overall company performance and how their behaviour influences the advancement of other women in their organisations. According to the literature review in Chapter 2, point 2.2 women face a number of challenges in the organisation, of which a few examples are the “old boys’ club”, the queen bee syndrome and male inclusivity. The research questions aimed to understand the participants’ perspectives on the role of women in the workplace and what they were doing to advance female participation. The questions also aimed to gain an understanding of how top-performing women managed to get to their level of seniority and what had contributed to their success.

3.2 Research question 2: How do organisational structure and measurements lead to increased and sustainable female transformation?

The introduction to the research problem indicates that companies with a female diverse workforce outperform their competitors. It links to the literature review, which clearly shows that it is imperative for companies to have female advancement on their corporate agenda. This has a direct influence on how the company positions itself to attract, nurture and retain females in the organisation. Female board participation is important for female transformation, as women must be in positions of influence to

ensure female advancement filters through the organisation. In this regard, issues of the company's Memorandum of Incorporation become relevant, as it should make provision for female board representation. This question aimed to investigate how the company structured itself in terms of policies and practices that would ensure female participation.

3.3 Research question 3: Does the legislative environment enable an increased rate of female transformation?

This question explored the extent to which legislation enabled or hindered female advancement in the workplace. Furthermore, it sought the participants' points of view in terms of how well their respective organisations adhered to the legislation. It was important to understand whether the skills plans submitted was not only done as tick-box exercises, but actually served as drivers of talent development and the promotion of diversity in the organisation. Moreover, it had to be ascertained whether the skills plans linked back to the recruitment practices of the organisations.

3.4 Research question 4: How do international pressure and trends impact corporate South Africa and the rate of female transformation?

The aim of this question was to gain an understanding of the participants' views of other countries' practices to advance female workplace participation. The matter relating to the quota systems introduced in many European countries would receive particular attention. In addition, this question aimed to provide an understanding of whether some of these practices would be useful in the South African context or its specific companies.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Introduction to the research methodology

From the literature review, the factors influencing and driving female advancement in the workplace were identified. The research questions were formulated to gain an understanding of how these factors influenced and played a role in female advancement in South African businesses, and to determine whether there was a link between the four factors listed below and successful female transformation in the companies included in the research.

The following factors relating to female advancement has been the focus of the research questions:

1. Individual behavioural factors
2. Organisational structure and measurements within the organisation
3. Legislative enabling environment
4. International pressure/trends

4.1 Choice of research design

This was a deductive qualitative research study. A deductive approach to research involves the testing of existing theory by using a research strategy to conduct the test (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The Hay Group (2014) study referred to in the introduction informed the research design and the questionnaire for the interviews.

Qualitative research is recognisable for the use of methods such as in-depth interviews and group moderation techniques. This method allows for an interpretation of “why”- and “how”-type questions. The researcher is able to prompt the participant to elaborate on responses to establish a deeper meaning or clearer context of the question or topic. This enables the researcher to obtain a more accurate result from in-depth interviews (Bailey, 2014). Qualitative research determines how people interpret their experiences, how they experience their world and what meaning they link to their experiences.

Qualitative research is less structured than most quantitative research methods. It does not rely on self-response questionnaires containing structured response formats. Rather, it is more researcher-dependent, in that the researcher needs to extract value

from the unstructured manner in which respondents provide the information, i.e. text from a recorded interview. The researcher then draws conclusions from the interpretation of the data (Zikmund et al., 2010).

Qualitative face-to-face methods of research allow for probing. Probing is an interview technique that aims to draw deeper and more elaborate explanations from the discussions (Zikmund et al., 2010).

According to Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (1994), qualitative research often ignores the numbers. Counting happens in the background when judgments of qualities are being made. The counting method allows for easier identification of patterns, namely (a) happens a number of times and (b) consistently happens in a specific way. The “number of times” and “consistency” judgments are based on counting. This method will allow the identification of various aspects’ importance, significance and recurrence. By using numbers, one easily sees what is contained in a large batch of data. Numbers also assist to verify an assumption for analytical honesty and bias elimination.

The research orientations used included some aspects of the phenomenology and ethnography approaches. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to studying human experiences, which are subjective and determined by the context in which people find themselves in their day-to-day lives. This approach relies largely on the conversational interview tools (Zikmund et al., 2010). Although the research was based on specific research questions, many of the questions allowed participants to remain anonymous, which made them more comfortable to tell their stories and give their opinions from a personal perspective.

According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), exploratory research methods are concerned with the researcher aiming to seek new insights, asking new questions and assessing topics in a new light. Moreover, descriptive studies are designed to produce accurate representations of persons, events or situations.

4.2 The scope

The scope of this research study is to test the key factors – individual behavioural, organisational, legislative and global trends – on the advancement of female participation in the workplace according to the 2014 Hay Group survey on female advancement.

4.3 Population

The participants in the study were a combination of contacts known by the researcher and others referred to the researcher through the researcher's network of contacts in the corporate business environment. Female and male senior executives in corporate South Africa were the main participants in the research study, including academics who have been researching the area of women in business. The researcher had a list of personal contacts of men and women in senior roles in South African companies for the study.

The sample of companies included listed and non-listed companies with local and/or multinational footprints. The researcher ensured that participants were individuals from companies with 100 or more employees. Furthermore, the respondents could provide in-depth information at senior level for the research study. The company size was important from a board composition point of view, as well as for ascertaining impact across business units or departments in a more complex environment.

4.4 Sampling method, size and unit of analysis

A sample involves any process that draws conclusions based on a measurement of a population portion. A sample is a subset from a larger population (Zikmund et al., 2010). A purposive sample, a form of non-probability sampling, was used, which included a number of senior male and female managers and executives in a variety of industries. According to Saunders and Lewis, (2012), this method is used when the researcher uses his or her judgement to select respondents who will best be able to answer the research questions. According to Zikmund et al. (2010), non-probability sampling is a sampling technique in which units of the sample are chosen, based on personal judgment or convenience. The probability of any particular member of the population being chosen is unknown (Zikmund et al., 2010). A sample of 12 respondents was interviewed.

The researcher secured interviews with senior executives from companies in various industries in South Africa. Some of the interviewees offered access to additional suitable interviewees. This is referred to as snowball sampling (Zikmund et al., 2003). The sample area for the study was Gauteng, particularly Pretoria and Johannesburg, where most corporate companies are situated. One respondent was from Cape Town.

4.4.1 Unit of analysis

The units of analysis were the individual interviewed and his or her company.

4.4.2 Population relevance

It is important to identify the target population from the start of the research project. The researcher identified the population to be men and women in senior management positions in businesses in South Africa (Zikmund et al., 2010).

4.4 Data gathering process

This qualitative research study generated data by using a combination of exploratory and descriptive methods, and semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Face-to-face interviews were the main method of data gathering. The use of an interview guideline ensured consistency throughout the process, thereby improving the quality of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The method followed was as follows:

- Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were scheduled with participants to gather data. While demographic information was collected by the researcher for participation and sample management purposes, only the industries were presented in this research report.
- The researcher made contact with the participants via telephone or e-mail. Where telephonic contact was established, the researcher confirmed the willingness of the participant to partake in the study and then followed the initial contact through with a structured e-mail containing an overview of the research, the research questionnaire and the consent form.
- The participants contacted via e-mail received the same structured e-mail and confirmed participation via e-mail. The researcher found no resistance from any of the participants to partake in the study. Participants were, in general, excited about the topic. There were two instances where the original contact confirmed that he or she was not the correct person to interview and referred the researcher to someone more appropriate in the organisation. Participants showed particular passion for the topic by requesting their own personal assistants or secretaries to

schedule time with the researcher. To the researcher, this was somewhat surprising, but a good indication that the topic was important to the potential participants. Moreover, it was a good indicator that, in the case of participants who were referred to the researcher, networks were valued and that participants had good relationships and confidence in those who referred them to the researcher.

- The scheduling of the interviews was challenging, given the availability of the participants. Three of the participants travelled overseas during the interview period and the researcher had to wait for them to return to South Africa to proceed with the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher had to contend with diary changes with a number of the participants and the postponement of the interviews impacted on the final number of participants in the study.
- The researcher scheduled time with the participants at their convenience. Some of the interviews were conducted after hours, as this was more suitable for the participants. Three of the interviews were conducted telephonically during normal business hours.
- Notes were made during and after the interviews to capture the researcher's observations and the unspoken aspects.
- During the interview process, the researcher took particular care not to ask or probe the participant on aspects of the questionnaire or their own organisations that would make them uncomfortable in any way. The researcher ensured that each participant signed the requisite consent form and made it clear that all information would remain confidential and that the participant could opt out of the interview at any time. The researcher had no instance where respondents did not want to answer questions or felt uncomfortable answering any questions.
- Eight of the interviews were conducted face to face either at the participant's place of work in a quiet meeting room or at GIBS in a syndicate room. The other respondents were interviewed telephonically, as it suited them best and distance did not allow for some interviews to be conducted face to face.
- All the interviews were recorded with a recording device, uploaded to a cloud server, downloaded by the transcriber and transcribed in Microsoft Word format.
- Current and new themes that transpired from the interview were cross-referenced. This was done to ensure richness of the data and to complement the research.
- The data was analysed to identify trends and links to create meaningful information.
- The information was cross-referenced with the literature review to enable further in-depth analysis.

4.5 Data analysis approach

Once fieldwork was completed, the data had to be converted to a usable format. The information content was then mined from the raw data. This process usually begins with editing and coding the data. The editing process corrects any interviewer errors before the data is uploaded to the necessary software programme for coding and further analysis (Zikmund et al., 2010).

Data analysis is the application of reasoning to understand the data gathered. This process aims to identify common themes from the data. The data was analysed per individual, with common themes being aggregated across the entire sample. The transcripts were analysed line by line and coded. Code families were created using the four main research questions as the family names. Two additional families were created for behavioural factors specifically, as well as compliments on the research received from respondents, which the researcher wanted to insert as an appendix to the research. Sixty-two codes were used for data analysis.

Respondents' interview transcripts are listed as projects in Atlasti and respondents are referred to as P1-12 in the quotations listed in Chapter 5.

Atlasti qualitative software was used to organise data according to themes and code data for the analysis. The software adopts the term "hermeneutic unit" to refer to groups of phrases that are linked with meaning. A hermeneutic unit is a text of passage from a respondent's interview, which links to a key theme from within the interview. These text passages are critical to the way in which data is interpreted (Zikmund et al., 2010). The transcripts of the interviews were categorised into appropriate categories, which linked back to the literature review, and a record of quotes is referenced in the research.

4.6 Validity and reliability

According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), research validity is defined as "the extent to which (a) data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure and (b) the research findings are really about what they profess to be about". Research reliability is defined as "the extent to which data collection methods and analysis procedures will produce consistent findings" (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

To ensure validity and reliability in the study, the researcher ensured that there was diversity in the organisations chosen. In some cases, the researcher aimed to have two respondents per organisation to test the consistency of the answers to the questions. The researcher incorporated questions from the Hay Group study to test the various factors in the South African context and to compare the findings.

The researcher ensured that interviews were conducted with individuals at similar levels of seniority in the organisations to ensure consistency in data collection. This eliminated the issue of potential elite bias, whereby heavier weighting to responses from higher-level or more senior respondents could be given (Miles et al., 1994).

To test the validity of the responses, the researcher interviewed an expert in the field who had been active in the specific topic of the research. Furthermore, triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) was applied, whereby views from males and females, as well as views from respondents from the same group of companies were compared to validate responses.

Chapter 5: Results

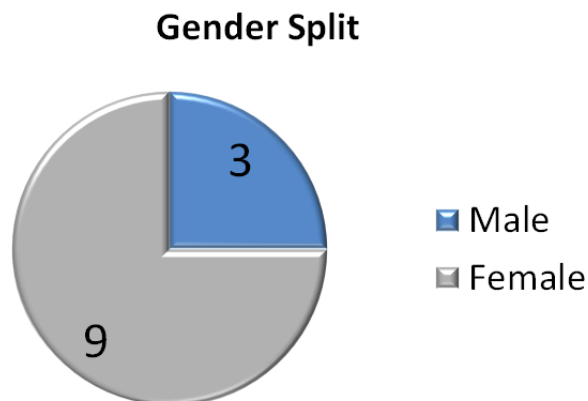
5.1 Introduction to the results

Chapter 4 set out the research methodology adopted to test the research questions from Chapter 3. The Hay Group (2014) survey listed four main factors that influence the successful management of female talent that affects female transformation. This chapter highlights the findings from the data collected from respondents during the interview process. The respondents included 12 senior executives in various local and multinational companies across various industries, including mining, construction, professional services, healthcare, human capital and information technology. The study is not racially representative, due to the unavailability of the targeted participants.

5.2 Description of the sample

Demographically, the group consisted of three males, of which two men were white and one Indian, as well as five white and four Indian women, as set out in Figure 5 below. The researcher realised that this sample was not racially representative and cited this as a research limitation. Race may indicate different factors to career advancement within the context of BBBEE and employment equity, in particular with regard to black women. No black females participated in the study, due to time constraints and unavailability of African participants during the research process.

Figure 5: Gender split of research sample



Respondents were aware of the lack of female participation at senior levels in their organisations and stated their embarrassment about this during the interviews. Below are two direct quotes from the interviews with two different respondents.

“The demographic of the team is a sensitive issue.”

“So we are almost embarrassed of our situation when it comes to females, because we don’t have as many as we should have. You look at a group photograph of our boards or our executive committees and it is just, we have kind of banned photographs now, it is just too embarrassing.”

The industries of the respondent organisations are listed in Table 1 below. The researcher was of the opinion that a breakdown of the industries involved was relevant, as some results related to industry barriers and male-dominated environments.

Table 1: Respondents by industry

Respondent	Industry
P1	Mining and Construction
P2	Legal Services
P3	Professional Services - HR
P4	Information Technology
P5	Waste Management Services
P6	Mining and Construction
P7	Mining and Construction
P8	Non-specific
P9	Hygiene Services
P10	Healthcare
P11	Information Technology
P12	Professional Services - Employee Wellness

5.3 The interview results

The 2014 Hay Group (2014) survey informed the development of the research questionnaire to test the following factors that influence the advancement of females in the workplace:

1. Individual behavioural factors
2. Organisational structure and measurements within the organisation
3. Legislative enabling environment
4. International pressure/trends

Each of the factors above were changed into specific research questions, as the primary questions and secondary questions on each of these were developed to guide the interview. In total, 20 questions were asked during every interview, each of which lasted between an hour and an hour and a half.

This research study did not give any personal information or information by which companies could be identified, due to the sensitivity of the topic.

The interviews provided rich data, and in many cases uninhibited personal accounts of the frustration around the topic of female advancement. The researcher found it relevant and necessary to provide a number of respondent quotes in Chapter 5 in order to capture the concern and frustration of the respondents in respect of the topic of this research study.

The responses are listed below according to question.

5.3.1 Research question 1: What are the individual behavioural factors that affect female transformation in South Africa?

The aim with the first research question was to obtain an understanding of the current status quo of female representation in the organisations that were part of the study. Questions were formulated with the aim of extracting the key factors that prohibit women from advancing in the workplace.

5.3.1.1 Are women well represented in positions of influence and decision-making in your company?

Table 2: Female representation in positions of influence and decision-making

Are women well represented in positions of influence and decision-making?	Yes	No
	25%	75%

Seventy-five percent of the respondents did not believe that women were well represented in their organisations. Two of the male respondents stated their embarrassment at the state of their current team demographic in respect of women. Twenty-five percent of respondents said they had good female representation. These companies were all headed by a female CEO or managing director (MD). Some of the responses from the respondents are quoted below:

P 6: *“Just in the overall I don’t think, women are actually not well represented in our company. The reason is probably a number of things. One is that the founder member is actually still the major shareholder and still makes the major decisions on appointments at senior level. He is fairly old school in his thinking and he sort of has this view that the industry we are in is a man-domineering industry and the positions for females are scarce and that they would fit difficultly into the culture. We have a few women that are at sort of senior management level but not at executive level. But it is still, women are still very few in terms of the organisation at senior level.”*

P 1: *“Okay, at this stage I would say not at all. And the reason for that is currently we have eight directors in the organisation and of the eight we have got six white males, one black male and one female. So that already is just one female represented on our executive level and then if you look at the senior management level we have got about 63 senior managers currently, of which only six are female. So I think we are still quite a far way away from getting the female equality represented within the organisation.”*

5.3.1.2 To what extent do the decisions that female management takes affect the outcome of the company performance?

Given the responses from the above question, it was clear from 75% of respondents that women were not in positions of influence or decision-making in the respective organisations. Below are some of the comments from the respondents to this question:

P 1: *“I wouldn’t say that there is no effect, I would say that there is a minimal effect.”*

P 6: *“At the moment not, there is actually very little impact because of the numbers and the positions that those women hold, that they can’t really make an impact on the decisions.”*

5.3.1.3 What are the key factors currently limiting the advancement of females?

Table 3 below captures some of the key words and phrases quoted by the respondents on the key factors that limit female advancement.

Table 3: Key limiting factors of female advancement

Respondent	Key factor
P1	Skills and experience; white males not moving out of positions; industry barrier
P2	Unconscious bias of older males
P3	Female commitment to move into higher positions; life stages
P4	Stereotypes, especially in environment where physical labour is required
P5	Difficult to change perceptions and mindsets
P6	Cultural limitation and stereotypes that women hold the caregiver role
P7	Stereotypes that women do not fit in physical labour environments; boys’ club; culture; unconscious bias
P8	So even there, I think if you are competing outside of the buddy system, I think it would be enormously difficult to get onto boards
P9	No real internal focus on female advancement
P10	Unwillingness of women to commit
P11	I see the support structures perhaps not being in place
P12	Life stages

The respondents cited gender bias, the industry, technical skills, mindsets, stereotyping, domination of males in the organisation and the lack of commitment on the part of females to higher achievement positions in the organisation as some of the key factors limiting female advancement. The below quotes support this finding:

P 2: *“We have done some research on this, both formal and informal, and some of them relate to unconscious bias by older men who feel more comfortable working with younger men, that they send younger men good work, so they get better work, so they do well, so they get more good work.”*

P 3: *“Do you find a lot of females fall out or do they really go through all the stages of their career moving into more senior roles or is there somewhat of a barrier at a point where women tend to not want to go the extra mile, the extra level, the extra responsibility? Would you say that you find that in your organisation with having so many female employees?”*

P 4: *“From a macro-environment, talent in engineering is limited. Stereotypes exist where women are not generally associated with hard-core building and construction, but more associated with nurturing caring roles.”*

P 7: *“So I don’t think, I honestly would not say that they actively discriminate, no, but when you choose, the stereotype is powerful male, the boys’ club. You are a woman, you don’t have to behave like a man to be successful. So I watched this behaviour for a while and in one of our discussions at board level I actually mentioned this and they absolutely said they despise women who do that.”*

5.3.1.4 Does the company understand the benefits of a female diverse workforce?

Table 4: Does the company understand the benefits?

Does the company understand the benefits of a female diverse workforce?	Yes	No
	100%	0%

The responses to this question point to the fact that all the organisations understood the benefits of having a female diverse workforce. They believed women brought a different viewpoint and allowed for more diverse decision-making. The issue of unconscious bias was prevalent from the responses. The main issue was that 75% of the respondents' organisations did not have appropriate structures in place to capitalise on these benefits. This is substantiated by some of the statements from the interviews:

P 2: *"... more diverse decision-making body is likely to make a more, a deeper decision and a more nuanced decision and will take into account more of the people who are likely to be affected by it. I think that is a contribution. But I think the other contribution is that we are just because women graduates are particularly younger people, statistically there are going to be some very smart women and our talent recruitment depends on being able to win women's interest in our firm, because of the way we behave."*

P 3: *"I definitely do and I think my company does as well."*

P 4: *"A female diverse workforce is important. It relates to broader than the organisation and to society. Female inclusion uplifts society. Respect, dignity, compassion must be upheld across gender and race. Women bring different perspectives and I believe decision-making needs to be diverse. Our organisation understands the importance of diversity. It has been active in driving programmes that ensure this is implemented in the organisation."*

P 7: *"So I don't know if men are aware of the strengths a woman brings in. I think they just see all the negative stuff; oh, she is going to have a baby. Yes, I honestly I don't think they are seeing the value, they are probably thinking it is a compliance thing but I don't believe they are actually looking at the value that diversity, not only women, but difference is good because it challenges stereotypes and so I don't think they value"*

that, no.”

5.3.1.5 What initiatives have you, as a female/senior leader in the organisation, actioned for the benefit of the advancement of female inclusion?

The initiatives taken by the respondents in main were mentoring, raising female matters at board level for policy-making, decision-making and coaching. Table 5 sets out the main responses.

Table 5: Initiative for female advancement

Respondent	Mentoring	Coaching	On EE or other committees	Started women specific forums	Started companies in support of women	Raised female initiatives and policies at board level
P1			Yes			
P2	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
P3	Yes	Yes				Yes
P4	Yes					
P5	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
P6		Yes	Yes			Yes
P7	Yes			Yes		Yes
P8	Yes					Yes
P9	Yes	Yes				Yes
P10	Yes					Yes
P11	Yes	Yes				Yes
P12	Yes	Yes				Yes
Total	10	6	2	2	2	10

All the respondents indicated that they had taken initiative to advance female participation in the workplace. Some joined various committees, started women’s forums and tried to push for various support structures at board level, for example an onsite crèche for women with small children. Moreover, 83% of the respondents either act as mentors or managed to establish mentorship programmes as part of the organisational structure. Below are some of the responses:

P 1: *“I actually joined the employment equity committee, so what I do is I represent the white females in this case in the employment equity committee and then we have a lady that represents the black females and another one that does the Coloureds and the Indians. But what is quite interesting about this whole committee is it started off as if it was like a silo mentality thing, like I would only look at the white females and the*

next person only at the black females and so on and so on, but what we have actually noted is that it is not becoming a question of, okay you represent blacks and me whites and that kind of thing, we now almost all jointly represent the females.”

P 2: “Subsequently I have taken responsibility for this gender intervention programme. I have insisted on the publication of policies that we previously had but that were in the bottom drawer and so were not sort of uniformly available to people and weren’t necessarily uniformly implemented. In addition, I have pushed for things like, a couple of weeks ago there was a women’s conference, which I sort of pushed for, everybody who wanted to go to it to be allowed to attend it. So I have kind of assumed for myself that role.”

P 5: “So one of the things that I put in place was a mentorship programme where we said, okay, over and above the fact that we have very few people of equity, candidates in the organisation occupying middle or senior management positions. To then understand, what we have done with the community next door, because it is an informal settlement of a few thousand people, about 7000, we have started enterprise development. So we need people to sort waste. So I established a company, enterprise development opportunity with black female women.”

P 10: “In our company, globally, and we are, at present, in I think 162 countries worldwide, South Africa is the only division that has an onsite crèche. And we pushed for it and I think it is because there are women in senior roles in South Africa that were able to voice this and enact it or enable it in the organisation. So it is the only one and we had our global CEO who came down to open the crèche because he was so proud of this achievement. And he is in full support of it.”

5.3.1.6 Do you, as a woman/senior leader, find that there is still male inclusivity in the workplace?

Table 6: Male inclusivity still exists

	Yes	No
Male inclusivity still exists	75%	25%

Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed that there was still male inclusivity in the workplace. Although some of the organisations had taken steps to take other genders and cultures in the teams into account, stereotyping, unconscious bias and mindset shifts seemed to be the recurring themes from the respondent's answers. Below are supporting evidence of these themes:

P 1: *"... and I have noticed now that you can see on a Monday 14:00 this place is empty and all the males have gone to play golf and the females stay behind. We had foreign visitors over quite a few weeks ago and the same scenario, and then from an entertainment perspective these guys wanted to go to a nature reserve because it's Africa and we want to see the animals, that kind of thing, and same thing. I mean I spent three days with these guys, we haven't seen any males in our visits that we have done and when it came to the nature reserve visit then all of a sudden the males want to go. And it is like, it's not safe for the females to go. You know which I just feel, honestly, that is where we as females actually have to stand up and say, hey guys, this is not on. What I have also found is that because it is an international market, a lot of these international guys are now coming back and saying, no, but hang on, how come she is not going with because she has been with us this whole time. And it is sort of swinging the mindsets in a sense currently."*

P 3: *"I want to say yes. I still find it. I can elaborate on it where I have seen that there is still like exclusive little clubs and it is not formal clubs. If you look at social situations or hunting trips or golf days, it is male-dominated so the women still feel excluded. It is just a fact, so then I think that's also things that bond people together and build relationships. So it's almost like women don't have that much opportunity to build social relationships with colleagues."*

P 11: *"Yes. Absolutely. Extensive. I mean having said all my nice fluffy stuff about how I have never battled, there is absolutely still that whole cliquey thing, to quite a large*

extent.”

5.3.2 Research question 2: How do organisational structure and measurements lead to increased and sustainable female transformation?

The aim of this question was to elicit information – based on the responses to the first question – on what the organisations the respondents represented were doing from a structural perspective to address the imbalance of female representation. In the cases where there was a more balanced demographic representation of females, the researcher wanted to know how it was achieved and how it was sustained in the organisation.

5.3.2.1 Is female transformation on the strategic agenda of corporate South Africa?

Table 7: Female transformation on the strategic agenda

	Yes	No
Female transformation is on the strategic agenda of the country	83%	17%
Female transformation is on the strategic agenda of respondents' organisations	58%	42%

Eighty-three percent of the respondents believed that female transformation is on the strategic agenda of government, but in 58% of the responses it was evident that most believed this urgency did not filtered through to their specific organisations and were of the view that lip service was being paid to the issue. Moreover, it appeared that the organisational structures were not in place to adequately address the issue. The responses of some of the key views are captured below:

P 1: *“I think from a corporate South African perspective yes, it is, because we have implemented now BBBEE, but even though I say yes and we have got BBBEE, I think it is still an industry-specific thing, like I have mentioned before.”*

Respondent 2 felt racial and gender discrimination should be viewed as separate issues, and that the legislation has been focused on racial transformation and not gender transformation specifically.

P 2: *“I think it is, but I think historically, racial transformation has been privileged over gender transformation and I think people have seen these two as separate things, separate competing things. So if you speak about gender, and I still see it, people say ag, you know princess, you don’t have any idea of what the real suffering was like. So racial discrimination and feelings of discomfort are privileged over gender ones.”*

P 5: *“Yes. Maybe corporate South Africa. You hear about it, people talk about it and you see it happening. But whether it is happening genuinely is something else and I think it is only when you get into the bolts and nuts of an organisation will you be able to understand to what extent is it happening.”*

P 7: *“Yes, I think it is on the agenda. Is it on the serious agenda? Maybe there are just too many things on with the economy struggling at the moment. It is just too many things for them to balance, I think.”*

5.3.2.2 Is there senior leadership support and commitment for the required change? Why do you say that?

Table 8: Senior leadership support and commitment

	Yes	No
Senior leadership and commitment exist in our organisation	25%	75%

Similar to the previous responses on the issue of the strategic agenda, only 25% of respondents could confidently state that their organisations’ leadership actively supported female advancement and had structures in place to support the advancement of female talent. Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt that there was a degree of awareness, but again the structures to implement and drive the initiatives and policies were not necessarily in place. It seemed from the responses that in organisations where there was senior support, the pace of implementing the necessary processes and policies was slow. Some of the responses are listed below:

P 1: *“... it is being said on the one hand that these are the levels that we need, but when it comes to the recruiting, nobody collaborates with them from an HR perspective.”*

P 3: *“So with time, it evolved and me, being me, realised and it was a deliberate decision on my side that they are brilliant people, performers. They’ll do anything for the business so I’ll do anything to help them through situations and that’s what I meant with conditions. And I spend a lot of time with the top six personally like in a technical coaching capacity.”*

P 4: *“We have a job creation initiative that is one of a few of its calibre. I do not believe that there is balanced representation of females in our organisation if you look at broader country demographics.”*

P 6: *“I think academically there is. When we talk about these things people would recognise that it makes sense and people would recognise it and in theory, there would be many advantages to get women in certain key positions and get them to give their input. Unfortunately I think when the takkie hits the tar there isn’t that support yet, it is still a paradigm shift that guys need to make, still a barrier that guys need to break and to think that they can treat women in equal footing in certain positions in the organisation. It is just a culture thing and us being out in the sticks and still think the way we do.”*

5.3.2.3 What are the key benefits for the organisation to provide women with opportunities and career advancement?

All the respondents were keenly aware of the benefits women bring to the organisation. Their responses included women being more creative, structured, disciplined in the manner in which they conduct themselves and business processes, being meticulous and bringing a different view to the decision-making process.

P 1: *“You know we have had people that have attended let’s say union meetings, for argument’s sake, previously and these meetings have been all over the place. The last couple of meetings that I have attended, which I didn’t actually realise in the beginning, people had given me feedback afterwards and said, gee, you know the meetings were held in the boardroom and we didn’t have it outside in the lapa for instance, we had an agenda, all of a sudden we had coffee and tea presented. It was run more like a corporate meeting than just let’s get together and let’s sort out this problem, and it’s just all over the place. And we had minutes and so I think it is a female thing in a sense of around discipline.”*

P 8: *“The biggest issue is, it would just give a greater and broader perspective so that you don’t have a thing merely done the way men have always done them and always will do them, you actually get a completely – so instead of having one solution you would have additional solutions. Because women think differently to men. And I think organisations, again they say it is about the boards. When there is a woman on the board the boards prosper because of, literally because there is different thinking.”*

P 9: *“And it comes back to diversity. So I think if you are not doing it you are excluding that whole pool. If you are doing it, then you are getting additional exposure to talent.”*

5.3.2.4 What structures are in place to effectively implement and sustain female advancement? How is this measured? Is there deliberate female career path management?

A number of structures, for example, employee transformation, leadership development programmes and women’s forums, supported talent development and advancement. These initiatives and structures were intended to drive transformation and 75% of respondents were of the view that it was not solely intended for the advancement of women. The responses from the question following this one were evident of this fact. Some of the responses on this question are as follows:

P 1: *“We also have employee transformation forum – that is where you basically look at the levels within the organisation and try and see where we can actually put people in. And as part of that process we have also got a policy now that we don’t recruit anybody externally, we try and do all our, we try and fill all our positions from an internal perspective first to also develop people internally before we do external recruitment.”*

P 2: *“We have a mentorship program and what is required there is that everybody, all the junior lawyers are required to have mentors. And I tend, or I only mentor women because there aren’t that many senior lawyers available to do that job. And in the process of that I would sort of deal with gender issues and gender concerns with my mentees.”*

P 3: *“I made an effort to make sure that I do develop the different levels of consultants in the organisation. Now, my advantage is, if I develop 10, nine will be women, so okay so that’s why I said, maybe I’m lucky, nine of them will be, but intentionally we develop the different levels in the organisation. I created what I call a great ideas academy, so*

we run like 30 different topical related courses in-house.”

P 4: *“Through the Leadership Programmes and even the Job Creation Initiative, our company actively drives upliftment and ongoing participation. The Job Creation Initiative is an initiative that builds a pipeline of young talent in the organisation that assists the sustainability of the organisation. There is career path and development across the organisation. People, being our greatest asset, we invest heavily in informal programmes to train our people. Paternal leave is an issue; women are not properly supported in terms of this legislation.”*

5.3.2.5 Do you believe the organisational structural changes truly benefit and fast-track female advancement in the company? How does this present in the workplace?

Table 9: Organisational structures truly benefit and fast-track female advancement

Do organisational structures truly benefit and fast-track female advancement?	Yes	No
	25%	75%

According to Table 9, 75% of respondents were of the view that organisational structures do not benefit female advancement.

Table 10: Have flexitime policies

Organisations with flexitime policies	Yes	No
	83%	17%
Percentage of above respondents who believe these policies are truly advancing women	50%	50%

Table 10 indicates that 83% of the organisations implemented flexitime policies that were mostly targeted at females. However, 50% of the respondents who indicated that there were flexitime policies were not confident that the structures implemented truly advanced or fast-tracked females’ career paths in the organisations. The responses in support of this view are as follows:

P 1: *“Again I want to say no, because I don’t think the organisational structures are changed in a sense to specifically accommodate females, not at all. You know it is females that are standing on their own two feet and they are raising their voices and they are saying this is me and I want to move forward. So if it is females that are just sitting out there that are waiting for structural change to sort of materialise so that they can be advanced in the company, it will not happen.”*

P 4: *“There are no real limitations in our organisation, people have opportunities to excel. The structure and policies definitely support people at all levels. The level of flexibility across the organisation is very much linked to the level of maturity of individuals and managers. Certainly in my team I have no problem with flexibility. People are enabled through technology and output is most valued.”*

P 12: *“And then our flexitime policy. We have a very generous flexitime policy in our organisation. And then within other divisions that I am not required to be here fulltime we have a work-from-home policy. And that is measured purely on outputs. Something I say to myself all the time, it will not bother me if I have to bump into you at the movies during the day. But by 23:59 tonight those outputs must be achieved.”*

5.3.2.6 What organisational limitations were eliminated to achieve female transformation?

Table 11: Organisational limitations eliminated

	Yes	No
Organisations with flexitime policies	83%	17%

Table 11 above indicates that 83% of the respondents cited flexible time as one of the major improvements on the factors limiting female advancement.

One respondent specifically mentioned the issue of difficulty to change the cultural influence that affects female advancement. Some of the responses are listed below:

P 2: *“I think definitely the flexible working time, the maternity policy, the maternity coaching, I think all of those things have made it easier for women to have children, that’s the deal hey, we are the ones that get to make babies or have the babies. That is not something we are going to change any time soon.”*

P 3: *“What I do do is I’m a bit flexible in terms of hours at the office in the first year of the child. But you know I’m not a clock-watcher because I’ve got a time sheet system. Every hour we work we invoice. They can’t lie to me, then the client won’t sign off the invoice, so I don’t have people that’s trying to get me out of hours and verneuk me. I just don’t have that nature of people here, because I trust them that they don’t disappoint me.”*

P 4: *“There are no real limitations in our organisation, people have opportunities to excel. The structure and policies definitely support people at all levels. The level of flexibility across the organisation is very much linked to the level of maturity of individuals and managers. Certainly in my team I have no problem with flexibility. People are enabled through technology and output is most valued.”*

5.3.2.7 How do the phenomena of the glass ceiling/cliff, decision-maker diversity and the saviour effect influence female participation?

Table 12: Glass ceiling prevalence among respondents

Respondents who find the glass ceiling phenomenon in their companies	Yes	No
	83%	17%

According to Table 12 above, the issue of the glass ceiling was pertinent in 83% of the responses.

Respondents believed that there were not many opportunities for advancement, and due to lifestyle and life stages, women opted out of the workplace. Decision-maker diversity was mentioned by some and referred to under research question 1, where respondents indicated that they believed women do bring a different perspective, which makes for richer decision-making. The responses below support this:

P 1: *“So we definitely have a glass ceiling currently in this organisation, without a doubt. You know there are not many opportunities to grab unless you get someone on that level that resigns, for argument’s sake. And that doesn’t happen often.”*

P 2: *“So first of all obviously it is a huge struggle to get to that or get through that glass ceiling, then to actually stay there is another challenge for women. The decision-maker diversity we have touched on in terms of the benefits of having an all-inclusive, diverse*

group of decision-makers, and the saviour effect specifically, I don't know if you are familiar with it, but relates to struggling organisations where they usually bring in women to sort of save the organisation. It is a Cynthia Carroll type of scenario."

P 7: "But a lot of senior women seem to get to a point and say, you know what, you can keep this. It is actually not worth this in my life, keep it. Or they have to kind of take their foot off for a while if their family is younger and then family gets independent then it's like, ooh, they don't need me so much I can now – whereas men never have that, it is always constant for them. So we do have different dynamics that we have to deal with and I think emotionally it is hard."

5.3.2.8 How is female talent identified and nurtured? Are there mentoring programmes in place for women?

The responses received on this question showed a lack of formal awareness of structures that specifically support female advancement and fast-tracking. Mentoring programmes existed, as was evident from the previous question on what women and senior leaders were doing to advance women. Seventy-five percent of respondents confirmed that there was no formal process in place. The following responses provided further insight:

P 1: "I don't know. I do not think you actually really know because many of these things happen without you knowing. So I will give you an example where every year our organisation has the senior management conference and then in this conference the senior managers have to then all name a person which they then feel has the talent and that needs to be promoted and those names get highlighted. But we, or us that are not part of that team, don't basically get told about it."

P 10: "And if you are able to do that then you are taken more and more to the next step. And then you get a sponsor, somebody who is there actively opening the doors for you, actively saying, if there is a position that comes up, this is the person that you should take. So it is a formalised structure within the organisation to say, let's start at this area at the base level and then develop across the organisation."

P 12: "No, we haven't got a programme that does that, no."

5.3.2.9 Do SA companies with female leaders at top levels succeed at a quicker pace to filter transformation down the organisation? What makes them sustain the pace?

Table 13: Companies with female leaders succeed at a quicker pace

Do SA companies with female leaders at top levels succeed at a quicker pace to filter transformation down the organisation?	Yes	No
	66%	44%

There was conviction in 66% of the responses that female-led organisations had or would have a positive impact on the advancement and fast-tracking of female talent. Below are responses in support of this view:

P 2: *“Look, I think it has both advantages and disadvantages. Certainly I think it is important for women to see other women as mentors and sources of inspiration and I think there is a potential for women to talk more freely about their own experiences, if they don’t feel like the men are watching them or listening to them.”*

P 7: *“Yes. I think it is. There are quite a few role models and people that have really done well. I think it is and many companies have done well. Not us, but others. So you have the Cynthia’s at Anglo and the Maria Ramos’ and government have surprisingly done well.”*

P 9: *“Oh definitely, ja. We have seen it, yes. And we have also seen where you have a senior female, that she tends to, the kind of bias, if there is any, is kind of gone. Therefore, she will employ more female people than male people. So we have kind of seen that where we have appointed and all of a sudden somebody wakes up and says, oh ja, why did we never think of having a female operations director in this division, because so and so is doing such a fantastic job.”*

P 10: *“Absolutely, yes. The reason I say this is the current CEO is a female. So a lot of the management team in the organisation is also female. Young, diverse females. So there is a focus yes and I think it comes more and more from bringing the women into the management roles.”*

5.3.2.10 How do South African companies with diverse boards contribute to the acceleration of female transformation?

Table 14: Women bring awareness to the boardroom

	Yes	No
Women bring awareness to the boardroom	75%	25%

Table 14 shows that 75% of respondents agreed that women on the board bring a different awareness to the boardroom. They are able to highlight the needs of females and drive policy changes from the top. Affinity bias seemed to be a theme that was prevalent with respondents, where they viewed women as being able to drive female recruitment and talent identification and development.

Some responses to this question:

P 4: *“Women do create a greater level of awareness of the requirement for female participation whereas a male-only board may not even raise these issues.”*

P 8: *“It is amazing, and I have seen it in smaller companies rather than bigger companies, but where there are female CEOs or female MDs, I think yes the pace is quicker, I think yes they almost attract other women and push them forwards. But you know now, maybe it is because they see the diversity or maybe they decided it was difficult for them to get there. Maybe it is just soort-soek-soort, but organisations with female leaders very often bring in other female leaders.”*

P12: *“Oh, it is a reality. And like I say, fortunately I can inform the board, the other female directors we possibly are, say, at similar life stages, we can inform the board, we can inform our organisation, we can sensitise our organisation.”*

5.3.3 Research question 3: Does the legislative environment enable an increased rate of female transformation?

This question explored the extent to which legislation enabled or hindered female advancement in the workplace. Furthermore, it sought the participants' point of view in terms of how well their respective organisations adhered to the legislation. It was important to understand whether the skills plans submitted were not only done as a tick-box exercise, but actually served as a driver of talent and diversity in the organisation. The researcher also wanted to determine whether the skills plans linked back to the recruitment practices of the organisation.

Table 15 below indicates that the majority of respondents did not believe that legislation supported the advancement of females at the correct levels.

Table 15: Legislative impact on female advancement

	Yes	No
Does legislation truly advance female transformation?	17%	83%

The responses are quoted below:

P 1: *“Well I mean if you take the Employment Equity Act, I meant that is now implemented in all organisations and that is supposed to now advance a female or females in an organisation but I don’t think it is being taken as serious as it should be.”*

P 2: *“Look, I mean the employment equity legislation definitely advances female recruitment, I am not so sure about female advancement. This understanding that we have to lift our game at the higher level but there is not a plan in place for doing that. And skills development plans, not so much. I think it is more of a tick-box exercise.”*

P 7: *“Because we haven’t transformed. If you look in every boardroom, some companies have transformed, majority, who is in charge still? It is your white males.”*

5.3.3.1 In what sense does legislation advance or prohibit female advancement?

Table 16: Employment equity has failed

	Yes	No
Employment equity has failed	58%	42%

The overall view of the respondents was that legislation should play a much greater role in advancing females. This is not from a racial perspective, but in general as a societal imperative. Table 16 shows that 58% of the respondents were of the view that employment equity failed at truly advancing women and that companies did not adhere to the legislation in all respects. The respondents cited the Mining Charter as a progressive means of advancing females. One of the key issues relates to changing mindsets and culture. Some of the responses are as follows:

P 1: *“Well I mean if you take the Employment Equity Act, I meant that is now implemented in all organisations and that is supposed to now advance a female or females in an organisation but I don’t think it is being taken as serious as it should be. People say, oh well, the act is there and we know we need to conform to it, but to me it is a long-term process. To me it doesn’t feel like there is enough energy behind it to actually make sure that it is effective.”*

P 2: *“Well that is totally what the employment equity legislation requires you to do. Say what are our targets for a five-year period. Target ‘schmarget’. You know, unless you have also got a plan for getting there, the target is at best a wish list.”*

One of the respondents raised the point that the legislation fails to address the underlying bias, culture and mindset issues that are key influencers of the lack of female transformation.

P 5: *“And it is very interesting to see that even though our legislation et cetera understands or claims to understand that they have advanced, there are still prevalent bias that exist in not only in the corporate culture, in the mindset of people and even in the policies of organisations.”*

P 6: *“So there isn’t enough pressure on us to transform, although in theory we have got, we all know that we should and we are a JSE-listed company and we are getting some pressures to start transforming, but it is slow. It is slow. Social and ethics committee chairman has actually joined the business now as a full-timer and we are going to get a new chairman soon, so if we can get a black female, for example, in that position, I am sure we will have a much higher emphasis in transformation than we currently have.”*

P 7: *“Employment equity hasn’t worked.”*

5.3.3.2 To what extent does the company comply with the skills development plans as legislated by government?

Table 17: Skills development is a tick-box exercise

	Yes	No
Skills development is a tick box exercise	33%	67%

Although some respondents were of the view that the skills development plans were completed and that they advanced female recruitment, they did not have confidence that they actually aided the advancement of females. Table 17 highlights the fact that 33% of respondents find the skills development plan a tick-box exercise. Three of the respondents indicated that their organisations have implemented job initiatives, not legislated, to further enhance skills training and development in general, but not specifically for women. Two of the respondents said they took the skills development plan submission serious in their business and it filtered through to their recruitment practices.

P 2: *“Look, I mean the employment equity legislation definitely advances female recruitment; I am not so sure about female advancement. This understanding that we have to lift our game at the higher level but there is not a plan in place for doing that. And skills development plans, not so much. I think it is more of a tick-box exercise.”*

P 4: *“Again, our company goes well beyond the skills development requirements. With its job creation initiative it makes a continuous effort to uplift society and give young people an opportunity to participate in the workplace and become employable.”*

P 12: *“With a female. Transformation is not changing every white employee with a black employee. Transformation is about saying, how do I have a system that I am going to move from this point to that point and this is the same outcome I am going to get. And that is transformation.”*

P 12: *“They don’t think it is necessary. Because on paper everyone is very very gender-equal; we promote women, we will respect women. Very, very; they comply completely on paper. I think it is in the actual delivery of it that I think a lot of them fall short.”*

5.3.4 Research question 4: How do international pressure and trends impact corporate South Africa and the rate of female transformation?

This question aimed to obtain an understanding of the participants’ views of other countries’ practices to advance female workplace participation. The matter relating to the quota systems introduced in many European countries was of particularly interest, while the researcher also wanted to determine whether some of these practices would be useful in the South African context or the specific companies in the country.

5.3.4.1 Global trends lean toward female quotas and legislative enforcement of female workplace participation. Are you aware of such international trends and what is your view?

Table 18 and Table 19 below highlight the awareness of the respondents of female quotas and whether they are in favour of a quota system or not.

Table 18: Awareness of quotas

	Yes	No
Are you aware of international trends on quota systems?	100%	0%

Table 19: In favour or quota systems

	Yes	No
Are you in favour of a quota system?	17%	83%

All the respondents were aware of the quota system. However, 83% of respondents were not in favour of female quotas, as they believed this might set women up for

failure. They were of the view that skills and experience should be the main criteria. However, this is a challenge, and participants cited the historical disadvantages of women in education and the workplace as contributing factors to the lack of skills and experience. Some of the respondents agreed that only legislated quota systems would correct the imbalance, but there was a concern that cultural factors could inhibit success. Some of the responses were as follows:

P 1: *“I am aware of some of the trends. I mean being part of the international market I have spoken to quite a few females that I have come across doing business over there and what I have found is like globally a lot of women are paid less than men. And I know people want to implement these quotas and legislation wants to enforce females to work in a workplace, but culturally these places still seem to give the formal stuff to the men and the informal stuff to the female.”*

P 4: *“Yes, our country is a long way from Europe and other developed economies. I believe quotas are important and will work.”*

Two of the respondents indicated that they believed companies would take their time in bringing women into organisations at all levels if a formal legislated approach is not taken. One of the quotes below supports this view:

P 8: *“You know, I hope the quotas will work and I also hope that the ladies who get the opportunities don’t mess it up. I just have the two concerns. And the one we have spoken about before is the resentment, which only makes the situation worse because it now becomes us and them. And the second is, that underlying bias that men don’t even know they have. I don’t know if this will change that. I don’t know how many generations it will take to change that. I think it will change, but I am not sure about your generation. My generation has had it already.”*

P 12: *“Don’t throw the numbers at it. Put the right people in the positions. Put people that can make a difference, that can be productive. I would rather have a smaller percentage of very highly effective women than a large percentage of ineffective women. Because then again it fulfils the prophecy and you have all these patriarchal men saying, well you see, they wanted more women, they can do nothing.”*

5.3.4.2 South Africa is also considering female quotas. How do you think this will impact your company?

Table 20: The quota system should be a process/roadmap approach

	Yes	No
Agree that a quota system should be a process/roadmap approach	67%	33%

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents, as shown in Table 20 above, agreed that the implementation of a quota system should take the form of a process or roadmap approach, rather than being an overnight change. Their concerns were that women may be set up for failure due to inexperience, and it may negatively impact organisations' ability to function at board level. The respondents were strongly of the view that the right skills and competencies must be the underlying premise for bringing females into business instead of an attempt of merely correcting numbers. In light of this, 33% of respondents were of the view that a forceful approach should to be taken for real advancement to occur. Some of the responses follow:

P 1: *"... well our company is listed and if you have to put 40% of females on your board – that is not going to happen overnight."*

P 5: *"I do believe that when you look at your organisation or your country, for the moment we need to put competent individuals in competent positions, okay? It doesn't help to fill the position or the role with a specific gender or race to meet the target because when you are doing that you are creating a bigger problem. And the problem is the one that we are currently faced with in the country."*

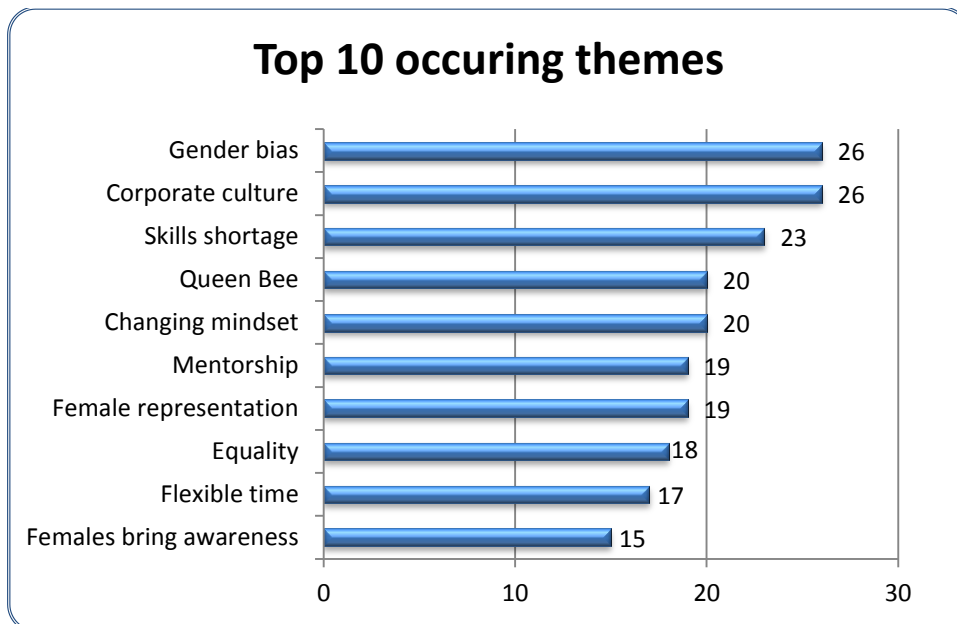
P 9: *"Just as a principle I don't believe in quota systems. Having said that though, I have also found that we say to people, or to companies rather, you have got to do this otherwise we are going to bring legislation in, they kind of tend to drag their heels on it. So in terms of South Africa and the Employment Equity Act, which is in my opinion a quota system, we battle in certain areas to meet demographics."*

P 12: *"So I wouldn't push up the numbers just because it is an exercise we have to do. Even when we look at succession planning, it is not just because you are a nice woman that you are going to be earmarked for a position, you are going to have to prove yourself. Not as a woman, as an employee."*

5.4 Recurring themes from the results

Figure 6 below indicates the top 10 most commonly occurring themes identified in the interviews. They are listed by the number of times the respondents used these themes collectively throughout the interviews. The highest occurring theme was gender bias and corporate culture. It was important for the research to identify these themes, as a number of these themes emerged as the interviews progressed without them being listed as specific research questions. Appendix 2 contains a list of all the themes that occurred more than ten times through the interviews.

Figure 6: Top 10 themes



5.5 Conclusion to the results

This chapter represented the findings that emerged from the interviews with 12 respondents from various organisations and industries in South Africa. The factors listed by the Hay Group (2014) survey informed the main research questions. These factors were grouped into four main categories. Behavioural factors and invisible barriers, such as gender bias, culture and the queen bee syndrome, were all among the top 10 themes that emerged from the interviews as key behavioural factors limiting female advancement.

Although most of the respondents displayed an understanding of the benefits females brought to the organisations, participants confirmed that in most organisations there

was no formal integrated approach to female talent attraction or retention. Most respondents' organisations implemented policies such as maternity leave, flexitime and mentoring, but based on the responses, it did not seem as though the respondents were confident that these policies truly benefited and advanced females. Low levels of female representation and the slow pace of transformation – due to failure of legislation or organisations not actively driving transformation – were factors that respondents found frustrating, and many of the female respondents tried various initiatives to accelerate female participation and advancement in their respective organisations.

Overall, the respondents believed that women at top executive and board level brought awareness to female representation and what it meant for organisations in terms of being conscious of gender-specific requirements.

Chapter 6: Discussion of results

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the results from the research study were presented. Four research questions were posed to 12 participants in the study through semi-structured interviews. This chapter discusses the results in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2. This chapter follows the Hay Group (2014) survey factors, which formed the basis for the development of the research questions.

6.2 Discussion of research questions

According to the Hay Group (2014) survey, the factors listed as the main research questions must be considered and addressed as a collective to ensure the effective management and advancement of female talent (Hay Group, 2014). The factors are individually addressed below in accordance with the literature review in Chapter 2, the research questions in Chapter 3 and the top 10 list of occurring themes, as indicated in Figure 6 in Chapter 5.

6.2.1 Research question 1: What are the individual behavioural factors that affect female transformation in South Africa?

a) Gender bias and stereotypes

Based on the respondents' views, it was evident that gender bias was a key factor influencing female representation and advancement. Gender bias was one of the highest factors cited by participants. A research study by Easterly and Ricard (2011) published in the *Journal of Research Administration* on why women leave academia, showed that gender bias exists through gender schemas or unconscious bias. Unconscious bias occurs in all parts of daily life, but when it impacts on hiring and reward practices, it must be dealt with. Being aware that such bias exists and making a conscious effort to overcome it will benefit women and the organisations they work for (Easterly & Ricard, 2011). The participants referred to gender bias and unconscious bias as follows:

P 2: *“We have done some research on this, both formal and informal and some of them relate to unconscious bias by older men who feel more comfortable working with younger men, that they send younger men good work, so they get better work, so they do well, so they get more good work.”*

P 8: *“... but in actual fact I think it is because of men not even realising that they are not, that they are being discriminatory against women. So their understanding is so ingrained of, oh she is a great woman, but they don't even realise that they don't see it from the same footing.”*

Gender bias still exists in the workplace and holds women back from career advancement. The research refers to first and second generation gender bias. First generation gender bias refers to the denial of equality, where second gender bias refers to holding women back from reaching higher echelons or power (Grover, 2015). One of the respondents' quotes below, which was mentioned during a discussion on the influence of gender bias on recruitment and selection, reflects this:

P 7: *“It is a stereotype that we women need to be looked after.”*

According to Oakley (2000), the glass ceiling is not one ceiling or one spot on the wall, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias. The glass ceiling phenomenon is discussed in more detail further in this chapter, but the researcher included it under the discussion on gender bias as a relevant influencing factor on the glass ceiling.

Furthermore, gender bias still plays a role in the advancement of females in the workplace. According to a study by Pichler et al. (2008), gender stereotypes have consistently portrayed men and women as opposites. This has led to men being seen as masculine and achievement-oriented, in contrast to women as being nurturing and facilitative. When looking at this bias in the workplace, it appears that women are often affected by this view, and negatively impacted when it comes to performance reviews.

Moreover, gender bias affects decisions about the selection, placement and promotion of women, especially in managerial positions. The following quotes from the respondents point to how bias could potentially influence the selection of a female for a particular job role:

P 6: *“I think that the role that a female holds in her household as a wife and a mother and then also as a career person makes it very difficult to actually fit into our culture unless she really is only driven by career and has no balance on the other side of the business. We do a lot of travelling in our business, which also makes it difficult again for the female to travel and some of this travelling happens in third-world countries, that makes it also difficult. So I think it is a combination of the industry, the culture and the way we expect employees to behave, is just not conducive to a normal well-balanced lifestyle for a woman.”*

P 7: *“It is a stereotype that we women need to be looked after.”*

b) Affinity bias

- ***Women provide others with opportunities***

Affinity bias plays a significant role in the advancement of women. One of the respondents said the following:

P 11: *“I would give preference though to a woman if I have got two candidates that are, in my opinion, equal.”*

Within the structure of organisations, it is critical that recruitment practices eliminate the possibility of affinity bias as far as possible. Affinity bias in recruitment is defined as an interviewer showing a preference for candidates who are similar to themselves (Turnbull, 2014). One of the respondents indicated that there was affinity bias in recruitment practices, which was highlighted to the respondents by the CEO. The respondent was recruiting a particular gender consecutively for roles in the business without being aware that preference was given to one gender:

P 11: *“I hadn’t been running the business very long and the CEO said to me, be careful, your last 11 hires have all been women. Make sure that you keep your balance right ... so at that stage I developed a sensitivity around the need of making sure that you don’t kind of get out of balance, one way or the other.”*

According to Turnbull (2014), many organisations have implemented the practice of panel interviews to mitigate unconscious or affinity bias. Affinity bias is a part of human conditioning. It is important for individuals to be aware of such bias. Managing affinity

bias seems to hold the same challenges as being an inclusive leader, in that in order to feel more comfortable with people who are different to us, we need to get to know them to become comfortable with them.

c) Glass ceiling

Oakley (2000) states that the glass ceiling is not one ceiling or one spot on the wall, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias. In Chapter 5 the results on the glass ceiling was presented in point 5.3.2.7, and it was indicated that 83% of respondents cited this phenomenon as prevalent in their organisations. There seems to be a lack of opportunity to grow into the higher echelons of the organisation due to inappropriate structures that allow women to move into decision-making roles. One of the respondents cited the fact that white males remained in positions and prevented further growth for competent females.

This links to the Pichler et al. (2008) study, which concludes with three proposed approaches to the management of diversity in organisations and in an attempt to break down the glass ceiling barriers: (1) training women to be successful in a male-dominated environment, (2) assimilating and accommodating women-supportive policies and practices, and (3) valuing gender diversity. Pichler et al. propose that by adopting female-friendly work policies, such as employer-sponsored childcare, could positively contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

It seems that unless effective policies and practices are implemented and gender diversity is embraced at leadership level, change will either not take place or will continue at a slow pace.

d) Male inclusivity

- ***Old boys' club***

According to the 2013 SABPP Women's Report (Meyer, 2013) referred to in the literature review, men verbalise that they will allow women on their boards, but 37% of JSE-listed companies do not have women on their boards yet. The participants echoed the report's findings that the "old boys' clubs" was a contributing factor to this imbalance. Women are often not included in decision-making, as stated by one of the recipients:

P 8: *“Absolutely. Absolutely, it is still done at the pub.”*

The abovementioned report (Meyer, 2013) states that many decisions are taken outside the boardroom, where policies and employment equity have little influence (Bosch, 2013).

In the study conducted by Oakley (2000), respondents raised the issue of the “old boys’ club”. This phenomenon occurs because of men perceiving women or diversity as a threat to the status quo. One way in which women are kept out of these “clubs” or networks is the tendency of men to transfer skills, power and competence to those in the network. These networks operate on a basis of reciprocity and become a closed loop that is hard to penetrate.

- ***White males***

The conclusion to the SABPP Employment Equity and Transformation Report (SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014) listed a number of recommendations. One of these was that white males should be replaced, instead of achieving representation through the actual growth in jobs at the required levels. One of the respondents vocalised the frustration that the opportunities in the organisation were stifled by the fact that white males still occupied the highest positions in the company, and unless they moved, there would be little transformation or advancement of females.

This links to the issue of mentoring and sponsorships further discussed in this chapter. According to Robbins and Judge (2013), not all employees in an organisation have an equal chance to be selected for mentorship programmes. In the United States, upper managers in most organisations have traditionally been white males, and mentors tend to select people who are similar to themselves with regard to educational background, gender, and race and ethnicity. Minorities and women thus have a smaller chance to be selected. Robbins and Judge (2013) furthermore conclude that having a mentor is only valuable if there is a good supportive network of resources. If a mentor is not a strong performer, the success of the protégé may be jeopardised.

Oakley (2000) reveals that women at the top often report that men feel threatened by them, as if the men have somehow failed at competently filling their positions. This factor links back to women being disadvantaged by males occupying positions of power.

d) Behavioural factors

Linking to research question 1 and the results from Chapter 5, point 5.3.1.3, an article by Warfel et al. (1987), informed by the work of Pichler et al. (2008), found that women needed to portray macho, male-type characteristics in order to qualify for executive and board-level positions (Warfel et al., 1987).

In this study, the respondents cited that women tended to work harder than their male counterparts to continually prove themselves. In addition, one of the respondents echoed the literature that a former senior female executive portrayed male characteristics that made her unpopular and less respected by her colleagues. This led to her eventual departure from the organisation, among other factors. It was described as follows:

P 7: "You are a woman. You don't have to behave like a man to be successful. So I watched this behaviour for a while and in one of our discussions at board level I actually mentioned this and they absolutely said they despise women who do that. Which is a good thing. So they didn't respect that, they didn't encourage that and they didn't think that was a good thing."

The results from point 5.3.1.4 in Chapter 5 link to the 2014 McKinsey Women Matter Report on companies in the Gulf Cooperation Council States (GCC) (Sperling et al., 2014), which cite nine organisational behaviours in which women's impact is most evident. It found that women score highest in effective behavioural factors such as people development, expectations and rewards, acting as role models, inspiration, participatory decision-making, intellectual stimulation and efficient communication. In the same report, men scored higher in two factors: individual decision-making, and control and corrective action (Sperling et al., 2014).

The respondents offered the following in this regard:

P 3: "I'd say yes to that. Definitely my experience. Women can deal with a lot of variables at the same time, considering everything, and then make the decision, and I want to say it's a condition, with that goes your, the adulthood, and also your emotional stability."

P 5: *“They are also very creative and it is a general fact that females are more creative in comparison to males. And it is always a creative mind that brings another perspective to something. And something that we may not have looked at or thought of. They are a lot more loyal, they are more committed and they remain in organisations for a longer period of time. You will find that your retention on female staff in employees is a lot longer in comparison to males.”*

P 12: *“I completely believe so. We have the drive, we have the commitment, we have the dedication. Women, I think, if you pay them fairly, you have good benefits for them, they will work for you. You treat them fairly, you treat them with respect, they will continue working for you.”*

- **Support for women as caregivers**

According to the literature, success in respect of diversity is dependent on three key factors: pressure for diversity, the type of diversity in question and managerial attitudes (Dass & Parker, 1999). Dass and Parker (1999) use a framework to summarise the internal and external pressures related to diversity facing organisations, which include age, gender, race, culture and values, and sexual orientation. With specific reference to women, Dass and Parker (1999) highlight the responsibility of women as caregivers in the home environment, and that these needs must be addressed to accommodate women. Moreover, they correctly identify the fact that many organisations put superficial practices in place without first understanding and then addressing the root of the problem.

The respondents said the following on this matter:

P 4: *“From a macro-environment, talent in engineering is limited. Stereotypes exist where women are not generally associated with hard-core building and construction, but more associated with nurturing caring roles.”*

P 2: *“The single most significant factor that affects women is that they are typically the primary carer of children and so while we have flexible working hours policies and we have recently introduced maternity coaching to enable women to return to practice, which is very difficult.”*

The results relating to research question 5.3.2.3 and 5.3.2.4, as indicated in Chapter 5, become relevant under this point. The respondents were of the view that, given the fact that women are caregivers, they were stereotyped into being required to care of children and the elderly, and not being able to travel (for example), as one of the respondents stated. A participant also mentioned that life stages made it difficult to fulfil roles requiring higher commitment. Furthermore, 75% of the respondents do not believe that the flexitime and maternity policies truly advance women in the workplace. One of the respondents commented that the flexitime policy becomes a limiting factor for women.

The caregiver responsibility links to the literature review, where Arjouch et al. (2005) state that women in high-status occupations often work a second shift, due to family responsibility at home, although they have full-time jobs. The additional responsibilities and obligations on women affect the time they have available to build relationships with co-workers. Thus, for some women, these additional responsibilities often cause them be unable to focus on a career and be financially independent (Arjouch et al., 2005). This factor links to the challenges women face in formal and informal networking, as discussed in the next section.

- ***Formal and informal networking***

As indicated in the literature review, McDonald (2011) states that gender-homophilous contacts offer greater job finding assistance than other contacts. The results from the study shows how social capital flows through gendered and racialised networks (McDonald, 2011).

Based on the results from research question 1 covered under point 5.3.1.6, Chapter 5, male inclusivity remains prevalent. Seventy-five percent of respondents confirmed that male inclusivity existed in their organisations. This has an impact of networking and women's ability to break through the glass ceiling, as referred to earlier in this chapter. Because men and women socialise in different ways, male-dominated environments have created a corporate culture where men organise activities that relate to their social sphere. Men tend to play golf, as four of the respondents stated in the interviews. Furthermore, they attend rugby matches or go fishing. According to a study by Arjouch et al. (2005), networking between men and women differs in complex ways and relates to particular life stages. The study states that groups of support are gendered, and expectations and roles differ between men and women.

- **Queen bee syndrome**

The research questionnaire did not specifically have a question on the queen bee syndrome, but respondents raised the issue under research question 1 and 4 as limiting factors to female advancement. According to the literature review, the queen bee syndrome and the glass ceiling phenomenon (Broughton & Miller, 2009) are other factors at play in organisations that hinder the rate of transformation. Broughton and Miller (2009) cite factors such as gender stereotyping, perceptions of female management style, personal style, tokenism, difficulties in networking and overconfidence as prohibiting female advancement. The underlying factors, such as gender bias and stereotyping, seem to create reluctance among women in top positions to want to uplift and drive female advancement. Responses that highlighted the queen bee syndrome were as follows:

P 4: *“But you also have the issue of greater competition between women, i.e. the queen bee syndrome aspect.”*

P 11: *“Because senior women are not necessarily better at promoting other women in their organisations ... So women in senior positions, in their desire not to end up off the glass cliff can sometimes kind of go a little the other way and not sustain the transformation in the business because the men are still less hassle. They don’t get pregnant, they don’t want to, you know.”*

P 2: *“It is not a strong thing, in fact I would say it is a fairly isolated thing, but there are women who say, I had to struggle and I am damn sure going to make sure that you have to struggle too.”*

e) Female representation

In accordance with the statistics referred to in the introduction to this study and the literature review in Chapter 2, South Africa is a highly gender-unequal society. The introduction to the research study highlights the fact that, according to the 2015 Census reported by the BWA of South Africa (2015), in South Africa women represent 51% of the population. Women make up 45.8% of the working population and 29.3% of women have executive management roles. Figures 2 and 3 show that the latter number reduces the higher one moves up the seniority pyramid, with only 21.8% of women holding directorship positions and 11.6% holding CEO or chairperson positions

(BWASA, 2015). Moreover, according to the 2013 SABPP Women's Report (Bosch, 2013), the EEA aimed to correct the imbalance. In 2013, women made up 42.2% of the workplace population in South Africa, but only 4.4% of CEO positions were held by women. The respondents confirmed this view that in their respective organisations, women were still underrepresented in senior roles.

P 4: *"The demographic of the team is a sensitive issue. We have three white males, two black males and one white female. We have a 30-team board, five females of whom two are executive board members."*

P 7: *"No. Definitely not. I look at, I report on headcounts so at board level no women at all. And I think, in fact I have just done the numbers for annual report, I think overall women are 11 percent, that is at all levels."*

P 9: *"If we go up into a management level then that ratio drops and it is 25% female, 75% male. If we go up into a more senior level, so that is executive committees and board, it kind of drops right down to about 6, 7%. So the further we go up the pyramid, the less the female ratio becomes."*

P 9: *"In my personal opinion, no."*

P10: *"... women are, I would say, under-represented in especially roles of management."*

Except for the two organisations that, based on the nature of the industry, have a majority female workforce representation, all the other respondents stated that female representation is low at the top echelons of the organisation. Some of the respondents indicated that women are well represented in lower-level positions in some instances. The response below supports the statement of an industry where the nature of the work allows for higher female representation:

P 3: *"Yes, I am in the fortunate position that by nature of our profession, there is a lot of talent in women in this profession, so the whole organisation, we are 90% women and 10% male, so the whole business is actually managed, the management team only exists of women. Okay. So when it was due to their performance and ability to work on that level."*

6.2.2 Research question 2: How do organisational structures and measurements lead to increased and sustainable female transformation?

f) Strategic agenda

Female leadership and equal representation at senior management and executive level must be based on a governmental, organisational design, and it should be a corporate strategic agenda issue in order to make a significant impact on the advancement of women in the workplace. With reference to the South African legislative environment, the potential conflict between the BBBEE and EE acts in respect of the definition of designated groups, removes the protection under the EEA for white females (Bosch, 2013).

The results presented in Chapter 5, point 5.3.2.1, show that 83% of respondents believe that the topic is on the strategic agenda of the country, and is evident from the transformation that occurs at government level. However, half of the same respondents who represent the 83% statistic did not believe that their organisations had the topic on their strategic agendas. Some respondents said that it might be on the strategic agendas, but there were no female voices to keep the level of awareness high, and hence the topic moved down the priority list.

According to McKinsey (Barton et al., 2015), the issue of gender gap parity has become a strategic priority. A study conducted by McKinsey (Barton et al., 2015) showed that gender diversity was a top-ten priority for only 28% of the companies surveyed in 2010. For a third of the companies surveyed, gender diversity was not even on the strategic agenda at all. McKinsey (Barton et al., 2015) has done its own internal study on gender diversity, and found itself to be meagrely transformed. They specifically implemented a top-down target approach. The company has never set specific gender goals for itself until 2014. After doing so, McKinsey experienced a five-percentage point improvement in their intake of female consultants (Barton et al., 2015).

g) Leadership support

From the results listed in Chapter 5, points 5.3.1.1, 5.3.2.1 and 5.3.2.2, it is evident that firstly, women are not represented in positions of influence and decision-making in the

respondents' organisations. Moreover, the topic is not a priority on strategic agendas, nor does appropriate leadership support exist for the advancement of women.

This links to the literature review, where it is indicated that the 2013 BIAC and Deloitte (2013) report confirms that the board, CEO, senior managers and managers play the biggest role in female advancement. The report highlights that business leaders should take charge of the issue of female advancement and not make it an HR responsibility. The report clearly states that leaders must understand the business case for female transformation and that the necessary structures and metrics should be in place to support the objective (BIAC & Deloitte, 2013).

The theory of position power is relevant when considering how leaders and senior individuals in the workplace play a role in female advancement. Robbins and Judge (2013) define position power as influence that is derived from one's formal structural position in the organisation. With this position comes the power to hire, fire, discipline, promote, and give salary increases (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Corporate South Africa is, according to the statistics cited in the introduction to the research study, still a male-dominated environment. It requires a position of power to be able to make a real difference in the decisions taken that influence the advancement of women in the workplace.

The results listed in Chapter 5, under point 5.3.1.1, indicate that female leadership in the organisation tends to lead to increased female participation. Among the 12 organisations represented in the study, 25% indicated that there was good female participation. Although no direct correlation could be drawn, the organisations with female participation at executive level were led completely by female CEOs or MDs.

Cummings and Worley (2015) state that senior executives and line managers are responsible for initiating change. These individuals are responsible for maintaining the organisation's character and performance. Senior managers thus decide when to initiate significant changes, what the change should be and how to implement it. These individuals direct and set the pace for the change throughout the organisation. Thus, executive leadership should be involved in large scale to effect the critical transformational, especially when the change is required at a fast turnaround time.

h) Organisational structures and workplace policies for diversity

- ***Fragmented approach to structure***

The results listed in Chapter 5 links to research question 1, 2 and 3. The highest ranked issues of gender bias and corporate culture influence female representation and advancement. It does not seem as though all the companies have female advancement on the strategic agenda, which resulted in haphazard responses to address the issue. The legislative requirements for companies, for example, are not key drivers of female transformation, and therefore the policies and company structures do not address the requirements for a transformed and representative female workplace.

This links to the PricewaterhouseCoopers (2014) Next Gender Diversity Report in the literature review. The survey of 40 000 respondents across 18 countries shows that not only do companies grapple with the issue of female diversity and gender equality, but the entering of the millennial generation into the workforce requires companies to review practices, as this generation reshapes the workforce (Flood, 2014).

Transformational change involves reshaping the organisation's strategy and design elements to effect change. An organisation's design includes the structure, work design, human resource practices and management processes in support of the business strategy. Therefore, unless diversity is on the strategic agenda, the required changes within the organisation to drive the change will be hampered. A fragmented approach to change results in misaligned design elements, which, in turn, sends mixed messages about the desired behaviours. Typically, when change is driven by the senior executives, it happens more rapidly, which eliminates or mitigates the risk of it being mired in politics, individual resistance and other forms of organisational inertia (Cummings & Worley, 2015).

Furthermore, Oakley (2000) highlights corporate policies and practices in training, career development, promotion and compensation as contributors to the glass ceiling phenomenon.

The essence of this work is about the culture an organisation creates that ensures sustainable growth through a diverse and efficient workforce (Hay Group, 2014). Cummings and Worley (2015) claim that organisations react with appropriate but

narrow responses, for example, maternity leave being added to benefit packages as women in the workforce increased. The impact of these narrow responses does not establish the essential conducive conditions for creating an enabling environment for female participation and career advancement.

The results listed in research question 5.3.2.4 in Chapter 5 highlight the fact that women do participate in various structures in the workplace, including employment equity forums and social and ethics committees. In addition, a number of women initiated women-specific forums to discuss female-related challenges in the workplace and to provide support structures for women. Three of the respondents indicated that they were lobbying for corporate crèches, which was successful in only one of the participating organisations. There was not senior leadership support, and one of the respondents commented that the CEO of the organisation involved said that if women wanted to be treated equal to men, they needed to expect the same conditions in the workplace to those of men.

As indicated in the literature review, the Hay Group (2014) states that the essence of their study is about the culture an organisation creates that ensures sustainable growth through a diverse and efficient workforce (Hay Group, 2014). Cummings and Worley, (2015) claim that organisations react with appropriate but narrow responses, for example, maternity leave being added to benefit packages as women in the workforce increased. The impact of these narrow responses does not establish the essential conducive conditions for creating an enabling environment for female participation and career advancement.

The responses to research questions 5.3.2.4, 5.3.2.5 and 5.3.2.6 Chapter 5, echo the literature review in that the respondents felt that there was no integrated manner of approaching and implementing policies and practices that would drive female advancement. The general feeling among the respondents was that the policies did not link to strategic goals and were therefore not addressing the issue in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

- ***Coaching, mentoring and sponsorships***

The results listed under point 5.3.1.5 in Chapter 5 and the results in Table 5 indicated that respondents believed that mentoring was an important driver of participation in the

workplace. Eighty-three percent of the respondents act as mentors or coaches, or have mentorship programmes in their organisations.

According to the literature review, mentoring and sponsorship are necessary to assist women in career advancement. A mentor is a senior employee who sponsors, in some cases, and supports a less-experienced employee (Robbins & Judge, 2013). One of the respondents said the following in this regard:

P 8: “ ... *but I have been doing it for women particularly because I feel that there aren't necessarily a lot of people out there that make it easier for ladies. I have done mentoring for strangers that have come up to me after a conference and said, I need your help. I have done mentoring for people I know, if I had to add up the number of women that I have mentored, if it is men there is a half a dozen of them, if it is women it is between 60 and 70, I would say.*”

Mentoring relationships serve both career and psychological functions. Career functions include areas of lobbying, coaching, providing exposure, sponsoring by nominating a less-experienced employee for potential career advancement opportunities and acting as a sounding board for ideas. Psychological functions include counselling, sharing of personal experiences, providing friendship and acting as a role model (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Affinity bias, mentioned under the discussion on gender bias, again plays in on mentorships and the selection of candidates. Robbins and Judge (2013) state that people will naturally gravitate towards a mentor and can more easily communicate with those they identify most closely. Senior males will most likely select male protégés to reduce the risk of sexual attraction or gossip. This influences female advancement, as women may be excluded due to gender preferences.

Unfortunately, not all employees in an organisation have an equal chance to be selected for mentorship programmes. In the United States, upper managers in most organisations have traditionally been white males, and mentors tend to select people like them, with a similar educational background, gender, race and ethnicity. Minorities and women thus have lesser chances to be selected. Robbins and Judge (2013) conclude that having a mentor is only valuable if there is a good supportive network of resources. If a mentor is not a strong performer, the success of the protégé may be jeopardised.

The Pichler et al. (2008) study concludes with three proposed approaches to the management of diversity in organisations and attempting to break down the glass ceiling barriers: (1) training women to be successful in a male-dominated environment, (2) assimilating and accommodating women-supportive policies and practices, and (3) valuing gender diversity. Pichler et al. (2008) propose that by adopting female-friendly work policies, such as employer-sponsored childcare, could positively contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

i) Benefits of female participation

The results indicate that all the respondents believe there are specific benefits that women bring to the workplace. These include different perspectives, improved decision-making ability in the team. The company also has additional exposure to talent, as it is seen as an employer promoting equality. In addition, women often bring structure to the way business is conducted. Furthermore, some of the respondents highlighted the fact that women brought an awareness of female issues to the workplace, which is necessary for advancement. The respondents said the following:

P 4: *“Women do create a greater level of awareness of the requirement for female participation, whereas a male-only board may not even raise these issues.”*

P 5: *“So to come back to your question, it plays a major role to have females in that position and the converse can be said. Imagine you had no females on your board level, on your senior management level. Do you believe that there would be some type of fostering of getting females in that role? Definitely not.”*

- ***Decision-maker diversity***

Further to the benefits of female participation discussion above, the literature review highlighted decision-maker diversity as one of the key benefits to organisations. Cook and Glass (2014) aim to address some of the institutional aspects affecting female leadership and transformation. Their analysis focuses on testing three institutional-level theories that may shape women’s access to, and tenure in top positions: the glass ceiling, decision-maker diversity, and the saviour effect. The Lord Davies Annual Report on FTSE 500 companies study (Cohen, 2015) shows that diversity among decision-makers – not firm performance – significantly increases women’s likelihood of

being promoted to top leadership positions. Moreover, contrary to the predictions of the saviour effect, diversity among decision-makers extends women leaders' tenure as CEOs, regardless of firm performance.

The respondents of this study were of the view that this was a key benefit. However, their respective organisations found it difficult to change the culture and old ways of doing things to accommodate females.

j) Equality in the workplace

According to Robbins and Judge (2013), employees have a perception that what they get from a job is in relationship to what they put in. They compare their outcome-input ratio to those of relevant other employees. The perception is that the ratio is equal to those of relevant other employees with whom they compare themselves. A state of equity exists when the perception is that that one's own situation is equal to those of the relevant others and that the situation is fair and just. However, in a situation where the perception is that one's specific situation in relation to those of other relevant employees is not fair and that justice does not prevail, it creates tension and anger. Employees who perceive an unequal situation will make one of six choices, one of which is to leave the organisation. The female respondents had the following comments on the issue of equality:

P 2: *"Exactly. It is about equality and not suffering."*

P 3: *"I don't think it's structure or it might come down to policies, but most corporates where I consult in just have the view that they cannot deal with all the flexibilities that women would want, so there is no discrimination."*

P 12: *"They don't think it is necessary. Because on paper everyone is very very gender-equal. We promote women, we will respect women. Very, very, they comply completely on paper. I think it is in the actual delivery of it that I think a lot of them fall short."*

The issue of equal remuneration came up in one of the interviews, where the respondent stated that she had been appointed to an executive role and after being in the role for six years, the CEO noticed that her remuneration was far less – as much as more than 50% less – than what her colleagues at the same level earned. The

company gave her a 25% increase, which was still about 30% less than her colleagues at the same level.

P 8: *“Six years after I was appointed in an executive role, the then CEO apparently turned around, and I was told this by the HR manager. And he said why did a woman earn less than the executives because the men who were on my level, and I was ahead of them when I came in, because they paid me more than they thought I was worth, were all earning significantly more than me, and they then gave me a 25% increase. It probably still 30% less than what the male executives earned. They say women earn 30% less than men.”*

k) Culture and corporate culture

The issue of culture plays a significant part in the way in which companies are able to transform. Culture takes between seven and ten years to change. Cummings and Worley (2015) also state that if an organisation truly believes in diversity, it must be a strategy that fuels innovation and economic progress. Cummings and Worley (2015) mention that “the seeds of organisational responsiveness and successful change are in the innovative possibilities that exist when multiple viewpoints, values, and beliefs are heard and nurtured over time”.

According to the McKinsey Global Survey (2013) (Barton et al., 2015) of 1 421 global executives, corporate culture is a significant inhibitor of female advancement. Sixty-nine percent of female respondents were confident that they would reach the C-suite, in comparison to 86% male respondents.

Cultural change is necessary in most organisations reviewed in this study. Corporate culture as an inhibiting factor in the advancement of women was cited by 83% of the respondents. Research question 5.3.1.3, Chapter 5, referred to bias, mindsets, male domination and stereotypes as factors limiting females. Moreover, the results of question 5.3.1.6 also highlighted male inclusivity as a factor in the lack of, or slow pace of transformation and female representation. One of the respondents said the following in relation to culture:

P 8: *“So that mindset is one of the biggest limitations that I have seen the transformation of. I think South Africa is a country that has a lot of cultural influence as well in terms of male/female roles and I think that is a difficult thing to change.”*

These factors and behaviours relate to corporate culture and the way in which females perceive the workplace. Kotter (1996) defines change as a set of norms and behaviours, and shared values among a group of people. Norms and behaviours are common and pervasive ways of acting by a group. This behaviour persists, as the group tend to behave in a certain way and transfers this behaviour to new members. Usually those who conform are rewarded, while those who do not are punished. Shared values are shared important concerns and goals. As with norms and behaviours, these shared values will persist over time, even if group members change. Therefore, the first step is to change the norms and values. Kotter (1996) further states that culture is something that is not easily manipulated.

Culture changes only once you have successfully altered people's actions; after the new behaviour has produced consistent benefits over time. Once people see the benefits and improvement in performance, they are more likely to accept the change (Kotter, 1996).

According to Stainback et al. (2011), work environments with a supportive culture and histories are least likely to have women interpreting work-related experiences and tensions as gender discrimination. Workplaces with supportive work-family environments are more likely to be perceived as embracing equal opportunity and therefore reduce women's perceptions of gender discrimination.

In the study conducted by Oakley (2000), respondents raised the issue of the "old boys' club". This phenomenon occurs because of men perceiving women or diversity as a threat to the status quo. One way in which women are kept out of these "clubs" or networks is the tendency of men to transfer skills, power and competence to those in the network. These networks operate on a basis of reciprocity and become a closed loop that is hard to penetrate.

Oakley's study highlights the fact that corporate practices, as well as cultural and behavioural factors, are the key contributors to unequal workplaces. Behavioural and cultural factors include issues of stereotyping, tokenism and preferred leadership styles. Furthermore, corporate policies and practices in training, career development, promotion and compensation are contributors to the glass ceiling phenomenon.

According to an article by Deborah May (2014), published in *Governance Directions*, the first step to achieving cultural change is to help organisational leaders see how unconscious bias manifests in their organisations. In the article, the author proposes that leaders conduct a formal cultural audit to identify the underlying bias that exists in their organisations. This audit enables business leaders to understand unconscious bias and other diversity barriers in the organisation (May, 2014).

6.2.3 Research question 3: Does the legislative environment enable an increased rate of female transformation?

1) The failure of legislation – employment equity and skills development

Based on the results listed in point 5.3.3, Chapter 5, and Table 15, 83% of the respondents felt that legislation did not advance female workplace representation. Moreover, point 5.3.3.1 and Table 16 show that 58% of respondents believed EE failed to transform the workplace, with regard to female participation in particular.

According to the Employment Equity and Transformation Report of the SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board (2014), two areas affect South African EE, namely government's performance in the area of basic and higher education, and organisations' mindsets and processes. Additional factors that contribute to low rates of female advancement in this country include poverty, poor education and slow economic growth (SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014). This report concludes that the major constraint to the achievement of EE is the slow economic growth rate of South Africa. In order to achieve appropriate levels of representation, white males should be replaced, instead of achieving representation through the actual growth in jobs at the required levels. Another constraint is the inability of government to increase the performance in basic and higher education to ensure a strong skills pipeline for businesses. The report leaves it up to HR to change and drive recruitment practices and policies to achieve EE.

“The organisations who seemed to make visible progress in attracting, developing, advancing and retaining suitable qualified persons, black people, woman and people with disabilities, the designated groups in terms of the Act, were those who saw affirmative action in favour of these groups as one of their key strategies for pursuing corporate goals such as achieving and maintaining productivity, excellence and global competitiveness. These are employers who saw employment equity as a business

imperative rather than simply an issue of complying with the law. In many of these companies accelerated human resource development is a critical part of the affirmative action measures.”

(SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014).

The 2015 Women in Leadership Census statistics (BWASA, 2015) highlighted in Chapter 1 prove that there has been little movement in the female participation rates in top positions.

6.2.4 Research question 4: How do international pressure and trends impact corporate South Africa and the rate of female transformation?

m) Quotas

All the respondents in the study indicated an awareness of the quota systems that a number of countries have implemented, as referred to in Chapter 1.

Although they agreed, the respondents' concerns echoed information from the literature review that quotas would automatically put them on the back foot. In Chapter 2, it was indicated that Bosch (2013) stated that although legislation played an important role in achieving a balance, if not implemented effectively, it harmed the particular gender more than benefiting them. Gender stereotyping would create the phenomenon referred to by Oakley (2000) as “double bind”, according to which some women feel that whatever they do, it is just not good enough, and they eventually leave the organisation.

P 2: “I stood for Exco at a time when women weren't really represented on Exco and rather uncomfortably we vote in rounds, on the third round when no women had been elected and our regulations require that the Exco must represent geographical, gender and racial diversity, and our CEO said listen, we have got no women on this thing, if you people don't sort of tidy this thing up I am going to have to set these elections aside. And I thought about standing down then because I was one of the three nominated women and it felt like I was a complete puppet, but I decided not to do that and my first term was quite an uncomfortable one because every time I said something I thought that well, I am only here because someone put his foot down.”

Moreover, a number of the respondents raised concern over the historical challenge of women lagging behind in terms of skills and experience to function at executive and board level. This was particularly prevalent in the case of respondents from the mining and construction industries. One of the respondents had the following to say on this matter:

P 4: *“We cannot expect to all draw from a small pool of women who are experienced and able to sit at board level.”*

6.3 Conclusion to the results discussion

In conclusion to the discussion on the results, the four main research questions led to the discovery of the impact of gender bias and corporate culture on the advancement of females in the workplace. These underlying causes were the main reasons why a number of the other factors, for example, lack of skills, the queen bee syndrome and changing mindsets were cited as additional factors that inhibited female advancement. Stereotypes and unconscious bias keep women from filling specific job functions and it seems as if this bias filters through to the recruitment practices of the organisations. In addition, these factors influence the ability of women to build networks to support further career growth.

Lack of a firm leadership stance and strategic vision with regard to female representation and advancement lead to a lack of organisational structures in place to support women in the workplace. Although the benefits of a female diverse workplace were evident in the respondents' views, it was clear that organisations failed to capitalise on these benefits. Women have specific challenges in the workplace, which are not receiving the levels of attention required to create the support structures for an equal work environment. Furthermore, legislation has not been successful in addressing female participation and advancement at the levels required to be representative of the population statistics. All the respondents indicated support for a quota system, but they cautioned against the approach to be taken when quotas are implemented.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 of this research study highlighted the issue of female participation, representation and advancement in the workplace. The research was informed by various sources covering the lack of female representation in the workplace and the barriers women faced to reach the top echelons of the corporate world.

Global and local statistics gave a clear indication of this challenge. Women make up just 14% of executive committees of Fortune 500 companies and only 4.8% of these companies are led by women (Meister, 2015). Furthermore, there are only 21 out of the 500 companies with female CEOs (Meyer, 2013). Women remain under-represented in top executive positions (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). The female quota system implemented across Europe aimed to address the inequality and under-representation of women on corporate boards. Although there has been advancement in female education and inclusion in the workforce, the imbalance still persists. The top 300 companies in the European Union have only 9.7% female representation at board level (Sweigart, 2012). Moving to America, a similar problem exists, where women make up less than 15% of all Fortune 1000 directors (Sweigart, 2012).

According to the 2015 Executive Directors Report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2015), only 16% of executive board members of the 355 companies listed on the JSE were women (PWC, 2015). The 2015 Women in Leadership Census by BWASA (2015) reported that women represented 51% of the South African population. However, women make up 45.8% of the working population, and 29.3% of women have executive management roles. This number decreases as one moves up the seniority pyramid, with only 21.8% of women holding directorship positions and 11.6% holding CEO or chairperson positions (BWASA, 2015).

Furthermore, the introduction to this research study emphasised that companies with female representation at the top outperformed their competitors. Johns (2013) reported that Adler conducted an empirical study in 1998 that showed a strong correlation between a company's consistent record of female promotion into the executive level and high profitability. Adler's study (Johns, 2013) investigated the practices of 215 Fortune 500 companies over a 19-year period, from 1980 to 1998. Longitudinal and

historic performance data was analysed. The author evaluated four indicators of profitability, namely profits as a percentage of revenue, assets, shareholders' equity, and the firms' competitiveness in relation to their industry median counterparts. The results showed a clear correlation in that those companies with high female executive participation outperformed the industry median on all profitability measures. Furthermore, the results indicated that those companies with the best scores for promoting women consistently outperformed those with good scores (Johns, 2013).

Similar findings were reported in a study conducted by *Catalyst* in January 2004 as reported by Johns (2013). This study evaluated 353 companies in the areas of gender diversity in top management and their financial performance. The study included five different sectors and two financial measures were applied: ROE and (TRS). The results revealed a link between gender diversity and higher financial performance. The companies with a higher number of women in top leadership positions showed better financial performance than those with the lowest female representation. The ROE was 35% higher and the TRS was 34% higher (Johns, 2013).

The McKinsey 2014 GCC Women in Leadership (Sperling et al., 2014) report states that companies with female representation at executive committee level outperform those with no women at the top. The statistics quoted reveal that these companies have, on average, a 47% greater return on equity and 55% higher average earnings before interest and tax (Sperling et al., 2014). Studies indicate that including women in the top echelons of organisations has a direct influence on company performance, including the bottom line and risk management.

The research questions were formulated on the basis of the Hay Group (2014) survey on factors that influence women in the workplace and how these factors need to be considered as a whole in order for organisations to deal effectively with the slow pace of female transformation and advancement in the workplace. The Hay Group (2014) survey highlighted four main factors that businesses should consider. These are as follows:

1. Behavioural factors
2. Organisational structures and metrics
3. Legislation
4. International pressure/trends

In Chapter 6, the findings of the research were discussed in the context of existing literature and the top 10 factors the respondents felt were most pertinent when considering female advancement in the workplace were highlighted. The research findings were based on the factors from the Hay Group (2014) survey and additional factors prevalent in the South African context.

This chapter briefly reviews the background to the research in light of the objectives as set out at the beginning of the study. Further, this chapter addresses the main findings, the research implications for management, including a new model of factors from the base set by the Hay Group (2014) survey, the research limitations and recommendations for future research.

7.2 Principal findings

The principal findings from the research are listed below:

The most cited themes of the study, as indicated by Figure 6 in Chapter 5, include gender bias, corporate culture, skills shortages, the queen bee syndrome, mindset changes, mentorship, lack of female representation, equality, flexitime and the fact that respondents believe that women bring awareness to the board on issues affecting female representation and advancement in the workplace.

7.2.1 Research question 1: What are the individual behavioural factors that affect female transformation in South Africa?

The findings of the six sub-questions of research question 1 were as follows:

- Gender bias and corporate culture remained the highest factors influencing female representation and advancement.
- Industry barriers, especially with regard to stereotyping, were identified as the main factor by respondents in particularly the mining and construction sectors.
- Gender bias and stereotypes were highlighted as the main factors limiting women in the workplace. This has led to continued male inclusivity in the workplace, with 75% of the respondents citing this as a problem and challenge in their organisations.
- The queen bee syndrome was highlighted as a resulting factor of the challenging environment in which women found themselves. The respondents highlighted

gender bias, stereotypes and male inclusivity as the key contributors to the queen bee syndrome. According to Oakley (2000), the glass ceiling is not one ceiling or one spot on the wall, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias.

- Seventy-five percent of the respondents said women were under-represented in positions of influence and decision-making in their organisations.
- Respondents from companies with female CEOs or MDs reported a higher representation of females in the organisation.
- Respondents cited industry barriers as a key inhibitor of female advancement.
- All the respondents seemed to understand the benefits of a female diverse workforce, but companies have failed to capitalise on the benefits.
- Eighty-three percent of respondents have been active in participating in a number of ways to advance females in the workplace. Some examples include women forums, and joining the EE and social and ethics committees of their respective organisations.
- The respondents indicated that they had lobbied at board level to implement various support structures for women, for example, corporate crèches, performance management systems, and mentoring and coaching programmes.

7.2.2 Research question 2: How do organisational structure and measurements lead to increased and sustainable female transformation?

The organisations that seem to make visible progress in attracting, developing, advancing and retaining suitably qualified persons – black people, women and people with disabilities, the designated groups in terms of the act – are those that see affirmative action in favour of these groups as one of their key strategies for pursuing corporate goals such as achieving and maintaining productivity, excellence and global competitiveness. These are employers that see employment equity as a business imperative, rather than simply an issue of complying with the law. In many of these companies, accelerated human resource development is a critical part of the affirmative action measures (SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014).

The findings of the ten sub questions of research question 2 were as follows:

- Eighty-three percent of respondents believed that the government had female representation on the strategic agenda, but that their organisations did not have female advancement as a top priority on their strategic agendas.

- A concerning 75% of respondents said they were not confident that there was senior leadership support for female advancement in their companies.
- In the main, the respondents said women brought structure, discipline, diversity in decision-making and attention to detail to organisations as benefits.
- Although a number of structures were in place in terms of policies and practices in their companies, 75% of the respondents were of the view that these policies were not solely intended to advance women and that there was a fragmented approach to policy setting. The results found that 83% of respondents cited flexitime policies as the main improvement in policies.
- Eighty-three percent of respondents reported having the glass ceiling phenomenon in their organisations and linked this back to gender bias, stereotyping and structural limitation.
- Seventy-five percent of respondents said they had mentoring programmes in place, but not all these programmes were formalised in the structures of the organisations.
- Sixty-six percent of respondents reported that having female leaders at the top would have a positive impact on female advancement.
- Some of the respondents said that women acted as role models for other women.
- Seventy-five percent of the respondents were of the view that women in top-level positions brought awareness of the issue to the boardroom.

7.2.3 Research question 3: Does the legislative environment enable an increased rate of female transformation?

According to the SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board (2014), two areas affect South African EE, namely government's performance in the area of basic and higher education, and organisations' mindsets and processes. Additional factors that contribute to low rates of female advancement in the country include poverty, poor education and slow economic growth (SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board, 2014). The conclusion to this report states that the major constraint to the achievement of EE is the slow economic growth rate of South Africa that hampers achieving appropriate levels of representation.

The findings of the two sub-questions of research question 3 are as follows:

- Eighty three percent of the respondents did not view the existing legislation as beneficial for female transformation and advancement.
- Fifty eight percent of respondents said that Employment Equity has failed.

- The respondents felt that the legislation failed to address gender bias and corporate culture as two of the main and underlying contributing factors to the lack of female advancement.

7.2.4 Research question 4: How do international pressure and trends impact corporate SA and the rate of female transformation?

In Europe, Reuters reported in March 2015 that German Chancellor Angela Merkel had passed legislation that would force companies to reach 30% female representation on boards (Copley, 2015).

The findings of the two sub-questions of research question 4 were as follows:

- All respondents were aware of the international trends relating to quotas.
- Eighty-three percent of respondents were not in favour of a quota system, as they believed such a system could adversely affect women. The respondents were of the view that such a system would only work if implemented in a phased or roadmap approach.

7.3 Implications for management

a) Remaining competitive

According to the PricewaterhouseCoopers Next Gender Diversity Report (Flood, 2014), a survey of 40 000 respondents across 18 countries, the lack of women in senior leadership is and will continue to take its toll on companies from a competitive and financial perspective. The report highlights the fact that, not only do companies grapple with the issue of female diversity and gender equality, but the millennial generation entering the workforce requires companies to review practices, as this generation will reshape the workforce (Flood, 2014).

Given the statistics from the 2015 Women in Leadership Census (BWASA, 2015) that females represent 51% of the population, it would be advisable for organisations to ensure that female representation, participation and advancement strategies are considered as a priority on their strategic agendas.

The report highlights the following factors as critical for companies to consider if they want to ensure that they are able to provide an environment that would attract the female talent of the future.

1. Ensure a more inclusive culture.
2. Ensure a strong equality record.
3. Work-life balance for employees should be in the strategic planning.
4. Face-to-face direct feedback on performance should be made practice.
5. Mobility and global opportunities – gender bias and stereotypes prevent organisations from providing women with opportunities where travel may be required. This is due to the fact that women are seen as the caregivers and having to be taken care of, instead of being able to provide for themselves and make decisions about their careers.
6. The company should have a good reputation.
7. There should be a focus on attraction and retention strategies.
8. Leadership diversity and female advancement must be on the strategic agenda

A real concern for South African business should be the statistics cited in the PricewaterhouseCoopers Next Gender Diversity Report (Flood, 2014), which shows that globally, engineering positions are ranked second hardest to fill, with only 27% of STEM graduates from G20 countries being female. Nearly four times as many 15-year-old boys consider careers in engineering or computing than girls (Flood, 2014). Organisations need to ensure that there are programmes in place to support the education systems in the country to drive a pipeline of talented females for organisational competitiveness.

b) Cultural audits

From the research, the issues of gender bias, corporate culture and stereotyping were main issues raised by respondents. It would be in the best interest of organisations to address these underlying, unseen factors to inform a comprehensive strategy for female transformation and advancement in organisations. According to an article by Deborah May (2014), published in *Governance Directions*, the first step to achieving cultural change is to help organisational leaders see how unconscious bias manifests in their organisations. In the article, the author proposes that leaders conduct formal

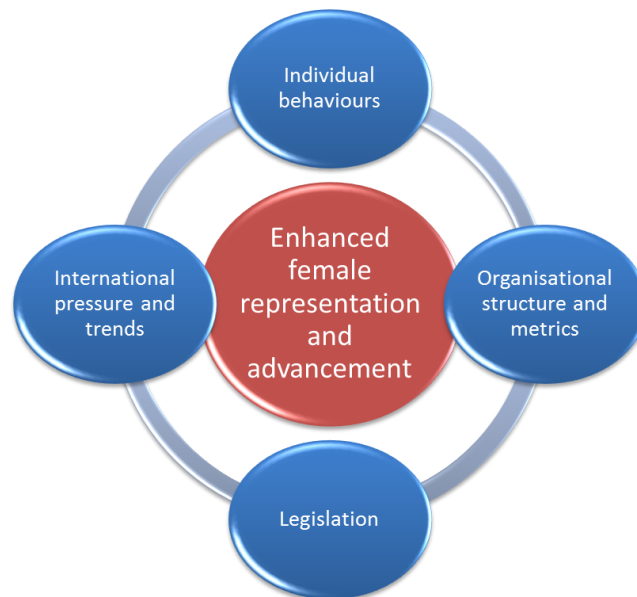
cultural audits to identify the underlying bias that exist in their organisations. These audits enable business leaders to understand the unconscious bias and other diversity barriers in the organisation (May, 2014).

c) A model for management consideration

Figure 7 represents the factors listed by the Hay Group (2014) survey that informed the research questions. These factors should be collectively considered for effective female advancement. However, the findings from the research expanded the factors identified by the Hay Group (2014) for the model to be more appropriate in addressing the factors that management need to consider collectively within the South African context.

Figure 7: Hay Group (2014) factors model

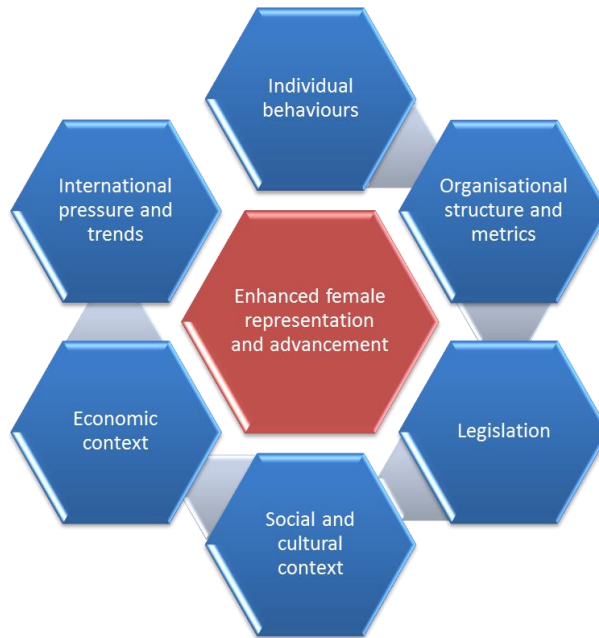
Hay Group Survey 2014 factors influencing female advancement



Further to the Hay Group factors, the adapted model in Figure 8 includes the social, cultural and economic context for a comprehensive assessment and view of the challenges that should be addressed in a comprehensive strategy towards enhanced and sustainable female transformation. This is in direct correspondence with the SABPP Labour Market Committee and Board (2014) factors listed in point 7.2.3 of this chapter.

Figure 8: New factor model for South African context

Model – Factors in the South African context influencing female advancement



7.4 Limitations of the research

The following limitations were identified with regard to this research study:

- The maturity of the South African business landscape affects the research in that men started most businesses and little transformation has occurred.
- The extent of societal pressures from both an education and cultural perspective has not been not been fully explored.
- Corporate culture factors have not been fully explored.
- The research sample area was Gauteng, and the researcher did not obtain a view on whether women in other provinces experience the same issues.
- Time and distance have played a role in some of the interviews, which may have caused a lack of further in-depth exploration of some of the questions.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

- The research does not focus on a specific industry. It may be worthwhile looking at how specific industries compare, as certain industries have more stringent transformation policies to drive the process, for example, the mining industry has specific transformation charters.
- An industry or company comparison could investigate how similarly structured companies allow or advance female participation at senior level. Policies and governance measures on how successful companies manage female talent could be explored, and their most effective practices may be identified.
- Another possible investigation can focus on whether companies with female board representation have higher levels of female transformation throughout the company.
- There is a lack of research in the South African context on the financial performance of companies with representative female representation in comparison with those without it.
- Although race was not a specific consideration of the research, future research could include African females to obtain their perspectives, with specific reference to the BBBEE codes.
- It is important to understand the impact of skills availability on female advancement. Respondents have highlighted this as an issue in South Africa and future research may explore the impact of this and make recommendations recommendation on how to address it.
- Although the area of female entrepreneurship was covered to some extent in the research questionnaire, it was not the focus of the project. Future research may ascertain the impact of female entrepreneurship on the rate of female transformation.

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Appendices

1. Appendix 1 - Interview consent form

Sunday, 12 July 2015

Dear Messrs,

LETTER OF CONSENT

I am conducting research on what women in senior level positions are doing to advance female participation in South Africa and how organisation structure, legislation and international trends enable female workplace participation. I am interviewing males and females to obtain a diverse view of this research topic.

You will receive the questionnaire beforehand for your own preparation and comfort. The interview is expected to last about an hour and will help to understand how you and your organisation play a role in the advancement of women in the workplace. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be provided in the research report. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below:

Researcher Amelia van Heerden	Research Supervisor Verity Harden
443228@mygibs.co.za	pvharden@global.co.za
071 548 7226	082 331 3575

Signature – Researcher

Date

Signature – Participant

Date

2. Appendix 2 – Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

According to the Hay Group's survey in 2014 (Hay Group, 2014), companies that successfully manage female talent do it in a structured manner and take the following impact factors into account:

1. Individual behavioural factors
2. Organisational structure and measurements within the organisation
3. Legislative enabling environment
4. International pressure/trends

The research questionnaire aims to test whether the participants' organisation take these factors into account in a structured manner for successful management of female talent. Women in senior positions would need to have an integrated view of these factors to enable them to make an impact in the workplace.

Section A: Demographics

Date of interview

Company Name & Details

Interviewee Details

Designation

Organisation Demographics

Section B: Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the individual behavioural factors that impact female transformation in South Africa?

1. Are women well represented in positions of influence and decision making in your company?
2. To what extent do the decisions that female management take affect the outcome of the company performance?
3. What are the key factors currently limiting the advancement of females?
4. Does the company understand the benefits of a female diverse workforce?
5. What initiatives have you, as a female/senior leader in the organisation, actioned for the benefit of the advancement of female inclusion?

6. Do you, as a woman/senior leader, find that there is still male inclusivity in the workplace?

Research Question 2: How do organisational structure and measurements lead to increased and sustainable female transformation?

7. Is female transformation on the strategic agenda of corporate South Africa?
8. Is there senior leadership support and commitment for the required change? Why do you say that?
9. What are the key benefits for the organisation to provide women with opportunities and career advancement?
10. What structures are in place to effectively implement and sustain female advancement? How is this measured? Is there deliberate female career path management?
11. Do you believe the organisational structural changes truly benefit and fast track female advancement in the company? How does this present in the workplace?
12. What organisational limitations were eliminated to achieve female transformation?
13. How do the phenomena of the glass cliff, decision maker diversity and the saviour effect influence female participation?
14. How is female talent identified and nurtured? Are there mentoring programmes in place for women?
15. Do SA companies with female leaders at top levels succeed at a quicker pace to filter transformation down the organisation? What makes them sustain the pace?
16. How do South African companies with diverse boards, contribute to the acceleration of female transformation?

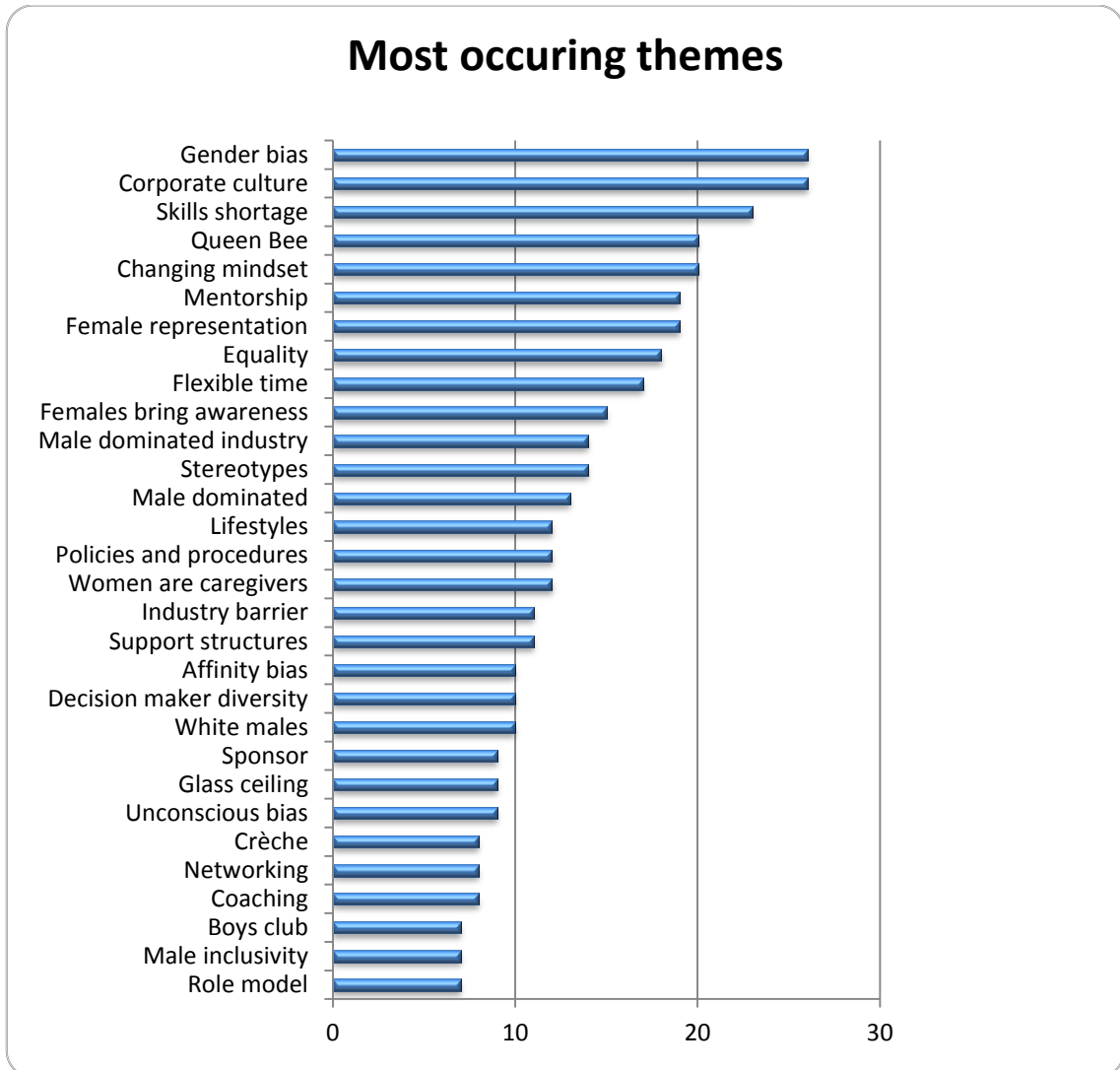
Research Question 3: Does the legislative environment enable an increased rate of female transformation?

17. In what sense does legislation advance or prohibit female advancement?
18. To what extent does the company comply with the skills development plans as legislated by government?

Research Question 4: How do international pressure and trends impact corporate SA and the rate of female transformation?

19. Global trends lean toward female quotas and legislative enforcement of female workplace participation. Are you aware of such international trends and what is your view?
20. SA is also considering female quotas - How do you think this will impact your company?

3. Appendix 3 - Most occurring themes from the interviews



4. Appendix 4 - Compliments on the research study

The researcher found it pertinent to the views of the respondents on the need for the research topic. Below are some of the quotes from the respondents:

P 2: "No, I think the work that you are doing is really useful and I would be very interested in reading your output if that is a possibility."

P 3: "No, I think it is quite comprehensive. We have covered a lot of areas. I would like to see the result."

P 3: "We will do, take some of my own discussion here with you, apply it in my own organisation to pilot it and see if we can do anything with it."

P 4: "I wish you all the best and want to comment in closing that I think this is an important topic. Your research may lack the importance of race i.e. black vs white females as this is a huge sociable imbalance aspect."

P 7: "And a positive point of view, yes. Push but not go into burn the bra mode."

P 8: "No, I just wish you luck because I think it is, initially I thought ooh that is going to be difficult, but the more I thought about it the more I thought, you know this is actually great, I really like what you are doing. And if I do think of something I will email it to you and I will email you that letter of consent."

P11: "No, I think it is great research, I wish you luck in completing your thesis and I think it is lovely, it is a lovely topic to have engaged with."

5. Appendix 5 – Turnitin report results

Final report included in hard copy submission