Enablers for the advancement of female executives in corporations

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Abstract

While much has been written about the barriers that prevent greater levels of female participation in leadership, this study will specifically focus on identifying the enablers within organisations that allow women to thrive and attain top positions, if women have the aspirations to lead and if women want these leadership positions. It is hoped that the understanding of these enablers will influence growing female talent in organisations at executive levels.

The study is exploratory in nature and was better suited to a qualitative approach. Data was collected with the use of a questionnaire in conducting face-to-face interviews. The sample size comprised 16 interviews. The sample was drawn from the population of senior executives across various sectors in corporate organisations in Gauteng, South Africa, and consisted of CEOs and executive directors.

The formulation of the Model for organisation enablers was conceptualised based on the findings of this research study. The key motivating factors of advancing women are diversity, business imperatives and legislation. The enablers which have been identified are Mentorship/sponsorship/coaching (MSC), an enabling environment and leadership development programmes (LDPs). The model is presented to assist leaders in both improving current organisational enablers and to develop and implement successful organisational enablers.

Keywords

Enablers, women advancement, women in 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 Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Jessica Singh

7 November 2018

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AWCA	African Women Chartered Accountants
BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BWASA	Business Women's Association of South Africa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
EEA	Employment Equity Act
EY	Ernst and Young
HR	Human Resources
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
LDPs	Leadership Development Programmes
MSC	Mentorship/Sponsorship/Coaching
ROE	Return on Equity
SAICE	South African Institution of Civil Engineering
SONA	State of the Nation Address
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum

Chapter 1: Problem Definition and Purpose

1.1 Introduction to the research problem

There have been abundant articles, reports and research conducted on the barriers that women face in advancing to executive positions in organisations. These barriers have been highlighted and their effect on women at an organisational and societal level has been identified and discussed extensively. Organisational leaders and women themselves are therefore well aware of the current barriers that women face in advancing to executive positions, but based on current statistics, not much is being done to address or break these barriers. Although women can assume leadership positions due to their capability and right to equality, it is evident from the various statistics available that there is an obvious gap of women in leadership positions at board, C-suite levels and as heads of state in emerging markets (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Women comprise only a small percentage of senior leadership positions in organisations (Bierema, 2016; Dworkin, Maurer & Schipani, 2012; Fajardo & Erasmus, 2017; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Grover, 2015; Roberston & Byrne, 2016). In the United States (US), women comprise 46% of the workforce, though only 4% of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions are filled by women, and women occupy only 16% of director positions in Fortune 500 companies (Lagerberg, 2015; Money, 2018).

A study by Fajardo and Erasmus (2017) found that 31% of South African companies have no women in senior leadership roles. This staggering figure is prevalent across sectors, despite the promotion of gender equality through the country's constitution and the Employment Equity Act (EEA). Both acts outlaw discrimination against women. The shift into positions of influence by women can therefore be viewed as a categorically delayed process (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017; World Economic Forum [WEF], 2016) with only a few instances of women breaking the mould to take up fundamental decision-making roles (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). The gap in managerial and political empowerment roles remains wide (WEF, 2017). This may also explain why, despite a pro-woman and diverse legislative, regulatory and governance environment in South Africa, progress with female appointments at board levels, for example, has been remarkably slow.

This phenomenon is also true for other parts of the world. Literature by Bierema (2016) states that female careers in the global workforce are immersed in patriarchal ethos. Women are stereotyped by this culture of patriarchy that is problematic for both men and

women to recognise and dismantle (Bierema, 2016). On a global level, there has been an increase in female employment, although progress has been slow with regards to equivalent pay, treatment and advancement (WEF, 2017). Based on research by Credit Suisse Research Institute (2016) women comprise 30% of senior management positions, although this percentage decreases when looking at CEO positions. The global indicator depicts that fewer than 5% of women attain the CEO level. According to the WEF (2017) the disparity between pay and employment opportunities between men and women requires 217 years to close. Furthermore, the findings indicate a widening gap in economic opportunity, which focuses on salaries, leadership and participation (WEF, 2017). It must be noted that economic opportunity has progressed quickly, but the gap remains the largest. On a global level, women account for 50% to 60% of college graduates, however, leadership positions are typically occupied by male colleagues (Dworkin et al., 2012; Shore, Rahman & Tilley, 2014).

Some research has been done on enablers and breaking the glass ceiling and the ubiquitous concern is, if this topic has already been explored, why does South Africa and the rest of the world still have to defend why women belong in executive positions and why is there still such a low number of women occupying executive positions? We still find that these issues are considered women's issues though they should, in fact, be human issues, due to its impact on individual businesses, the economy and society.

Given the complexity of contemporary demands faced by organisations, including climate change, competition, technological disruptions, environmental degradation, greater levels of governance and accountability, and diversity in leadership, one would have expected that the leadership diversity debate and agenda would have been a greater win. One would have expected this to be an urgent and purpose-driven agenda, given that goal number five of the 2030 US Sustainable Development Goals relates to gender equality (United Nations [UN], 2018). Target 5.5 of the gender equality goal aims to warrant complete and active participation and equivalent opportunities of women for leadership that incorporates decision-making at all levels of economic, political and public life, and is measured based on the proportion of women holding managerial positions (UN, 2018). However, numerous reports and studies discussed further below, show that female advancement remains a topical issue in contemporary organisations, but with far too little action. In a country like South Africa, and in other emerging markets where women continue to occupy the lowest and middle rungs of corporates, and where women are mostly employed in entry or middle functional roles, the need for correction and intervention is ever more urgent.

Even today in 2018, women, despite their levels of educational attainment and experience, are being stereotyped. A recent article about female engineers published in the July 2018 edition of Civil Engineering and on the LinkedIn page of Manglin Pillay ("Pillay") has been described as misogynistic and offensive. Pillay, who was the CEO of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE) asked whether South Africa should be investing heavily in attracting women into Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) fields (Shange, 2018). According to him, research disclosed that women are inclined to careers that are caring and people orientated and therefore he questioned the investment in women in STEM fields (Shange, 2018). The seriousness of his views and misunderstanding of the research article he referred to is concerning, not only because of his leadership role, but also because his views reflect biased, deeply entrenched, negative gender differences which still serve as barriers for women in the workplace. South Africans called on Pillay to step down and at first, the board of SAICE accepted Pillay's apology and retained him as CEO, citing his invaluable contribution to the engineering sector (SAICE, 2018). This enraged South Africans and specifically female engineers, as the issue at hand was not being addressed, which then led to public outcry on the matter and forced Pillay to resign as the CEO of SAICE on 6 September 2018 (Regter, 2018). This example highlights a few crucial elements we are having to address with regards to inclusion, specifically gender equality. These elements relate to the conscious and unconscious (implicit) bias that women face, the role of leadership in creating the appropriate culture of organisations, how governing structures view the transgressions of men versus women, and finally, how the dissenting voices of women and men can bring about the desired change.

The core question is, how do organisations acknowledge and change these fixed and deeply entrenched patriarchal views? How do leaders of these organisations implement change and address biases, misconceptions, and patriarchal behaviour to present women with enablers in advancing to executive positions to break through these barriers? This is the overarching question, which is relevant considering statements such as Pillay's and in unspoken statements which create barriers for the advancement of women.

A frequently debated matter in academic journals and in the popular press is the question of why so few women lead major corporations (Fitzsimmons, Callan & Paulsen, 2014). The goal of diversity remains an objective as women are intensely underrepresented across the world on boards (Terjesen & Sealy, 2016). Research by Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers (2016) supports this view, which highlights the importance of organisational enablers to assist these women in advancing.

Another study by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) on women in leadership in emerging markets finds that although the state of women in leadership has evolved in recent years, the pace of transformation has been slow, with the goal of gender parity still a long way off. This concern is amplified considering the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030, which identified that the empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of gender equality requires rigorous efforts to counter deeply entrenched discrimination based on gender, which often results from attitudes driven by patriarchy and social norms (UN, 2018). At the current pace of advancement, it seems that these goals will not be met. Despite all the media and academic attention and the growing corporate pledges around diversity and inclusion, this poses the question, why is the advancement of women into leadership and executive positions, particularly in corporations, happening at such a sluggish pace? This sluggish pace poses a further question as to whether organisations are motivated to advance women into executive positions and what factors motivate organisations to advance women.

It is hoped that the identification of these factors might shed some light on this sluggish pace of advancement (Catalyst, 2018) as well as provide laggard organisations with motivating factors. Perhaps by focusing so heavily on the barriers we have lost focus on the enablers and what is required to grow the pipeline of women in executive positions. Identifying, monitoring and evaluating these drivers to reach gender equality must be performed more deliberately and at a faster pace so that the advancement of women can be enhanced and its impact felt more rapidly by society, business and the economy.

When South Africa attained democracy in 1994, it introduced enhanced recognition for gender equality and women empowerment in the country's constitution. The government, private sector and unions, as well as most of the political parties, accepted the need for promoting women into leadership positions. Since 1994, South Africa has made significant progress in female empowerment and is ranked 19 out of 144 countries by the WEF's Global Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2017). The index measures in-country gender gaps across the health, education, the economy and political sectors (WEF, 2017). However, tellingly, the ranking substantially decreases to 89 out of 144 countries when measured on economic participation and opportunity, which, according to the WEF, is indicative of wider gender inequality (WEF, 2017).

Not that there has been much more progress elsewhere in the world; according to Klaus (2016) only 22 women are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. This is despite the fact that the first woman to become CEO of a Fortune 500 company happened 44 years ago. New evidence from the Credit Suisse Research Institute (2016) shows that despite the

global senior management pool accounting for 30% of all positions, less than 5% of women reach the CEO level.

As social and demographic changes increasingly look at the plight of women in society, organisations and corporations are under constant scrutiny (Desai, Chugh & Brief, 2014). Globally, many organisations recognise the need for gender diversity in leadership and the perspectives that women can bring to boards not only as leaders but also as consumers, mothers, teachers and decision-makers; however, many struggle to get more female representation on boards. Grosvold and Brammer (2011) argued that this could be attributable to environmental, cultural, political, legal, institutional and social factors.

In their study, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) further found that women in organisations are able to influence and even alter agendas to respond to the needs of their constituents when women attain a critical mass of around 30% representation at the highest levels. However, at the prevailing rate of advancement, it will take another 200 years for women to reach equivalence with men in organisations (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). These alarmingly low statistics are obviously a cause for concern.

1.2 Purpose of research

According to The Presidency (2018) the newly elected president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, supports '#PRESSFORPROGRESS' and urges all South Africans to also support and play their role in this initiative. This initiative was the theme in observing 2018 National Women's Day. It called on all South Africans, including corporate organisations, to focus on the advancement of gender equality, particularly emphasising the need to improve the status of women in the economy with the aim of gender parity. The President asserted that there must be equal representation of women in the workplace, as women continue to be the subjects of discrimination and are at a disadvantage in the workplace.

In his State of the Nation Address (SONA), the president further called on radical economic transformation to improve the position of black women to ensure active participation as managers, producers, financiers and owners of businesses (The Presidency, 2018). It is therefore encouraging to note that the new president has a serious agenda regarding the advancement of women to benefit not only businesses, but the country as a whole.

In this regard, the country of Mauritius adopted a by-design policy to achieve gender equality through their commitment at the local level by the identification and

implementation of practical steps for gender mainstreaming in and through local government and has dedicated specific resources to achieve this in the next two years (UN, 2018). These steps include their Constitution, which says discrimination based on gender is against the law; The Sex Discrimination Act, which sets out to achieve equality between men and women; The National Gender Policy for local level gender mainstreaming; and the Southern African Development Community Declaration on Gender and Development which targets representation of 50% women at all levels of decision-making (UN, 2018). For change to be done effectively and to be impactful, the women's agenda must be championed not only at a macro level, but also at a meso level.

While much has been written about the barriers that prevent greater levels of female participation in leadership, this study will specifically focus on identifying the enablers within organisations that allow women to thrive and attain top positions, if women have the aspirations to lead and if women want these leadership positions.

1.3 Management implications of study

As supported by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) from both a theoretical and organisational perspective, it is therefore essential to try and understand the 'why' and 'how' enablers that allow some women to successfully advance into leadership and executive positions. This has fundamental implications about the role of business in contemporary societies and its relevance as an institution for positive social change.

It is hoped that the understanding of these enablers will influence retaining female talent in organisations by growing this talent and the result is that organisations benefit from the diversity and business impact that women can offer. This, in turn, should influence organisational pipelines of future female leaders to promote gender diversity on both a global and domestic scale. It is furthermore important to understand the enablers to dismantle barriers to entry for women. This is necessary to ensure equal opportunity and economic growth. No economy can successfully compete in today's interconnected global market if it fails to nurture half its talent pool. The presence of women in the labour market is progressively substantial for development and economic growth at both national and institutional levels (Chengadu, 2018).

According to the Credit Suisse Research Institute (2016) the average Return on Equity (ROE) of companies with at best one woman on the board across a period of the last six years equates to 16%, compared to the average ROE of companies with an absence of female board representation, resulting in an average ROE of 12%. Triana, Miller and

Trzebiatowski (2013) emphasise that the association of strong skill sets of women in emerging markets is core when overseeing activities such as accountability of management for performance purposes in contrast to men and, as a result, organisational corporate governance quality inclines to be elevated. Choudhury (2014) and Rowley, Lee and Lan (2014) contend that economic value should not be the only underlying principle of appointing women as directors, but rather equality should be. Therefore, female representation should be viewed autonomously instead of its mere impact on financial performance (Choudhury 2014; Rowley et al., 2014).

To support this, Chant and Sweetman (2012) highlight that smart economics should not be considered as the only solution to address gender equality. Smart economics are known as the act of advancing the development of women and girls, but ignoring the complications of gender, race and class in making the decision to advance these women (Chant & Sweetman 2012). Grover (2015) recommends that women, when establishing their identity, do so as leaders rather than female leaders. The WEF (2017) posits that gender parity is essential, as 50% of the world's population should be entitled to equivalent access to economic participation as gender parity is important to how societies and economies flourish. In addition, women, as half of the world's talent pool, have an immense impact on the competitiveness, development and future-readiness of both businesses and economies on a global scale.

1.4 Research problem

Based on the introduction of the research problem, the purpose of this research and the management implications of this study, it is evident that even though the barriers to women advancing into executive positions have been clearly articulated by numerous journal articles and the media, we still find such a low percentage of women breaking these barriers and filling executive positions. Furthermore, the advancement of these women is occurring at a sluggish pace. Based on literature, there is underlying theory that accounts for possible reasons as to why the advancement is occurring at a sluggish pace and, in some instances, not occurring at all, even in the presence of organisational enablers. There is a possibility that the enablers are not sufficient or are insufficiently supported to overcome these barriers and it is therefore important to understand how the females who have advanced have approached and overcome these barriers that are highlighted in these theories.

To explain why women are marginalised, this study will draw on social identity theory and social role theory. These theories will help the researcher to understand how to

navigate and overcome these barriers that still pose as barricades even in the presence of organisational enablers. It is hoped that the participants can offer possible solutions to women who are still facing the same barriers.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) coined the social identity theory, which associates the characteristics of the self-image of an individual with the perception of belonging to a specific social category. Individuals endeavour to attain and uphold positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals can assess their own group through in-group/out-group contrasts, which then lead to social groups attempting to distinguish themselves from each other (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The purpose of distinction is to attain or maintain superiority over the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Weiner, Lerner, Irving and Millon (2003) support the notion that in-group members are more positively evaluated than out-group members by individuals. Robbins, Judge, Millet and Boyle (2013) caution about in-group bias, which occurs when members of a group favour fellow group members as a result of belonging to the same group. In-groups are influenced by race, gender or nationality (Robbins et al., 2013). The bias arises from individuals seeking similarities between themselves and others (Robbins et al., 2013). Gender bias is therefore a form of in-group bias. The study will therefore endeavour to understand the best approaches to adopt to break this barrier of in-group bias in organisations, which acts as a barrier for the advancement of women into executive positions.

Other reasons cited for the slow advancement of women to executive positions include limited access to networks, various biases, stereotypes, lack of female role models and mentorship (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Included within the biases hypothesis is the female leadership traits versus male leadership traits. The social role theory coined by Eagly in 1987 refers to human adaptation and how individuals behave differently based on their gender (Eagly, 2013). These gender roles emerge from the division of labour by society based on gender (Eagly, 2013). Furthermore, social role theory purports that the female role exhibits communal behaviour, in contrast to the male role, which exhibits agentic behaviour (Eagly, 2013). Agentic behaviour according to Betz and Hackett (1987) refers to the initiative in generating and benefitting from opportunities, taking risks, pursuing goals using persistence and achievement of goals from the willingness to change one's current situation. Shore et al. (2014) support the social role theory by reference to the perception that masculine traits are evident in individuals that lead, resulting in the belief that men are better leaders. This bias presents itself as a barrier and this research seeks to understand if women that have advanced and for women aiming to advance are expected to conform to masculine leadership traits, female leadership traits or a combination of both traits.

The researcher aims to adopt a proactive approach in identifying what enablers have been adopted and implemented in organisations that have successfully advanced women into executive positions. A further focus on these enablers will include which enabler/s are most impactful in this regard and to identify any deficiencies in current enablers to suggest improvements so that these enablers are more impactful when implemented correctly.

In summary, the research aims to:

1. Understand the **factors** motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions;
2. Understand the significant organisational **enablers** that have assisted women in advancing to executive positions;
3. Understand which of the previously mentioned enablers have been the **most impactful** in advancing women into executive positions in organisations;
4. Understand the **deficiencies of enablers** identified, if any;
5. Understand what **approach** has been adopted to address the in-group **bias** and out-group members as highlighted in the social identity theory by female leaders in advancing to executive positions;
6. Understand if the **leadership traits as highlighted in the social role theory** are applicable to women that have advanced to executive positions.

The remainder of the report is outlined as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research questions, which draw on the themes extracted from the literature review in Chapter 2

Chapter 4: This chapter describes the research methodology that will address the questions in Chapter 3

Chapter 5: This chapter describes the research findings based on the research methodology followed in Chapter 4

Chapter 6: The results of each research question in Chapter 5 will be discussed in this chapter relative to the literature review in Chapter 2

Chapter 7: This chapter presents the summary of key findings along with the description, application and implication of the model for organisational enablers. The limitations of this study, along with the future areas of research, are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Factors that motivate organisations to advance women into executive positions are crucial as these may assist other organisations in identifying the benefits of advancing women into executive positions. The barriers that women face in advancing into executive positions need to be identified to give context to this current problem. Thereafter, the key focus of the research will be explored by identifying and understanding the organisational enablers that have assisted women to advance into executive positions incorporating any deficiencies identified in literature. Finally, the social identity theory and social role theory will be explored to understand the key findings and the effect of this on women in advancing into executive positions. These biases exist as barriers and seem to persist even in the presence of successful enablers. The aim of this research is thus to find successful approaches to addressing these biases to build the pipeline of women into executive positions.

2.2 Women in leadership

Derks et al. (2016) contend that even though participation of women in the workforce has increased, women continue to be underrepresented at higher levels of the organisation. According to literature, this is largely influenced by the existence of barriers in organisations. Studies highlight patriarchal history, and the apartheid era with its legacy largely impacting women's ongoing mission to equality (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). According to Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) many women in South Africa are still subjected to practices that are discriminatory. These are largely influenced by gender stereotypes and patriarchal social norms regardless of constant efforts and progression in this matter (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). In this regard, the fight for equality is not only aimed at racial oppression, but also at oppression on the grounds of gender (Gouws, 2012).

To dismantle the barriers that women face in advancing to higher levels in organisations, intensive and constant individual and joint efforts are required as the entrenched patriarchal mindset still prevails – even in the presence of a shift from apartheid to democracy (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). This is increasingly important as the complete growth potential of a country cannot be fulfilled when its growth reserve, which is predominantly women, is not utilised to its full potential (Bandara, 2015).

2.3 Motivating factors for organisations to advance women into executive positions

The significance of improving the balance of gender at board level of corporates, is recognised at an increasing pace globally (The World Bank, 2012). This study seeks to identify successful enablers that organisations have implemented, therefore, it is also vital to understand what motivates organisations to advance women into executive positions. Literature has identified several motivating factors, as discussed below.

2.3.1 Diversity

Various studies highlight the benefits of gender diversity in organisations, which further supports advancing women into senior leadership positions. There have been various reasons cited regarding the acknowledgement and appreciation of gender diversity in senior management teams. Perrault (2015) is in support of the gender diversity component being of supreme importance when compared to other measures of diversity due to its embedded strength and symbolism. Reasons cited include those given by Dezso and Ross (2012) who depicted, via a theoretical model, how female representation in positions of top management contributes to benefits of informational and social diversity. Further benefits cited were that, coupled with management task performance, this eventually improves the performance of organisations; along with the claim that firms which form a diverse workforce perform better than companies with no diverse workforce (Dezso & Ross, 2012). Among the emphasis of skills that women possess, Dezso and Ross (2012) purport that female leaders have various organisational linked beneficial skills such as widespread consumer outreach, enhanced corporate social responsibility processes and improved innovation. This study therefore highlights not only performance-enhanced value to organisations but also social benefit from diversity.

In support of gender diversity, Larkin, Bernardi and Bosco (2012) state that there is an incremental benefit for corporations that have gender diverse boards, provided that these corporations already possess a decent status in social responsibility, ethical behaviour and transparency. This study therefore demonstrates that gender diversity itself is not sufficient and that the right foundations are required to extract maximum benefit. Further recognition of the benefits of gender diversity was the presumption that all women possess dissimilar decision-making abilities and world views to men (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo & Michel, 2018). It is these differences in both elements of perspective and style that are used as the basis to argue the diversity that women

introduce to both boards and leadership teams with the ultimate result of improving organisational performance (Hoobler et al, 2018).

In further support of female leaders and their associated benefits, Adams and Funk (2012) articulate that female leaders are more participative and inclusive, resulting in the likelihood that when opposing interests are being considered, females will arrive at a decision more cooperatively (Bart & McQueen, 2013). Furthermore, it was found that women had the ability to adjust between various decision principles compared to men who could only adjust to one (Miller & Ubeda, 2012). De Cabo, Gimeno and Nieto (2012) state that in times of stress, female representation can result in the decision-making process being enhanced. Women have the skill to adopt context-dependent conditional fairness principles more frequently than men, translating into women's behaviour being driven by the context (Miller & Ubeda, 2012). Diversity in value, backgrounds, perspectives and skills that women bring to the boardroom drives the importance of increasing the number of women in boards of directors (Torchia, Calabro & Huse, 2011). Zenger and Folkman (2012) found evidence in their study that suggested that women possessed leadership skills that were strongly associated with success factors of the organisation, such as customer satisfaction, profitability, engagement with employees and retention of talent.

The positive effect of gender diversity on team performance was highlighted by Apesteguia, Azmat and Iriberri (2012) who found that gender diversity relates to better team dynamics in a positive way. In contrast, Ben-Amar, Francoeur, Hafsi and Labelle (2013) found that diversity may result in conflict in a group, which, in effect, can hinder efficiency.

In a study conducted by Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) it was found that the preferred leadership style and characteristics are those that exhibit renewed leadership methods, which, as a result, favour the implementation of feminine ideals and inspiration in society, government and business. Productive discussions are more likely to arise from the amalgamation of male and female attributes, therefore resulting in a positive effect on performance of the group (Apesteguia et al., 2012). Not all literature is in support of diverse boards, however, as Triana et al. (2013) found that diversity is double-edged, being able to boost or hinder strategic change depending on the performance of the firm and the power of female directors.

Even though media and academic research are of the opinion that women make better leaders due to their nature of being cooperative and relational, academic literature on the leadership female advantage views are mixed (Post, 2015). In a study conducted by

Post (2015) it was found that there are no differences in enhanced cohesion, learning by participation, participative communication and learning by cooperation of female-led teams in comparison to male-led teams. The study did, however, point out that context was a critical role player in the association between the gender of the leader and the quality of team communications (Post, 2015). While diversity and inclusion are required and encouraged, a study by Hays-Thomas and Bendick (2013) found that diversity and inclusion respond to complex matters such as gender, race, culture and religion, but are being disparaged for being seen as a humble solution to a complex problem (Hays-Thomas & Bendick, 2013).

Ben-Amar et al. (2013) found that a firm is more likely to have female board members when it is linked to other firms that have female directors on their boards. In addition, Ben-Amar et al. (2013) found that statutory diversity, which refers to the independence of board members and the separation of CEO and chairperson of the board's functions, is not enough for boards to perform well. Ben-Amar et al. (2013) suggest that boards must be complemented by demographic diversity such as culture, gender, experience of directors and nationality. In effect, Ben-Amar et al. (2013) suggest a balancing relationship between independence of the board and gender diversity.

It is important to identify and understand what drives diversity in organisations. In this regard, Peterson (2016) posits in her study that the motivating factor for the increase in female leadership positions in senior management in academia is as a result of external pressure to advance women.

Based on the literature on gender diversity detailed above, research question 1 will aim to understand what are the factors motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions. The study will aim to understand if the benefits of gender diversity have been realised and accepted by leaders of organisations in South Africa, thereby serving as a motivating factor for organisations to advance women into executive positions.

2.3.2 Enhanced company performance

Literature sources refer to the impact on firm performance as a result of advancing women into senior leadership positions. A study conducted by Dezso and Ross (2012) found that an organisation with top management representation of at least one female generated one percent more economic value and greater accounting performance than an organisation without a female in their top management team. Dezso and Ross (2012) suggest that CEOs ensure that gender diversity is maintained in top management in their

organisations. Dezso and Ross (2012) further assert that a CEO who goes above and beyond in assisting females in breaking barriers in their managerial advancement will be rewarded by firm performance improvements.

According to Larkin et al. (2012) where women comprise a high proportion of directors in a firm, these firms have an increased likelihood of receiving the recognition of being among the "100 best companies to work for" (p. 1) in addition to the "most ethical companies" (p. 5) and are also more engaged in corporate social responsibility. Cook and Glass (2015) state that firms which are represented by a female CEO and several female board members have an inclination to outperform firms with a male CEO and limited or no female board members. The meta-analysis compiled by Post and Byron (2015) found that a more positive outcome in the relationship between women on boards and financial performance occurs when countries possess stronger stakeholder protections.

However, not all literature is in support of women and their associated enhanced company performance. While some studies have found a link between corporate performance and women on boards to be positive, others found a negative link, and yet others still did not identify any link at all (Joecks, Pull & Vetter, 2013).

Based on the literature on the resultant enhanced economic performance due to the inclusion of female executives above, research question 1 will aim to understand what are the factors motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions. The study will aim to understand if the goal of enhanced economic performance is a motivating factor for organisations to advance women into executive positions.

2.3.3 Legislation and quotas

Not all decisions to advance women into executive positions are motivated by the appreciation of skills and diverse thinking of women, as detailed in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 above. Some organisations are forced to do so as a result of legislation, quotas or external pressure from customers, as detailed in various studies. The acceleration of female advancement into executive positions in this regard is evidenced in studies such as that of Sojo, Wood, Wood and Wheeler (2016) who found that several countries have employed quotas, targets and requirements on reporting to grow the number of women in leadership positions. Sojo et al. (2016) further state that when the US introduced the board diversity reporting directive, female representation on the boards of directors for Fortune 500 companies accelerated. Sojo et al. (2016) concluded that the requirement to report on diversity resulted in an increase in female representation in leadership

positions. Furthermore, Sojo et al. (2016) found that targets and quotas were visibly linked to an increase in female representation in parliament and boards of directors. Sojo et al. (2016) suggest that companies and countries which are aiming to increase female representation contemplate targets and quotas and implement strong enforcement mechanisms. In addition, cognisance must be taken that the level of representation attained is directly linked to how challenging the goal is and the extent to which the goal has been accepted by key stakeholders (Sojo et al., 2016).

Both governments and organisations have taken specific steps to decrease the gap between female and male candidates in senior leadership roles. (Klettner, Clarke & Boersma, 2014; Meier & Lombardo, 2013). The approaches taken include opportunity enhancing strategies, reporting requirements, setting gender targets, introducing quotas and equal opportunity strategies (Klettner, Clarke & Boersma, 2014; Meier & Lombardo, 2013). In support, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) state that legislation and governing codes have been updated globally by governments with the aim of promoting gender equality across organisations and management levels and in addition are highlighting devotion to business ethics and corporate governance.

To meet legislative requirements or quotas, some organisations use smart economics as the basis to advance women. Smart economics uses the development method of investing in women and girls to compete and grow in the economy (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). Chant and Sweetman (2012) highlight that the problem with this is that it adopts an approach of investing in women as a way to fix the world instead of methods to highlight that women are equal to men, and it is that which drives the investment. Chant and Sweetman (2012) argue that "smart economics is concerned with building women's capacities in the interests of development rather than promoting women's rights for their own sake" (p. 527). In this regard, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) argue that while they themselves acknowledge and support the necessity to highlight the development needs and inclusion of women at all decision-making levels, it is not advisable for this approach to be adopted merely to satisfy economic or business imperatives; rather, it should be embraced for the sake of women and gender equality.

Studies give an indication of how legislation and quotas have resulted in the advancement of women. In this regard, Wang and Keelan (2013) found that when a new law came into effect requiring that directors of firms in Norway must be 40% female, it resulted in an increase in the number of female board members, chairpersons and CEOs (Wang & Keelan, 2013). This depicted that the Norway gender quota not only enhanced boardroom gender equality, but also resulted in the spill-over effect on senior leadership

positions. However, another study conducted by Ahern and Ditmar (2012) discovered that the Norway gender quota was viewed as a constraint merely as a result of the imposition of a quota and resulted in the stock price falling significantly. Due to the adherence of the quota, appointed board members were considered to be less experienced, there was a subsequent rise in acquisitions and debt, and the operating performance of the firm deteriorated (Ahern & Ditmar, 2012). Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) highlight that the imposition of quotas with the resultant aim of achieving gender balance is perhaps not the ideal approach. This is supported by a study by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) which found that increasing the female leadership talent pipeline was considered more important that merely filling quotas.

According to literature, women who advance merely due to legislation and quotas are referred to as tokens. Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) posit that there are strong challengers including women to minimal gender quotas as it is viewed as tokenism regarding gender diversity. Kanter (1977) refers to a token which can be an individual or a group as the symbol of the group whereby the core role of the token is to portray a symbol of upward mobility in society. Kanter (1977) described tokens and included black people in a white-dominated group and women in a male-dominated group while the presence of a token emphasises the dominant group features. Grant (2017) defines tokenism as the practice of satisfying a moral requirement so that structurally disadvantaged people can be included in groups that have a better place with regards to the outcomes of a specific society and in effect upholding the idea that mobility is accessible by all individuals when in fact, it is not. Even when boards have a minority of directors that are women or one woman, these women can still be considered tokens (Torchia et al., 2011).

Kanter (1977) explains that a group is skewed when one dominant type (e.g. males) controls the minority (e.g. females) and concurrently controls the group and its culture. The minority is referred to as "tokens" and are treated as representatives and not individuals (Kanter, 1977). This is further supported by Niemann (2016) who articulates that tokenism is a behavioural and psychological state forced upon people with an obvious gender or race difference in a work environment. Tokens experience isolation and stereotyping and are seen as representatives, as tokenism is a result of the context and not the character of the person being tokenised (Niemann, 2016). Torchia et al. (2011) state that due to the high visibility of tokens, tokens encounter additional pressures relating to their performance and are singled out as a result of their difference and not due to any accomplishments. These reactions occur to a token when she is a single woman or women as a minority in a bigger group (Torchia et al., 2011). Women who are minorities in an environment dominated by males have minimal chance of

applying influence in the organisation until women reach the state of significant minority, as it is above this point that women can influence organisational change (Broome, Conley & Krawiec, 2010).

In consideration of legislative and quota related drivers, countries have adopted various approaches. An Ernst and Young (EY) (2014) report compared various initiatives that countries have implemented around the world to rectify gender inequality. The report analysed the European Council's European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020, which acknowledges that to attain economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity, gender equality policies were of vital importance and looked for ways to promote equal decision-making involvement of men and women in all fields (EY, 2014). EY (2014) found that the Australian government committed to achieving a 40% target of women on boards by 2015 and achieved this target early by 2013. The quota is 40% in Norway and listed companies can be dissolved by a court if companies are found to be non-compliant (EY, 2014). Germany aimed to achieve a quota of 30% by 2016, while the UK opted to go the route of voluntary targets and not a quota approach, with the result of increasing women from 10.5% in 2010 to 20.7% in 2014 (EY, 2014). Public companies in India must have at least one female board member if companies have five or more directors, while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is also required to have at a minimum one woman on the board with no definite timeline (EY, 2014).

In South Africa, the constitution shapes the landscape, including the EEA and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Codes. This aims for equal representation at a demographic level at all levels in organisations, but with a specific focus at board level. According to Lawrence (2016) the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) promotes gender diversity at board level and requires all listed companies to have a gender equality policy that must be included in their annual report.

To articulate the negative effects of advancement of women due to legislation and quotas, Oliphant (2015) contends that there is gender focus instability in the country, which is mirrored in the variations when compared to international female measures and indices of empowerment. A key highlight mentioned was that numerical targets are the key driver in South African organisations (Oliphant, 2015). However, this occurs to the detriment of upskilling of women or cultural desensitisation (Oliphant, 2015). There is evidence of duality in that equality is prescribed formally by the law, but, inequality is experienced by women (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Sullivan (2015) cautions that quotas are not perfect and highlights the risk that females might be appointed by

companies to the board to satisfy quota requirements instead of identifying the ideal candidate for the job.

Based on literature on legislation and quotas detailed above, research question 1 will aim to understand what motivates organisations to advance women into executive positions. The study will aim to understand if organisations have utilised legislation as a basis to drive the advancement of women into executive positions.

2.3.4 Values and skills set

The values and skills set of women are also motivators of women advancing into executive positions, as detailed in a study by Ben-Amar et al. (2013) who found that female directors are appointed only when female directors possess business expertise and suggest that the business background of women and formal education level serve as entrance criteria for board admission. The results of a study by Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) found that it is necessary for women who are aiming for senior positions, to exhibit detailed attributes of a skill they themselves possess. This is over and above their professional and educational skills. Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) further posit that women have access to a professional network that is extensive, therefore allowing the organisation to expand on its relationships. This will greatly enhance a female's chance of becoming a member of board subcommittees.

Based on literature on values and skills set detailed above, research question 1 will aim to understand what are the factors motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions. The study will aim to understand if organisations consider the values and skills that women possess as a motivating factor to drive the advancement of women into executive positions.

2.4 Barriers literature

2.4.1 Organisational factor barriers

There have been numerous studies performed on organisational barriers and it is important to summarise these barriers from literature to enable an understanding of how the enablers identified in literature then address these barriers. The barriers summarised will provide the link to why the organisational enablers identified play such an impactful and vital role in the advancement of women.

According to Sharif (2015) the glass ceiling is a term that affects female executives and managers and describes the "invisible, artificial barriers created by attitudinal and

institutional prejudices that prevent qualified individuals from advancing within their organisations and reaching their full potential" (p. 330). Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) found that even though women possess the required skills and education to fill top jobs, women face the effect of the glass ceiling, which presents itself as a barrier for being as competitive as their male counterparts once a certain hierarchal level is reached. In contrast, there are situations where women are promoted to executive positions but do not attain positive female advancement (Nekhili & Gatfaoui, 2013). Mulcahy and Linehan (2014) found evidence in their board appointments study that where impending board positions are associated with a catastrophic state and significant likelihood of failure, then it is probable that women will achieve these positions, then this occurrence is termed the glass cliff. Glass and Cook (2016) support this by asserting that it is expected that female CEOs are appointed during periods of high risk-task or potential catastrophe. De Cabo et al. (2012) posit that because male directors are outperformed by female directors in times of crisis, female directors may be awarded the riskiest jobs, thereby breaking through that glass ceiling, but ending up on the glass cliff.

In terms of biases exposed in organisations, Koch, D'Mello and Sackett (2015) state that gender biases are a potential trail to discrimination, which could entail a larger proportion of men being hired than women. This can occur even if both are comparably qualified for positions within the organisation (Koch et al., 2015). According to Heilman (2012) there is an expectation with gender stereotyping that women are less effective than men even in the absence of women having the ability to prove themselves.

Another finding contributing to the lack of female composition on boards is the limitation of the talent pool. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) posit that the most common talent pool to draw from is strongly influenced by the "old boys club" mentality. Some organisations also do not provide environments which are family friendly (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012). Family friendly environments allow women the flexibility to have a healthy work-life balance in which such situations, women will thrive and minimise the guilt of not having the ability to also meet family demands (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012).

2.5 Enablers literature

2.5.1 Organisational enablers literature

According to Hogarth, Karelaia and Trujillo (2012) it is vitally important to commit resources to sustaining and advancing women at both the lower and middle levels of management so that ultimately the pool of senior female aspirants can equate to the pool of men.

2.5.1.1 Mentorship/sponsorship/coaching (MSC)

According to Fitzsimmons (2012) one of the challenges that relate to the low number of women in leadership positions is the lack of access to mentors. This challenge results in limited transfer and development of career capital from a male mentor to women (Dworkin et al., 2012; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016). The definition of mentorship per Maloney (2012) refers to a relationship between two people with a specific focus on career development, with the implication of a younger member being offered guidance from a more senior member to enhance the career of the younger member (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). According to McDonald and Westphal (2013) "participation process mentoring" (p. 1173) refers to mentoring in an informal manner from a more experienced individual who can offer guidance in navigating new terrain and to enable a better understanding of behaviour norms of an organisation.

Coaching is mandatory during different stages in the careers of professional women and would entail advice to those at the beginning of their career and to identify methods to enable women to secure executive positions (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Dworkin et al. (2012) link the benefits of mentoring to the advancement of women in the workplace by stating that mentoring programmes can help women to overcome barriers. In support of this, a sponsor can make a substantial impact in terms of the support female leaders receive, that enables them to climb the corporate ladder (Glass & Cook, 2016). One of the most impactful paths to tackle barriers and advance into top management positions is though mentoring programmes (Dworkin et al., 2012).

Maloney (2012) states that mentorship has improved several careers and is categorised as a vital factor for job enjoyment and satisfaction. However, as it is based on a relationship between two people, mentorship is not guaranteed to be successful (Maloney, 2012). The positive results of mentorship are experienced not only by the mentee but also by the organisation (Ensher & Murphy, 2011; Maloney, 2012). Ensher and Murphy (2011) further state that individuals who receive effective mentoring are promoted more quickly, earn more money, and have enhanced mobility and flexibility in their careers when compared to those individuals with mentors who are ineffective or who have no mentor at all.

The benefit to the organisation is that effectively mentored individuals possess enhanced organisational commitment, are happier at work, are more loyal and have the ability to communicate at an improved level (Ensher & Murphy, 2011). Mentorship therefore significantly assists with (1) growing ambition and the provision of a potential role model;

(2) career safety and career risk management; and (3) career coaching and planning (Dworkin et al., 2012; Maloney, 2012). This is in addition to offering advice and pointing out not-so-obvious challenges (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

It is also important to understand that not all mentoring is equivalent, as sponsorship involves a unique relationship whereby the mentor is not limited to offering feedback and advice but in addition utilises his or her influence with individuals in senior positions to back the mentee (Ibarra, Carter & Silva, 2010). Ibarra et al. (2010) go on to say that it is therefore important for women to obtain mentors who, in addition to giving career advice, also sponsor them. This means that in addition to assisting women to know themselves better, identify their preferred operating styles, and changes required to enable them climbing up the leadership ladder, it is more beneficial that mentors also assist women to map out their moves and how to assume responsibility of new roles in addition to publicly endorsing their authority (Ibarra et al., 2010). This however, is not always possible as the best mentors often are not influential in pulling people up through the system. Sherwin (2014) supports the formal mentoring programme by stating that organisations must aim to get senior leaders to offer additional mentoring and support to females within the firm. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) expand on this by stating that the creation of women's groups that offer opportunities within organisations to women who face similar predicaments must be supported by organisations so that these women can exchange ideas on how to cope with problems women are facing.

Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) found that even in instances where women break through the glass ceiling; a second glass ceiling is reached once board level is attained. The cloudiness and the closed nature of the appointments at board level stem not only from a restraining view of the suitability of the profile of the applicant, but are also largely influenced by the traditional bias demonstrated through gender stereotyping (Nekhili & Gatfaoui, 2013). This type of setting therefore strengthens the sponsorship practices spread over the predominantly male-dominated corporate governance network and within the boardroom (Nekhili & Gatfaoui, 2013).

In their study, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) identified a key finding which related to various women expressing the importance of executive male sponsors in the organisation that could open doors of opportunity and vouch for them. Furthermore, women who had advanced shared that they themselves could not have advanced without the influence of their male sponsor even though these women possessed superior professional and academic credentials (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

Robbins et al. (2013) assert that value is only extracted from a mentor if a good supportive network of resources is available. If the mentor is not a strong performer, the impact and success on the mentee may not be successful (Robbins et al., 2013). Dworkin et al. (2012) encourage female role models to encourage other women in the advancement of their careers, which results in self-efficacy improvement, increase in leadership capital, and breaking down barriers.

Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz and Wiethoff (2010) make a reference to studies highlighting the powerful impact of male mentors to women in male-dominated professions. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) however, found in their study that successful women had mentors who were both male and female, with a higher number of mentors being male, which could largely have been influenced by the low levels of women in leadership positions. Furthermore, a European-based study by Hensvick (2014) states that female managers tend to be stronger mentors. This could be attributed to the ease of establishing female mentor relationships between women (Hensvick, 2014). In addition, the glass ceiling for female employees may be broken by female managers if they themselves act as role models or mentors for employees at a lower level or by the elimination of behaviour that is considered discriminatory (Hensvick, 2014). Fitzsimmons and Callan (2016) believe that women extract more benefit in progression from mentoring than men. Dworkin et al. (2012) advises that mentors should be strong influencers within the organisation and women should have the opportunity to choose their own mentors, thereby addressing their lack of networks within the organisation.

Dworkin et al. (2012) articulate that the ideal way to break down barriers is to implement targeted mentoring programmes. For sponsorship to be considered effective it should not stand on its own but should constitute a component of a comprehensive programme, including performance assessments, succession planning and training and development (Dworkin et al., 2012). It is of utmost importance that sponsors are held accountable to ensure maximum benefit of the sponsorship arrangement (Ibarra et al., 2010). Beeson and Valerio (2012) posit that influential male champions should be recognised for top practice efforts in extending diversity in leadership development and should be encouraged to recruit fellow executives to replicate these initiatives. Various organisations have instituted formal mentoring programmes for women aiming to advance into leadership positions, but there still exists the absence of sponsorship and specific training required to advance into executive positions (WEF, 2016).

Based on literature on mentorship/sponsorship/coaching (MSC) detailed above, research question 2 and 3 will aim to understand if MSC is a significant enabler in

organisations to advance women into executive positions. Research question 4 will also aim to understand if the deficiencies identified in the literature above resonate with deficiencies articulated by interview respondents on MSC.

2.5.1.2 Networking

Social capital is often crucial in advancing one's career and this tends to be an obstacle for women to advance into executive roles due to the nature of networking occurring after hours or, in some instances, requiring travel or extended hours of work (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). Women often have added responsibilities at home which prevent them from attending events planned after working hours and therefore lose out on the ability to meet influential individuals inside and outside their organisation. According to Glass and Cook (2016) a repetitive lack of support for the leadership of female executives was identified by the isolation of women from professional and social networks on the job. Fitzsimmons (2012) points out that a vital problem for women is access to informal networks.

Hewlett and Rashid (2010) suggest that assisting women to develop ties, distinguishability and organisational know-how is crucial to individual victory. Networking and building relationships are indispensable to strengthening commitment and engagement to develop the visibility, contacts and organisational know-how that is required for professional success (Hewlett & Rashid,2010). Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) support this by stating that the informal network configuration can create doors to leadership opportunities, determines who will support one's leadership claims and shapes the learning process.

Briggs, Jaramillo and Weeks (2011) state that networking is relied upon to continually develop over a period and is often associated with career advancement, increased pay and enhanced performance. A good network is often associated with top performing employees and informal networks, which are defined by Mohammadi, Hosseinzadeh, and Kazemi (2012) as spontaneous social and personal interactions and relationships outside the organisational structures, and which are called more impactful in the advancement of careers (Briggs et al., 2011).According to a study by Mohammadi et al. (2012) which focused on the relationship between informal networks in the workplace and gender, one of the contributing factors to women earning less, being less successful and being promoted at a slower pace to their male counterparts is a result of limited access to the variation and volumes of resources that these male counterparts possess. Fitzsimmons (2012) supports this finding by stating that a significant problem exists in women having limited access to informal networks.

According to Beeson and Valerio (2012) successful women should be encouraged to share challenges faced in their careers, as well as their paths to success with other women in the future leaders' pipeline, including strategies employed to develop their careers. To this end, female networks should be encouraged to enable this sharing of experiences (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). However, Ely et al. (2011) contradict women's networks by stating that women's networks result in fewer opportunities for leadership, less visibility is provided for claims of leadership, and a lower level of endorsement and recognition is generated.

Schueller-Weidekamm and Kautzky-Willer (2012) found that networking has a substantial influence in successfully attaining a top position but that efficient networks need a substantial investment of time to maintain and keep current, which, in the case of many women, might take away from family time. This limitation should therefore be recognised by organisations and integrated into women's career strategies. Gremmen, Akkerman and Benschop (2013) considered the relations between networking behaviour, gender and network structure to understand the significance of gender for organisational networks and found that gender does not explain the difference in male and female network structures and that these structures are better explained by networking behaviour as opposed to gender.

Based on literature on networking detailed above, research question 2 and 3 will aim to understand if networking is a significant enabler in organisations to advance women into executive positions. Research question 4 will also aim to understand if the deficiencies identified in the literature above resonate with deficiencies articulated by interview respondents on networking.

2.5.1.3 Leadership development programmes (LDPs)

Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) posit the importance of leadership development programmes (LDPs) being designed to essentially prepare women to move into senior positions. Several studies highlight the importance and need for continuous development programmes for women. In the pursuit of the development of talent across the workforce, the tenacious low levels of women in leadership positions in organisations has resulted in augmented demand for LDPs over time (Debebe, Anderson, Bilimoria & Vinnicombe, 2016). LDPs for women can range from once-off events to activities that have been strategically enacted and which have grown noticeably over time (Debebe et al., 2016). Morahan, Rosen, Richman and Gleason (2011) propose that increasing visibility and equipping women with skills were required to assist women in the transitions of their

careers and for their advancement and then to sustain the advancement of women in executive positions.

McDonald and Westphal (2013) state that women have been historically disadvantaged and were exposed to limited opportunities on the educational front and workplace experiences, which has led to a lack of gender diversity at the level of corporate leadership. LDPs can effectively prepare women in ascending the corporate ladder (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Dobbin, Kim and Kalev (2011) suggest that the number of women in upper management has a positive relation to the probability that the organisation implements a well-structured diversity programme. Sherwin (2014) states that organisations should aim to increase their impact on women's development by uniting increased opportunities for development and inspiration to all senior managers with the ultimate aim of enhancing the pipeline of women in manager and supervisor roles. Debebe et al. (2016) purport that participants in LDPs possess a transformed idea of purpose and value, feedback and support methods, which emphasise confidence, increased belief in their abilities, and their ability to lead change in organisations. This enables women to address workplace contexts that are challenging to them and balance work-life responsibilities, while taking cognisance of their career-life changes, in addition to seeing themselves as change agents of more unbiased workplaces for all (Debebe et al., 2016).

Women-only LDPs versus gender-diverse programmes are disputed to a large extent by practitioners and academics (Ely et al., 2011). Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) purport that there are advantages and disadvantages to both women-only and gender-diverse programmes. The advantages of women-only programmes relate to the freedom of women to voice their thoughts and opinions in the absence of men, as women feel more comfortable showing their weaknesses (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). This results in more robust relationships being formed with other women, due to the absence of gender dynamics (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Moreover, women from diverse cultures can discover differences in a more meaningful and deeper way (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). In addition, the other advantages of women-only LDPs as explained by Ely et al. (2011) are that women feel comfortable to learn with other women, a joint understanding of gender biases with other women, assisting women in identifying their personal leadership styles, and addressing the under-utilisation of female resources (Debebe, 2011). Other benefits relate to an increase in confidence, increase in networks, self-awareness and skills development (Debebe, 2011). Debebe et al. (2016) states that women exchange experiences and utilise and offer support to other women to enable current challenges to be addressed. In contrast, the disadvantages of women-only

programmes are that men feel that men are at a disadvantage by not attending these programmes (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

In support of gender-diverse programmes, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) indicate that the awareness of gender equality and the inclusion of men in these programmes has resulted in the creation of mutual consideration between genders through the inclusion of men in the process of learning. In this way, women and men can understand each other (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). The disadvantage of a gender-diverse programme is that it limits cultural exploration between women, and women do not focus on forming networks with each other (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). In a study conducted by Tanton (1992) it was found that gender-diverse settings can be infiltrated by the pressure of gender and restrain the extent of transformational learning. In support of this, women change while being in the presence of men, restrain their power and also find difficulty in voicing strong opinions while men are present (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Pressure exists in gender-diverse programmes and therefore constrains the safety of women and overpowers their ability to explore their leadership experience while incorporating the effects of gender (Debebe, 2011; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013).

In light of the preference of women-only programmes by Ely et al. (2011) it is vitally important to also incorporate men into these programmes and discussions to include different viewpoints and varied perspectives on current issues faced by women and organisations, to facilitate learning on an integrated platform. Based on interviews and case studies, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) indicate that a blended approach is the best approach, and this should incorporate a foundation of the women's LDPs with workshops for gender-diverse dialogues. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) go on to say that gender-diverse dialogues will enable the sharing of each other's lived experiences and well as participants' personal experiences of being demographically different at the organisation. To support this approach, Ely et al. (2011) propose that gender-diverse programmes be complemented by women-only programmes. Based on interviews conducted by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) on institution-level interventions, respondents mentioned conforming to a 50:50 gender split for recruitment, gender advisory programmes, academies to empower young women, internship programmes for women, supplier development programmes, and localisation programmes targeting women and youth.

LDPs have transformed over time from a personal development perspective to identifying and being aware of the various ways that women learn and various work-related experiences by women to an enhanced focus on managing talent as an initiative led by

the company (Vinnicombe, Moore & Anderson, 2013). The best way to ensure the effectiveness of LDPs is to embed them into the business needs of the organisation, thereby ensuring that it receives support from top management and is rolled out as a corporate customised programme (Debebe et al., 2016). This will offer a chance of better institutional change, which is more sustainable over time (Debebe et al., 2016).

According to Beeson and Valerio (2012) employers should focus on instituting LDPs to support the advancement of women in their careers, such as succession planning practices. This not only addresses the gender stereotyping barrier, but also promotes equality when defining career potential (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). These practices should include a thorough group discussion identifying research participants to fill executive-level positions, thereby contributing to a more gender-balanced identification method of imminent leaders (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Succession planning discussions should include female research participants which can then potentially prepare them to fill executive positions (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). This ensures that development plans for women focus on career advancement in the long term, coaching, mentoring and skill upliftment to enhance their success (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). According to the WEF (2016) human resource directors need to concentrate beyond administrations and systems to training and talent development, which can assist women to overcome barriers while simultaneously attaining better talent management.

Beeson and Valerio (2012) also posit that leaders in organisations should monitor the number of women considered in filling positions that have historically produced senior leaders and generate and monitor the trends in the retention and promotion of women versus men identified to fill future leadership positions. Even though a global perspective is viewed as vital in various organisations, some women are prevented from assuming international assignments due to family commitments (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Therefore, organisations should consider and develop innovative approaches (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Individual development plans should ideally promote involvement of an external nature for women, such as trade or industry associations, since exposure opportunities can be created to external stakeholders as well as leadership experience (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

The characteristics of LDPs for women that emerged from the study undertaken by Baltodano, Carlson, Jackson and Mitchell (2012) purport that information and training are not sufficient to ensure successful advancement into leadership positions and that feedback and encouragement is more beneficial in terms of developing the skills and knowledge required in the pursuit of their personal goals. In addition, mentors are

influential in assisting women to recognise opportunities by using networks to gain desired positions (Baltodano et al., 2012). This view is supported by Ibarra et al. (2013) who found that the focus on the identification of the correct skills and abilities is not sufficient and that these initiatives in addition, should support and inspire women to lead and in the process, enhance the likelihood that these women's efforts will be noticed and encouraged by others.

Evaluation in most cases relies only on participant satisfaction ratings, which occur at the end of the programme (Debebe et al., 2016). The problem identified with this approach is that these ratings are largely informed by the most recent experiences of the participant in the programme in terms of faculty engagement and learning material relevance (Debebe et al., 2016). Debebe et al. (2016) encourages LDP's directors to measure the longer-term effects of their programme, as these extend beyond the individual participation ratings.

Debebe et al. (2016) state that LDPs which have been customised to a single organisation are more intricate and therefore require feedback loops between leaders, managers, sponsors, participants and programme providers, so that the impact of the programme on women and the organisation can be assessed. Delivery of the LDPs is in most instances, the area of concern for organisations with an unwillingness to invest resources in follow up of the LDPs (Debebe et al., 2016).

In South Africa, research conducted by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) found that 54% of organisations offered LDPs to women, identifying a gap contributing to the challenges faced by women in their career advancement. Some 21% of respondents in their study indicated the LDPs as a solution (Hofmeyr and Mzobe, 2012).

Based on literature on LDPs detailed above, research question 2 and 3 will aim to understand if LDPs are a significant enabler in organisations to advance women into executive positions. Research question 4 will also aim to understand if the deficiencies identified in the literature above resonate with deficiencies articulated by interview respondents on LDPs.

2.5.1.4 Enabling environment

Inclusion and support from leaders

Studies indicate that an enabling environment with backing from leadership at the top supports and motivates the advancement of women. Sabharwal (2014) states that diversity management only, is insufficient for workplace performance improvement and

that an enhanced employee inclusion approach which considers views and promotes self-esteem of employees is required. The findings exhibit that the inclusive approach requires leaders who are supportive and leaders who empower employees, also assisting employees to arrive at vital decisions regarding their roles (Sabharwal, Is Diversity Management Sufficient? Organizational Inclusion to Further Performance, 2014).

Employees that experience inclusion feel that they are in a safe environment to voice their viewpoints and ideas as they feel recognised and valued for their role in the organisation (Sabharwal, Is Diversity Management Sufficient? Organizational Inclusion to Further Performance, 2014). According to Sabharwal (2014) change in organisations toward an environment of inclusion should be less reliant on policies and structure to foster an inclusive environment. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) found that in their study, interviewees proposed that the support and openness of organisations and of female leaders was one of their key success factors. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) went on to elaborate that support of male leaders in the organisations was also crucial to their advancement. Leaders must be authentic and create an environment of inclusion and diversity to foster an enabling environment (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) say that diversity and inclusion are approaches which will address the intersection of class, gender and race. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) further say that gender-equal environments can be promoted via the collaboration of men and women, with the aim of breaking down barriers to women advancing in organisations. In addition, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) suggest that there is a requirement to mould the culture into one that is transformational and a climate that supports gender equality and inclusion. Organisations must take cognisance of the varying cultural approaches to gender diversity and how these build enabling environments to help women advance in their careers (Kogut, Colomer & Belinky, 2014).

Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) state that the creation of a more inclusive work environment which supports women empowerment and diversity, as well as embraces leadership values and traits, is of vital importance, yet this reason is rarely articulated as a gender equality argument. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) go on to say that women and development agendas alone, cannot address and eliminate the gender inequality trap, as it necessitates the shifting of deep-rooted cultural norms and thinking of significant role players in the lives of women. This was articulated by Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) who found evidence of the CEO driving the diversity management process and Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) was in support of boardrooms that are gender diverse (Ng

& Sears, 2012). Considering the context of the King 3 report, the responsibility and accountability falls onto the board so that the board can demonstrate a pledge to strive for gender equality and foster a diverse environment (Chengadu and Scheepers, 2017). In fostering a diverse environment, it is essential to integrate women onto boards so that women can become part of an effective and sustainable executive structure (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

Despite the support of diversity in the EEA, organisational culture has an extensive road to acceptance (Chengadu and Scheepers, 2017). Equal participation and authority to make decisions are restricted by the gender stereotype of women to be the weaker sex (Chengadu and Scheepers, 2017). Despite these contests, the future seems positive, though it requires a significant cultural shift away from the ages-old mindset of gender entrenchment and stereotypes (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

Studies indicate that diversity and inclusion are in many instances used interchangeably but these are different and distinct constructs. Diversity refers to differences relating to demographics both observable (example. age, race, gender) and non-observable (example. education, culture) and is therefore a characteristic of an organisation (Nishii, 2013). Inclusion refers to the perceptions of employees that their organisational contributions are unique and appreciated and their complete involvement is encouraged (Barak, 2015).

<u>Critical Mass Theory</u>

Joecks et al. (2013) found in their study that initially, gender diversity had a negative effect on firm performance and only once a critical mass of 30% women was attained was this associated with firms that performed better than firms which had a board comprised only of males. In addition, Joecks et al. (2013) found that critical mass theory suggests that until a critical mass of women is attained, there is no focus on the varying abilities and skills that women possess. For women to exercise influence on board tasks, processes and interaction, with the aim of having a positive impact on firm level innovation, the board of directors has to include at least three women (Torchia et al., 2011). Torchia et al. (2011) posit that moving from one or two women (a small number of tokens) to at least three women (consistent minority) results in firm level innovation being enhanced. However, Broome et al. (2010) state that although critical mass theory says an increased number of women on the board enhances the comfort levels of women and lessens the stress of the initial and only female, their study found that it did not support the theory and stated that a critical mass of directors that are women will not produce diverse and noticeably feminine outcomes in the boardroom. Broome et al.

(2010) further explain that some female director respondents feel less like tokens and more relaxed when women comprise a significant minority on the board and that this level of comfort induces women to be more effective board members. Simultaneously, female and minority respondents who were in most instances, the first and only female or the minority in their board positions said they were familiar with the status of being an outsider and did not require support or reassurance from having more females on the board and effectively contribute being either in the singular or minority female board members (Broome et al., 2010).

Structures, processes and practices

In male-dominated organisations, the processes and structures most often place women at a disadvantage (Debebe et al., 2016). The findings from the study by Debebe et al. (2016) state that programme providers in organisations elicit information from human resources such as performance rankings to get a clearer understanding of development needs and can therefore classify and address issues that women are currently facing in the organisation with the aim of improving structures and processes. Specific projects to advance and retain women in leadership positions in science and engineering relate to change initiatives around culture, gender bias and the introduction of family-friendly policies, amongst others (Bilimoria & Lord, 2014). Women who work, value time and flexibility of working hours, paid maternity leave and childcare based at work, which are classified as "family-friendly policies" and aim to enhance the number of women in leadership positions (Bilimoria & Lord, 2014). Groeneveld and Verbeek (2012) argue that while these efforts are vital to ensure success in an organisation, this does not automatically result in a work environment that is inclusive. In support of this, Sabharwal (2013) articulates that work-life balance programmes will only be successful if initiated by top-level management and if these programmes are part of a larger organisational initiative. When only structural and policy changes are offered by organisations to accommodate diverse groups without the concurrent creation of an inclusive environment, then the organisation may not be able to enhance productivity (Sabharwal, Is Diversity Management Sufficient? Organizational Inclusion to Further Performance, 2014).

Based on literature on an enabling environment as detailed above, research question 2 and 3 will aim to understand if an enabling environment is a significant enabler in organisations to advance women into executive positions. Research question 4 will also aim to understand if the deficiencies identified in the literature above resonate with deficiencies articulated by interview respondents on the enabling environment.

2.5.2 The Other Enablers Literature

Personal traits such as education, integrity, altruism, bravery and responsible behaviour were considered enablers for women to attain their potential as leaders (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Of all the enablers identified, resilience featured the most popular, as various female leaders interviewed, viewed failures or challenges as prospects to persist and accomplish the impossible (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

Positive impacts in moulding these women relate to the influence of parental advice and guidance that instil values of responsibility, accountability, openness and affirmation (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Non-gender-specific role models tended to play a significant role in the lives of the women interviewed, as these influenced and moulded their self-efficacy, their drive to succeed and their personalities (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). In addition, women who experienced restrictions or challenges around them while growing up, possess the ambition to get themselves into a better social position, with the focus not only on themselves but also others living in similar conditions (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Poor socio-economic circumstances were the catalyst for success (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Another childhood catalyst identified was mothers who were restricted to household duties and roles that produced feelings of being trapped, unable to fulfil their potential or feeling disempowered (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). This served as a catalyst to prevent this scenario from repeating itself with their daughters (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

Fitzsimmons and Callan (2016) also emphasise that having children and supporting families generally occurs at the same time at the peak of women's careers, resulting in an exit from the labour force. Therefore, it seems that flexibility in the workplace is required and plays a key role in the accumulation of career capital.

2.6 Theories relevant to the research problem

Based on literature, even in the presence of enablers, there are organisational barriers that persist that still prevent women from advancing to executive positions. It is therefore important to understand how to address these barriers in order to overcome them and grow the pipeline of women in leadership positions.

2.6.1 Social identity theory

According to Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) many women in South Africa are still subjected to practices that are discriminatory and which are influenced by gender stereotypes and social norms, regardless of constant efforts and progression in this matter. Social identity theory highlights a more positive evaluation of the in-group members than that of the out-group members by individuals (Weiner et al., 2003). The bias arises from individuals seeking similarities between themselves and in-group members (Weiner et al., 2003). From a social identity viewpoint, Mathisen, Ogaard and Marnburg (2013) looked at directors that are men, that socially lean towards individuals that are alike to them and draw back from those viewed as different. Consequently, the out-group would be formed by female directors and experience increased levels of relationship and task conflict (Mathisen et al., 2013). This theory will be explored further in the research questions in terms of how successful women did address or how other aspiring women should address the in-group, out-group bias on their journey in advancing to executive positions.

Ely et al. (2011) and Ibarra and Petriglieri (2015) determined that the existence of male networks (the in-group), inflates the domination of males that occupy influential positions. These influential men tend to channel opportunities for career growth to their male subordinates due to the belief that these men possess the confidence to succeed compared to women (Ely et al., 2011). As a result, leadership opportunities for women become scarce and the visibility of women compared to their male colleagues becomes scarcer, diluting the ability of women to advance into executive positions (Ely et al., 2011).

A study conducted by Doldor, Vinnicombe, Gaughan and Sealy (2012) found that there were unusually similar attitudes and beliefs shared by board members in terms of how board members viewed their roles and in addition, considered themselves as a distinct community encompassing shared values. Moreover, Doldor et al. (2012) stated that the board appointment process remains both subjective and cloudy and driven typically by an elite group of corporate male chairmen with similar characteristics among themselves. Furthermore, Doldor et al. (2012) found that there has been a positive change within the last few years by the 30% club, which refers to a group of chairmen who drive gender diversity on boards. Despite these efforts, non-executive director appointments are still driven by the ability of the candidates to fit the behaviours, norms and values of prevailing board members (Doldor et al., 2012). Doldor et al. (2012) conclude that due to the domination of males on these boards, these practices disadvantage female candidates.

These practices referred to candidates for board appointments being chosen from a similar and narrow pool of applicants whereby this pool was largely influenced by the directors personal, business, professional and social networks (Doldor et al., 2012).

Based on literature on the social identity theory detailing the in-group bias and out-group members, research question 5 endeavours to understand the best approaches adopted and to be adopted to break the barrier of the in-group bias in organisations that prevents the advancement of women into executive positions.

2.6.2 Social role theory

According to the social role theory, gender can be categorised in two ways: The female role, which is communal, supportive, kind and nurturing; contrasting to the male role, which is considered dictative, strong, authoritative, controlling and of demanding behaviour (Cenkci & Ozcelik, 2015). Other researchers held the same view by confirming that leadership possesses masculine traits in various cultures, thereby forming a perception that men are better leaders (Shore et al., 2014). Women who alter their personalities by supressing their femininity to exude more of a masculine personality are done if women are perceived to be too feminine in a negative way (Ely et al., 2011; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). This ultimately leads to a loss of authenticity (Ely et al., 2011; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). The style of leadership introduced by women in male-oriented cultures has contrasted with traditional approaches of leadership, which could result in resistance to female leaders (Peterson, 2014).

Based on a study by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) women mentioned the importance of the change of behaviour from a masculine nature to a more authentic behaviour exuding more feminine traits. The capability to transition and show authenticity was a critical part of the leadership journey (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Furthermore, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) found in their study that during the initial years of a women's career, their leadership style exhibited masculine traits, but subsequently with the passage of time women became more authentic by feeling more comfortable with themselves, thereby exhibiting leadership styles that were more feminine.

Based on literature on the social role theory detailing the male leadership traits versus female leadership traits, research question 6 seeks to understand if women are expected to conform to masculine leadership traits, female leadership traits or a combination of both to advance to executive positions.

2.7 Conclusion

The literature review provides evidence of the current state of the progress of women in leadership positions in South Africa by articulating that even though participation of women in the workforce has increased, women continue to be underrepresented at higher levels in the organisation. Women in South Africa are still subjected to practices that are discriminatory, and which are influenced by gender stereotypes and social norms regardless of the constant efforts and progression in this matter. To dismantle the barriers that women face in advancing to higher levels in organisations, intensive and constant individual and joint efforts are required, as the entrenched gender mindset still prevails.

It is therefore vital to identify what motivates organisations to advance women into executive positions. Various studies highlight the benefits of gender diversity legislation, quotas or external pressure from customers as detailed in various studies.

Various barriers are faced by women in advancing to executive positions. The glass ceiling, glass cliff, gender bias, gender stereotypes, limitation of the talent pool, and workplace flexibility are a few examples of organisational barriers faced by women.

The literature also highlights organisational enablers that can assist women in advancing to executive positions such as MSC, networking, LDPs and an enabling environment. With regards to MSC, the benefits of mentoring were linked to the advancement of women in the workplace by stating that mentoring programmes can help women to overcome barriers. One of the most impactful paths to tackle barriers and advancing into top management positions is mentoring programmes. Networking and building relationships are indispensable to strengthening commitment and engagement. LDPs were also identified as enablers as these can effectively prepare women in ascending the corporate ladder. Information and training are not sufficient to ensure successful advancement into leadership positions and that feedback and encouragement is more beneficial in terms of developing the skills and knowledge required in the pursuit of their personal goals. An enabling environment was also purported to be an organisational enabler. The support and openness of organisations and of female leaders was one of the key success factors for women who advanced. Women who work value time in flexibility of working hours, paid maternity leave and childcare based at work, which are classified as "family friendly policies" and are aimed at enhancing the number of women in leadership positions.

Personal traits such as education, integrity, altruism, bravery and responsible behaviour were also considered enablers for women to attain their potential as leaders

This research will therefore focus on women who have advanced in corporate environments and try to understand which organisational enablers were critical for their success. It will also be beneficial to understand from the perspectives of male leaders what enablers they themselves have implemented in their organisations to assist women to advance to executive positions.

Social identity theory highlights a more positive evaluation of the in-group members than that of the out-group members by individuals. The out-group would be formed by female directors and experience increased levels of relationship and task conflict. This study will endeavour to understand the best approaches adopted to break the barrier of the in-group bias in organisations that prevents the advancement of women into executive positions.

According to the social role theory, gender can be categorised in two ways: The female role, which is communal, supportive, kind and nurturing; contrasting to the male role, which is considered dictative, strong, authoritative, controlling and of demanding behaviour. Women mentioned the importance of the change of behaviour from a masculine nature to more authentic behaviour exuding more feminine traits. The capability to transition and show authenticity was a critical part of the leadership journey. This study will seek to understand if women are expected to conform to masculine leadership traits, female leadership traits or a combination of both to advance to executive positions.

This study will seek to confirm, contrast or add to existing literature in this regard.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

This research will aim to answer six specific research questions. Each research question has been derived from the reviewed literature.

Research question 1: What are the factors motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions?

Research question 1 sought to understand what are the driving factors in advancing women into executive positions in organisations. The two interview questions were structured to obtain the personal opinions and views of the interview participants with regards to whether their organisations have a key focus in advancing women. In addition, the interview question aimed to understand what drives organisations to advance women into executive positions.

Research question 2: What are the significant organisational enablers that have assisted women in advancing to executive positions?

Research question 2 aimed to identify what are perceived to be the significant organisational enablers that have assisted women in advancing to executive positions in organisations.

Research question 3: Which of the previously mentioned enablers has been the most impactful in advancing women into executive positions in organisations?

Research question 3 aimed to establish which of the enablers above, female and male executives perceive to have the most impact with regards to assisting women in advancing to executive positions. It is expected that through this question a common theme might emerge whereby one of the enablers might be identified as more influential or impactful than the other enablers.

Research question 4: What are the deficiencies of enablers identified, if any?

Research question 4 aims to establish the deficiencies of enablers identified, if any, to enable a more corrective approach to be adopted, which might result in enhancing the number of women advancing to executive positions.

Research question 5: What approach has been adopted to address the in-group bias and out-group members as highlighted in the social identity theory by female leaders in advancing to executive positions?

Research question 5 endeavours to understand the best approaches to adopt to break the barrier of in-group bias in organisations, which prevents the advancement of women into executive positions.

Research question 6: What leadership traits as highlighted in the social role theory are applicable to women that have advanced or want to advance to executive positions?

Research question 6 seeks to understand if women are expected to conform to masculine leadership traits, women leadership traits or a combination of both to advance to executive positions.

Chapter 4: Proposed Research Methodology and Design

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 set out the literature review which then moulded the research methodology and the interview guideline that was utilised for the face to face, in-depth interviews. This chapter sets out the applicable research methodology utilised in this study. A qualitative, exploratory approach was suitable for this research and the accompanying research design, data sampling and data analysis strengthened the nominated approach.

4.2 Choice of methodology

4.2.1 Rationale for the proposed method of research

The researcher's main strand of research philosophy is interpretivism, as research relates to understanding the occurrences in a work environment and the associated behaviours of participants (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher aims to understand what has enabled women in advancing into executive positions in an organisation by prioritising the human experience and interpretation over measurement and prediction from both women themselves and from male leaders (King & Horrocks, 2010). The concern of interpretivists is not the origination of a fresh principle, but to appraise and improve interpretive theories (Antwi & Hamza, 2015).

The study is explorative, as general information will be ascertained about this topic that is not obviously comprehended by the researcher. Research aims to evaluate the research concepts from various and differing points of view as it was established in Chapters 1 and 2 that, according to (Chengadu and Scheepers 2017; Mohammadi et al., 2012 and WEF, 2017) women are advancing albeit at a slow pace. Moreover, enablers from literature, such as MSC, networking, LDP's and an enabling environment, as detailed in Chapter 2, were enablers in organisations that assisted women in advancing to executive positions. The study provides provisional answers to initial questions which detailed research needs to support or differ from (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Qualitative research is essentially exploratory (Bryman, 1984) and permits a comprehensive study for a possibility for rich data and acceptance when faced with vagueness and contradictions (Denscombe, 2014). An exploratory researcher will adopt a qualitative approach which will involve a more in-depth understanding of a business phenomenon, which may then lead to a hypothesis being developed (Denscombe, 2014). Furthermore, exploratory research, which in various instances involves qualitative methods, can be a useful initial step to arrive at a more confirmatory, definite study rather than starting with

an incorrect, misleading or inadequate set of research objectives (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). Research is better suited to a qualitative approach and not a quantitative approach. According to Tucker, Powell and Meyer (1995) when the researcher is attempting to make sense of appropriate constructs ahead of attempting to theorise around it, the suitable method to be utilised is qualitative research. To further highlight the applicability, qualitative research enables the researcher to delve into business objectives through methods whereby the researcher can offer elaborate explanations of phenomena in markets in the absence of numerical measurement dependability (Zikmund et al., 2013). This must be performed with a key focus on the discovery of new perceptions and factual inner meanings (Zikmund et al., 2013).

On the other hand, Denscombe (2014) purports that interpretation is limited in quantitative research and is restricted to the questions asked. Therefore, quantitative research would not be suitable to produce the rich, thick data that was utilised as a basis for the analysis and presentation of the findings to enable an understanding based on the context of the research topic (Denscombe, 2014). Furthermore, Saunders and Lewis (2012) purport that qualitative research design such as interviews is well paired with exploratory research and influenced the method that was utilised to investigate the enablers that organisations have implemented to advance women into executive positions. Zikmund et al. (2013) imply that qualitative research is not as structured as quantitative approaches and eliminates the dependency on self-response questionnaires which have responses in a structured format. Instead, qualitative research is more dependent on research, resulting in meanings being extracted from unstructured responses by the researcher (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Grounded theory is associated with the inductive approach, as theory is developed from data collected from interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The strategy entails the use of a questionnaire in conducting face-to-face interviews and is considered useful in exploratory research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

An inductive approach focused on larger generalisations rather than specific observations (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) and surfaces from participants' discussions (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The approach permits a design to evolve rather than having a complete proposal at the start of the study because it is challenging if not impossible to envisage the outcome of interactions due to the varied viewpoints and value systems of the researcher and participants, and their effect on the interpretation of reality and the results of the study (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The approach is bottom-up and theory develops as a piece of art that is being created rather than a preconceived

image such as a puzzle (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). This approach entails the researcher analysing data through the observation of patterns and common themes extracted from the interview process which influenced the development of some general conclusions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Due to the exploratory nature of the research topic, which was to identify and understand the various enablers that organisations have implemented to advance women into executive positions, inductive reasoning was most fitting to enable an understanding of the research context in contrast to deductive reasoning which tests a theoretical proposition (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The method was therefore driven by the research questions, objectives and context, while a mono method was most appropriate – also influenced by the effort and time of gathering, validating and scrutinising data (Venkatesh, Brown & Bala, 2013.

4.3 Population (universe)

A population is defined as the complete set of group members that share common traits (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Zikmund et al., 2013). According to Zikmund et al. (2013) at the beginning, the definition of the target population is crucial to ensure adequate sources can be identified from which data must be collected. The population relevant to this study is senior executives, men and women from organisations across numerous sectors in Gauteng who have had exposure to the concept of the advancement of women into executive positions within their current or previous organisations. This exposure focuses on women who have advanced in organisations and men who are in strategic positions in organisations that can influence the advancement of women into executive positions. These individuals have been able to provide insight into what enablers have been implemented to enable women to advance into executive positions. Senior executives are defined as CEOs, executive managers, directors and board members. The population will include men and women so that views and insights of men can be acknowledged and incorporated into the study, as it is important to incorporate different perspectives surrounding this topic. As important as it is to hear the voice of women leaders, chronicles should not and could not only be by women, for women and about women, and therefore the researcher sought to hear male perceptions on women advancement and what their enablers are due to the fact that it is men who are most often at the helm of institutions (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

A sample of potential research participants that met the requirement for the study was extracted from this target population. Potential research participants were identified per section 4.4.1 and it was ascertained whether these participants fit the sampling criteria through the enquiry of a few background questions. By participants describing their role,

experiences and their exposure to women advancing to executive positions, the researcher was able to establish the satisfaction of the sampling criteria.

4.4 Unit of analysis

This refers to the simple unit of text to be categorised during analysis of information (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2015). The proposed unit of analysis will be the organisational enablers experienced or implemented by the interviewees in the organisation. These relate to the individual experiences and perceptions of the interview participants which then informed the final unit of analysis for this study. These were explicitly linked to Chapter 1 research objectives and permitted the identification of organisational enablers that assisted women in advancing to executive positions in organisations.

4.4.1 Sampling

4.4.4.1 Sampling method

According to Zikmund et al. (2013) qualitative research rarely requires samples with hundreds of respondents. Instead, a handful of interview participants are in most instances the source of data for a qualitative study (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Nonprobability sampling techniques were utilised as the population was not available in a complete list and therefore a random sample could not be selected from the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). According to Zikmund et al. (2013) in nonprobability sampling, there is an unknown probability of any specific member of the population being selected, as the selection is quite arbitrary as personal judgement is heavily relied upon by researchers. Nonprobability sampling is considered practical and is therefore utilised in business research (Zikmund et al., 2013).

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used. According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), purposive sampling entails the researcher utilising their own judgement to select who will best have the ability or insights to answer the research question/s and therefore meet the research objectives. Denscombe (2014) supports this by stating that purposive sampling is where the best information can be obtained by selecting research participants based on known characteristics and not through random selection (Zikmund et al., 2013). Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) further emphasise the appropriateness of purposive sampling in selecting research participants that yield an understanding and insight of the phenomenon being investigated. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) state that random sampling manages selection bias and allows for generalisation

from the basis of a sample to the basis of a larger population, which, in fact, is a key feature of qualitative research. The researcher therefore interviewed female participants who had advanced into executive positions or males who had influence on enablers in organisations. The variety of purposive sampling used was heterogeneous to enable adequate, diverse characteristics that provided maximum variation in the data collected. The underlying premise is that key themes can be identified from patterns that surface which are of significance (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Snowball sampling is where subsequent members are identified by earlier sample members after the first sample member (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). It is an effective technique that can be utilised through a method of referrals (Denscombe, 2014). Snowball sampling is appropriate as members of the population are easy to identify but difficult to access (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This technique is most appropriate to locate interview participants through referrals (Zikmund et al., 2013). Snowball sampling was utilised as the researcher requested referrals from interview participants to other relevant senior executives who met the sampling criteria. One major bias identified by Zikmund et al. (2013) is that a person referred by someone else in the sample has an increased probability of being alike to the first person. The researcher took this into consideration during the interviews and probed for additional information based on responses received to enable the interview participant to offer more detailed information on personal experiences and perceptions.

4.4.4.2 Sampling size

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the sample size was relatively small. There was some difficulty experienced in securing interviews with participants at such high levels within organisations, as CEOs and executive directors were interviewed. According to McCracken (1988) eight interviews will suffice. In contrast, Saunders and Lewis (2012) purport that due to the population being heterogeneous, the sample size must fit the criteria of being larger – between 15 and 25. Saunders and Lewis (2012) also state that data saturation should influence the number of interviews required. The researcher's sample size comprised 16 interviews. Out of the 16 interviews, only six participants were known to the researcher prior to the interviews.

Due to the consent letter being provided and signed by the interview participants, the participants were comfortable that confidentiality would be maintained and openly shared experiences, perspectives and insights into the research topic and areas of improvement within their own organisations. This is imperative as the researcher is bound morally to

arrive at an ethical research design by ensuring that the relationship between the researcher and participants is clearly understood (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This resulted in greater sensitivity in analysing a rich source of data (McCracken, 1988). The researcher indicated confidentiality of the subjects' identity to prevent subject bias, eliminating the fear of the researcher showing them in a bad light (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). No participants withdrew from the study and as such, all findings have been reported on.

The sample was drawn from the population of senior executives across various sectors in corporate organisations in Gauteng, South Africa and consisted of CEOs and executive directors. The sample therefore comprised participants who were at relatively senior positions within their organisations. Due to the seniority of the participants, it was difficult to make contact to conduct interviews and the researcher therefore relied on snowball sampling so that the researcher could be referred to other willing participants. Once initial contact was made, it was relatively easy to secure an interview date as this was done three months in advance. This prevented cancellations as participants endeavoured to plan meetings around the researcher's pre-secured interview date. Communication methods such as face-to-face interactions, email and telephone were utilised to secure interviews with these individuals. The researcher identified interviewees at an African Women Chartered Accountants (AWCA) function to honour a newly appointed female deputy CEO and male CEO. Three interviews were secured from this function. All interview participants have been categorised by position in their industry in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Categorisation of participants by industry and position

Industry	Position	Number of Participants
Engineering	CEO	1
	Executive Director	1
Technology	Executive Director	2
Retail	Executive Director	1
Insurance	CEO	1
Financial services	Executive Director	5
	CEO	1
Media and digital marketing	CEO	1
Development finance	Executive Director	2

	CEO	1
Total		**16**

The sample was secured across seven different industries, namely (1) engineering, (2) technology, (3) retail, (4) insurance, (5) financial services, (6) media and digital marketing, and (7) development finance. Due to the application of purposive and snowball sampling being utilised, the participants across industries were not equally distributed in the sample. This was the intention which was to collect industry-wide views influenced by differing experiences, perspectives and insights.

4.5 Measurement instrument

4.5.1 Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews

The measurement instrument utilised to gather data was semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The researcher asked questions per the interview guide and followed up each response by probing to elicit further elaboration from participants (Zikmund et al., 2013). The researcher encouraged participants to share information freely without prompting the direction of the conversation (Zikmund et al., 2013). Interviews provided the solid grounding on which theoretical knowledge was built by the collection of solid information, and profound insights into the experiences of the interview participants and perceptions and narratives of the research purpose (Tucker et al., 1995). This approach therefore allowed for consistency during the interview process and flexibility for a level of customisation to probe for additional information from participants. Questions were phrased as such with a purpose to convey a broad view with the aim of avoidance in leading the respondent and, as a result, implore for answers that were not influenced by the questions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013).

4.6 Data gathering process

A structured interview is when an interviewer uses a questionnaire to collect data (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Questions were designed in a clear, concise manner to enable the data to be collected to avoid misinterpretation of the questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).The questions were compiled by the researcher and linked to the literature review in Chapter 2 and the purpose of the research study.

Data collection was performed by means of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 16 participants. This allowed the researcher to explore the participants' responses in

detail. According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), exploratory research is commonly conducted by interviewing "experts" on the relevant topic. The participants interviewed, however, were not experts, but rather suitable based on experience and perspective to address the research question. This requires a list of topics and questions to be asked, although there was a variation in the order of the questions asked from one interview to the next interview, which was influenced by participants' responses. The researcher had the choice of omitting some questions or topics if those were considered irrelevant to a participant or additional questions could be incorporated to obtain further details, explore objectives more in depth or to confirm the understanding of the participant's responses. The researcher did not omit any questions but did change the order of the questions in some instances to extract more meaningful explanations from interview participants and did incorporate further probing question to extract rich, thick data. Data saturation was reached by interview 11, where no new codes were identified. Data saturation is when additional data does not add or change a finding from existing data (Silverman, 2015) or where additional data provides few or no new insights into the research question and objectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Per Saunders and Lewis (2012) preparation for these interviews included finding out about the participant and their organisation prior to the interview to ensure credibility on the researcher. In addition, an interview guide was essential to list the topics for discussion and the initial questions that were asked. A consent form was also developed and sent to respondents prior to the interviews. It was essential to ask questions carefully and to attentively listen to the answers given. The participants were also advised that their identity would be confidential and that the information offered would not be shared with any individuals other than the researcher and the supervisor. Locations of the interview were chosen after taking into consideration the preference of each participant to ensure an environment where the participant was comfortable and free of disturbances.

A pilot test entails trying out the interview guide and interview technique with a small number of respondents with similar characteristics of those individuals that will be used in the actual research to ascertain if it works. The researcher conducted one pilot test which assisted in identifying any problems needing to be addressed prior to conducting the actual research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Appendix 3 refers to the initial interview guide, which was amended post the pilot interview to Appendix 5. The amendments to the initial interview guide are depicted in Appendix 4.

Interviews were recorded on a cell phone and the consent of the participant was sought before the interview proceeded, to ensure integrity and accuracy of the data. These recordings were then forwarded for verbatim transcribing to a transcriber. McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig (2003) advise that transcription, which consists of verbal discourse, is an expected element of qualitative analysis and attention should therefore be practised by verification of the original audio to the transcripts. Furthermore, the transcripts must be analysed for correctness and a sense check to correct any errors during transcription (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher therefore tested the accuracy of the transcriptions by listening to the audio and verifying the audio against the transcriptions for accuracy and completeness.

In most cases, notes were made by the researcher during the interviews. This was to keep track of key terms or key phrases for which probing was required to extract a more detailed explanation. Overall, the interviews followed the order of the interview guide and participants could provide complete responses without being interrupted.

Due to time constraints, interviews were conducted with participants at a period termed a "snapshot" in cross-sectional design (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This, therefore, is an indication of the snapshot of the perceptions and experiences of the interview participants when considering the enablers in organisations to advance women into executive positions. It was therefore not the intention of the researcher to understand how these enablers would develop over an extended period of time.

4.7 Analysis approach

Data collected in qualitative research should aim to be rich, thick and deep to supersede the biased attitudes of the researcher (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). The content analysis process should commence during the premature stages of data collection as this early immersion will assist in moving back and forth between the development of concepts and collection of data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2015). The researcher therefore analysed data very early in the data collection process to identify and understand the concepts arising from interviews.

The audio was transcribed soon after the audio recorded interview and jotted notes as soon as possible after the interview, as leaving the jotted notes for a few days might have resulted in them being illegible after a few days had passed (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2015) categories and a coding scheme must be developed from literature, data or theories. The processing of data must be performed utilising methodical and transparent procedures to support reliable and valid

interpretations (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2015). A coding manual in a self-developed Microsoft Excel template was populated to ensure consistency. The coding was applied to all transcriptions and the resulting themes were identified. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) and Saunders and Lewis (2012) themes are established through the identification and acknowledgment of a vital thought, idea or construct that repeated itself or were meaningful with regards to the research questions. Patton (2002) supports a thematic approach in identifying meaningful patterns resulting in the creation of a framework for communicating the substance of what the data discloses. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) thematic analysis allows for a rich description and complex understanding through the identification of common themes and concepts in the data. Inferences from the data were then drawn and activities such as identification patterns then occured (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2015). In analysing the data, the arguments offered and the findings presented should support the researcher's claims made clearly and logically (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The data collected was analysed qualitatively and was used to explore what is happening and gain new understandings about this topic. In analysing the qualitative data captured into Microsoft Excel on a question-by-question basis, an iterative process as purported by Denscombe (2008) was followed. This entailed (1) coding of data systematically; (2) data was categorised to reflect ideas; (3) identification of themes to recognise patterns; and (4) development of conclusions from identified patterns. In addition to thematic analysis, frequency analysis was also utilised. Each thought, idea or construct was documented and the frequency of being repeated was also documented. These frequencies were then ranked according to occurrence. As a result of the iterative process, each interview took approximately two hours to code and analyse. Constant reference was made back to the transcription during the generation and assignment of codes. All codes were then collated to develop themes. The themes were then used to develop conclusions from identified patterns. During coding, pertinent quotations were identified and incorporated into the findings of research undertaken (Braun & Clarke 2006; Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.8 Data validity and reliability

The researcher aimed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. According to Saunders and Lewis (2012) validity refers to whether the findings are actually about what they seem to be and to therefore remove any and all factors that can threaten the validity of the findings. The researcher sought to address this by subject selection, whereby any biases in the selection of the research subjects is removed as

these biases may lead to an underrepresentation of the research population (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Furthermore, validity and reliability are used on a frequent basis to evaluate qualitative research for trustworthiness clarification (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

External validity refers to the extent to which the results are made general to other research settings (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In addition, validity is a strength of qualitative research, which focuses on whether the findings are precise from the viewpoint of the participants, the researcher and readers of the report (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher addressed this by interviewing subjects across various sectors and organisations. The researcher aimed for content validity by ensuring that the questions in the interview guide resulted in the provision of adequate data to meet all objectives and answer the research question (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In addition, the researcher aimed for construct validity by carefully designing questions to ensure that data collection was based on the intended aspect to measure rather than something different (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). According to Cresswell (2014) to determine the accuracy of the findings and also to persuade readers of that accuracy, rich, thick descriptions were utilised to convey findings and further clarification provided as limitations in section 4.9, detailing the biases the researcher brings to the study. Reflectivity is an essential characteristic of qualitative studies as this self-reflection opens the door to an authentic and exposed narrative that readers will identify with (Cresswell, 2014).

Research is considered reliable if it employs analysis procedures and data collection methods which result in the production of consistent results (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The researcher ensured reliability by asking the same questions in the same way to prevent biasing of results (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This was achieved by the use of an interview guide during the semi-structured in-depth interviews to ensure standardisation of the questions. Reliability was confirmed by re-reading the interview scripts to identify obvious mistakes made during transcription.

4.9 Limitations

4.9.1 As the researcher is not an expert interviewer, the interpretation of the results could have been impacted as the analysis is dependent on the individual analysing the data (Patton, 2002)

4.9.2 Geographical bias could influence the response of the participants due to the sample being limited to Gauteng

4.9.3 Difficulty maintaining neutrality during interviews as the researcher may be somewhat biased when interviewing female executives as the researcher identifies with these individuals based on their gender

4.9.4 Qualitative research is essentially interpretive, and interpretation characterises the researcher's individual and theoretical considerations of the topic under analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2015)

4.9.5 Due to the topic choice being of high interest to the researcher, there is a risk of bias being a part of the research process which could result in the researcher making their individual interpretations of the subjects' conclusions. Due to this, mindfulness, flexibility and intellectual awareness was exercised throughout the research process as this is a crucial aspect of grounded theory

4.9.6 The findings are researcher-dependent. Alternate researchers may reach differing conclusions based on the same interviews. This is due to qualitative research lacking intersubjective certifiability which refers to the ability of alternative individuals adhering to the same methods to yield the same findings or arrive at the same conclusion. This results in producing varying insights (Zikmund et al., 2013)

4.9.7 Data analysis and interpretation is highly subjective and it is difficult for the researcher to settle on a true interpretation (Zikmund et al., 2013)

4.9.8 Zikmund et al. (2013) highlights the limitation of interviews in that the researcher must be a person that is highly skilled and the researcher has not conducted interviews prior to this study

4.9.9 Transferability across various industries may have been impacted by the use of snowball sampling, especially due to the sample being skewed to financial services

4.9.10 The results cannot be transferred across all industries, even though findings were based on multiple views, as only seven different industries formed part of the sample size

4.9.11 Views of only senior executives were incorporated and the views of lower level employees are not included. This could potentially lead to results that are biased, as various, balanced views from all levels in the organisations were not obtained

4.9.12 Due to familiarity based on the researcher knowing six of the interview participants, there is a likelihood of their responses being influenced or affected.

4.10 Conclusion on research methodology

The study is explorative as general information will be ascertained about this topic that is not obviously comprehended by the researcher. The research is better suited to a qualitative approach and not a quantitative approach. Grounded theory is associated with the inductive approach as theory is developed from data collected from interviews. The strategy entails the use of a questionnaire in conducting face-to-face interviews and it considered useful in exploratory research. The population relevant to this study is senior executives, men and women from organisations across numerous sectors in Gauteng who have had exposure to the concept of the advancement of women into executive positions within their current or previous organisations. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used. The researcher's sample size comprised 16 interviews. The sample was drawn from the population of senior executives across various sectors in corporate organisations in Gauteng, South Africa, and consisted of CEOs and executive directors. The sample was secured across seven different industries, namely (1) engineering, (2) technology, (3) retail, (4) insurance, (5) financial services, (6) media and digital marketing, and (7) development finance. Data collection was performed by means of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 16 participants. Interviews were recorded on a cell phone and the consent of the participant was sought before the interview proceeded to ensure integrity and accuracy of the data. These recordings were then forwarded for verbatim transcribing to a transcriber. A coding manual in a self-developed Microsoft Excel template was populated to ensure consistency. The coding was applied to all transcriptions and the resulting themes were identified. The findings are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter consolidates the interview findings for each research question posed in Chapter 3. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, these findings were utilised to understand the organisational enablers in advancing women into executive positions. Through a process of thematic and frequency analyses, key findings were identified through results analysis and inductive reasoning. This chapter provides an outline of the sample, summaries of the interviews conducted and analysis of the transcriptions. In conclusion, the collection of results in accordance with the research questions posed in Chapter 3 are presented.

5.2 Sample overview

5.2.1 Sample classification

Table 2 below, has a list of the 16 participants interviewed, together with their designation, gender and the industry in which their organisation operates. The interview participants were women who advanced to executive positions in their current or previous roles, and men who are in strategic operational roles that can directly influence organisational enablers in the advancement of women. The entire sample consisted of 11 women and five men who were either CEOs or executive directors at their current organisations. Ten of the 16 organisations depicted below are listed on the JSE.

Table 2: Classification of Interview Participants

Participant	Designation	Gender	Industry
1	Divisional Executive: Corporate Affairs	Female	Development Finance
2	HR Manager: Contemporary Division	Female	Retail
3	Executive Director	Male	Technology
4	CEO	Male	Financial Services
5	Director: Marketing	Female	Engineering
6	CEO	Male	Engineering
7	CEO	Female	Financial Services
8	Head: Wellness	Female	Financial Services
9	MD: Health	Female	Financial Services

Participant	Designation	Gender	Industry
10	CEO	Female	Media & Digital Marketing
11	Divisional Executive: Agro Processing	Female	Development Finance
12	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Female	Financial Services
13	Marketing Executive	Female	Financial Services
14	CEO	Male	Insurance
15	Financial Services Executive	Female	Technology
16	CEO	Male	Development Finance

5.2.2. Industry

Interviews were conducted with participants in the following industries, namely (1) engineering, (2) technology, (3) retail, (4) insurance, (5) financial services, (6) media and digital marketing, and (7) development finance. Six of the participants were based within the financial services industry, which indicates a potential sample bias as it may suggest that the findings of this research are specific to this industry. This was then followed by three participants in the development finance industry and two participants each in the technology and engineering industries. One participant was interviewed from each of the other remaining industries, namely, retail, media and digital marketing, and insurance. The distribution of participants per industry is depicted below.
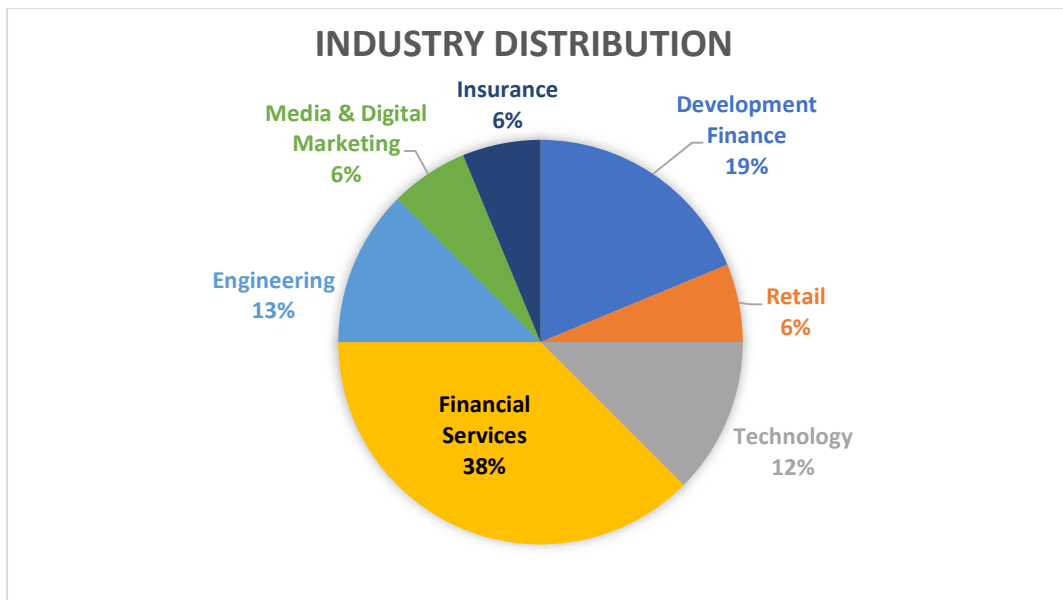
Figure 1: Distribution of participants per industry

5.2.3 Seniority level

The dispersion by seniority level is shown below.
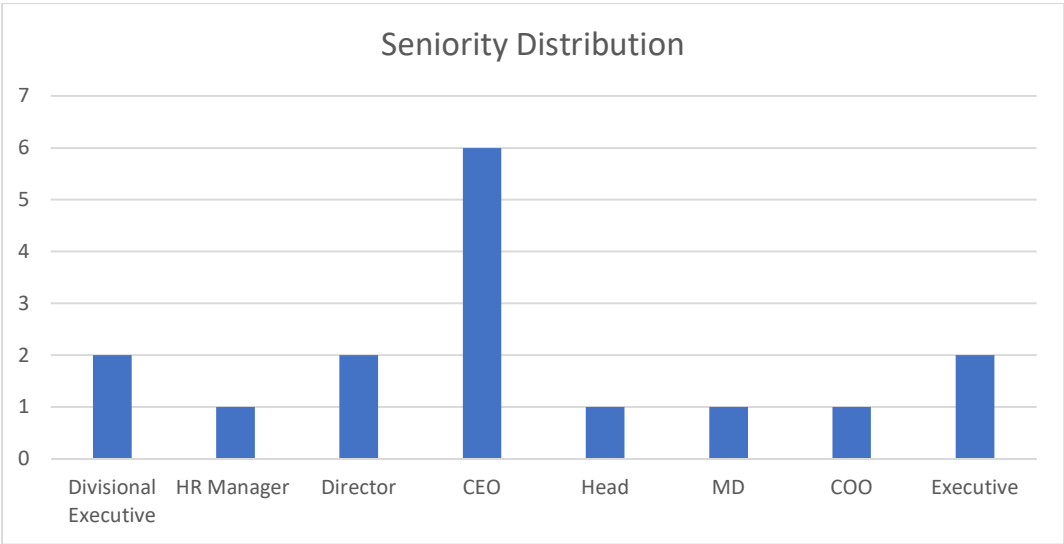
Figure 2: Dispersion of participants by seniority

The figure above confirms that the sample selection criteria detailed in Chapter 4 has been met. There may be a bias based on these findings arising from senior leaders as these findings do not include the views of employees at lower positions in organisations. The justification for including only senior leaders in this study is due to these individuals being key decision-makers in organisations and the researcher therefore aimed to obtain their views or experiences regarding women advancement. It was considered that senior female employees would have actual experiences with organisational enablers in respect of their own advancement. Senior male employees were also interviewed as they are still primarily the key decision-makers who have influence over organisational attitudes and culture towards women advancement.

5.3 Interview summaries

The researcher interviewed 16 participants and the summary details of the interviews including the date and the length of the interviews are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Interviews Summary

Participant	Date of interview	Interview in minutes
1	12 June 2018	00:56:19
2	13 June 2018	00:40:52
3	15 June 2018	01:09:52
4	18 June 2018	00:23:31
5	19 June 2018	00:43:02
6	19 June 2018	00:31:12
7	27 June 2018	00:49:10
8	04 July 2018	00:25:27
9	10 July 2018	00:34:58
10	11 July 2018	00:24:21
11	13 July 2018	00:44:48
12	26 July 2018	00:44:51
13	26 July 2018	00:21:48
14	07 August 2018	00:35:04
15	16 August 2018	00:28:13
16	30 August 2018	00:37:46
Total		**10:11:14**
Average		**00:38:12**

5.3.1. Interview method

All 16 interviews as depicted above were conducted face-to-face at the participant's place of employment. In most instances, the interviews were either conducted in a meeting room or in the office of the respondent. This enabled all audio to be clearly recorded with no background noises or interruptions, which then enabled a more reliable transcription of the audio. Two interview participants requested the interview schedule to be sent in advance of the interview.

5.4 Presentation of results

The results are presented according to the research questions in Chapter 3 and the interview guide per Appendix 5.

Per application of grounded theory, coding was used to analyse the data in the interview transcripts. Phrases and key terms (constructs) were all extracted from the interview participants' transcribed interviews and recorded on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet developed by the researcher. Each construct was then grouped according to a specific theme based on what meaning the construct aimed to achieve. Thereafter, constructs that aimed to offer the same meaning or explanation were collapsed into smaller groupings and the frequency of these constructs mentioned was calculated to arrive at the rankings depicted below.

5.4.1 Results for research question 1

Research Question 1: What are the factors motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions?

Research Question 1 sought to understand what are the driving factors in advancing women into executive positions in organisations. The two interview questions were structured to obtain the personal opinions and views of the interview participants with regards to whether their organisations have a key focus in advancing women. In addition, the interview question aimed to understand what drives organisations to advance women into executive positions.

Interview Question 1 - In your opinion, is the advancement of females into executive positions within your organisation a key focus area?

The first interview question sought to understand whether organisations do in fact, consider the advancement of women as a crucial key focus area, before delving into understanding the driving factors. Table 4 below, depicts a summary of the responses from the interview participants:

Table 4: Interview Summary to Question 1

Number of Interview Participants	Response
15	Yes
1	No
Total: 16	

15 of the 16 interview participants responded that the organisations they work for considered the advancement of women as a key focus area. 69% of the research participants worked in organisations which were led by men and 15 participants

confirmed that the male and female leaders in their organizations supported and played a key role in advancing women into executive positions.

With reference to support and focus of organisations in advancing women, one participant specifically mentioned:

> "…I think it's just a function the previous CEO that he wanted that. So, he actively pursued where can I find strong women to promote them into these positions, but the organization is instructed for that."

One interview participant did not consider her organisation as focused in advancing women into executive positions. The reason for her appointment was a restructuring within the organisation and the number of resources that left the organisation. That role therefore needed to be filled and she was most suitable in terms of who was left and explained her experience as follows:

> "I think a lot of it has almost been forced, it hasn't been a strategy somebody said I am going to adopt. I think where we are at now, mostly white male dominated environment and my view and my perception is that they would like to keep it that way. I think if they had to make a choice between a male counterpart entering this business and a female counterpart, I think they would be more comfortable with a male since it's so male dominated."

Interview question 2: In your opinion, what motivates your organisation to advance females into executive positions?

The second interview question sought to understand what are the main factors that motivate organisations to advance women into executive positions. Interview participants expressed varied viewpoints and mentioned more than one motivator in some instances.

The following themes and frequency of constructs emerged during the analysis of the data relating to question 2 and are depicted in Table 5.

Table 5: Interview Summary to Question 2

Ranking	Motivating factors/themes	Frequency of constructs mentioned by participants
1	Diversity	15
2	Business imperatives	11
3	Legislation	7
4	Leadership intention	6
5	Forced	5
6	Skills	4
7	Incentives	2

Per analysis of the top three motivating factors as viewed by the participants, participants indicated 15 times that their organisation's motivating factor was based on diversity, 11 times that their motivation was based on business imperatives and seven times that their motivation was based on legislative requirements.

Each theme is analysed in detail below:

5.4.1.1 Diversity

Participants indicated the requirement and appreciation for diversity on boards and committees is a key motivator of advancing women into executive positions. Diversity extended not only to gender diversity but diversity in thinking, views, business perspectives, approach and empathy in terms of having women in senior executive positions. A participant shared her experience of being a suitable executive candidate due to her femininity and the nurturing aspects she brought to the table. The following views which supported the motivating factor for diversity were articulated as follows:

> "Women think differently about many situations and their contribution. Having had the benefit to sit in the board meetings I find how male directors think to how female directors think, very differently. There is a lot of empathy, there is a lot of care maybe from being feminine."

> "There are equally, many companies, present company included, that see the need to actually bring in women because they feel women bring in a completely different element into the boardroom, and just the way they think and the way

they feel and the way they approach things, it's so different from men and I think not having women in those roles is to a huge detriment to the company."

"…as organisations evolve, they understand that you know, that in diversity, there's a lot of things that people bring to the table and I think with women as well, and the other things that are different that women bring to the table, and I think as organisations that [are] evolving and maturing they understand the strategic imperatives of having diverse people around the table."

In considering diversity, a participant also considered the power that women hold as consumers and advocated that this power be extended to business and decision-making, stating that "women mean business because women actually contribute towards 90% of consumer decisions and whether you are talking about a business, be it a product or service, something that's been sold predominantly, it's women that determine their agenda and the woman should be at the centre of executive leadership."

Diversity was also further dissected by one participant as being the different voice and not necessarily a different gender. In this regard, she stated

"…and he said, you know when you started having the one or two, it was just a different conversation and he liked it. I thought, well, I must promote that. So, I think it takes some maturity that says there's a different way of looking at things and it's not a – it's beyond gender boundaries because diversity is – am I ready for a different voice?"

It was also interesting to note that the diversity requirement was not necessarily an internal requirement in the organisations themselves, but in some instances organisations were forced by their customers, who are external shareholders, to show diversity in their executive leadership teams to mirror what their clients were doing inside their own organisations. These views were expressed as follows:

"So, in that profession, the client drives diversity because the client says, I want women on this audit, I want black people on this audit, you know, I want to see the demographics reflecting what you, what you're putting in front of us. So, I think that was a big catalyst, you know, where the clients that we dealt with says, well this is what I want to see, it forces the firm to say well okay, now I need to do that."

"Our organisation is kind of having to really evolve within climates of our clients and we see almost like the market, the space that we in, in South Africa [the]

move towards this focus on women and women development, women empowerment and the organisation is really trying to step up to the challenge."

One executive went on to say that although the customer's requirements motivated her organisation to advance women into executive positions, she had to deliver on all her allocated tasks to prove she was worthy of her appointment, which then elevated the decision to advance other women in the organisation.

5.4.1.2 Business imperatives

The second most frequent motivating factor that interview participants discussed relates to business imperatives - to be seen doing the right thing by society. This ties in closely with the finding above on diversity, where organisations were forced by their customers to show diversity in their executive leadership teams to mirror what their clients were doing inside their own organisations. Their views suggest that if the right things are done for society and its members, this results in a strong company. Organisations must be seen as doing the right thing, therefore, being a good corporate citizen in society is always important.

Furthermore, organisations were motivated by their clients' actions of advancing women or being instructed by clients to empower women and valued clients' perceptions of the organisation. In this regard, the following was stated:

> "… we see our own clients driving to have women in senior positions so if your clients have got women in senior positions, why shouldn't you? And doesn't it make sense that you do what your clients want? And you do what your clients are doing themselves."

Interview participants also mentioned the importance of aligning their goals of advancing women to the goals of their government shareholder, who focuses on funding women and advancing women in the industry, and therefore mentioned the importance of this alignment.

5.4.1.3 Legislation

The third largest motivator expressed by interview participants was legislation. This included transformation, BBBEE scorecards, the regulatory environment, targets and quotas. Participants indicated that transformation was huge on their people agenda and formed part of their business imperatives. Transformation also formed part of one

interview participant's performance measures, which fed directly into his bonus structure. His emphasis was as follows:

> "Within transformation, the promotion of females particularly black and African females is a big, big priority. It makes up a major part of our transformation performance of course. The scores feed into our management incentives so it intentionally feeds into our bonus schemes in the company."

Some interview participants said that women are being advanced into executive positions to attain quotas and BBBEE ratings for organisations to merely attain their desired BBBEE score. Participants explained that it becomes a business imperative by looking at their BBBEE scoring and if they want to achieve the levels that they are aiming to reach so that they can bring in those projects they want to work on. Other interview participants shared their experiences by stating that:

> "Sadly, though there have been many companies and when I speak with friends in similar positions, a lot of them have done this under duress because they feel like they have got to meet the quota, they have got to be seen to be doing the right things and they just basically want to achieve certification that they are a level one or level two or whatever the case might be."

> "So yes, it has been enforced in some cases and in other cases it has been a natural progression. Those guys that sit around the boardroom table and completely not engage with the women and pretend they are non-existent are the ones that are doing it to meet quotas and are doing it to get BEE ratings and all other number of reasons."

Employment equity legislation has also been proposed as a motivating factor to advance women into executive positions and was elaborated on as follows:

> "I think if you look at our employment equity of aspirations, women are at the forefront of that so we have committed."

5.4.2 Results for research question 2

Research question 2: What are the significant organisational enablers that have assisted women in advancing to executive positions?

Research question 2 aimed to identify what are perceived to be the significant organisational enablers that have assisted women in advancing to executive positions in organisations.

Interview question 3: What enablers does your organisation employ to advance females into executive positions?

The third interview question sought to understand what are the specific, impactful and successful enablers that organisations have implemented for the advancement of women into executive positions.

The approaches adopted by organisations to advance women into executive positions are detailed in Table 6. In addition, the approaches and frequency of constructs that emerged during the analysis of the data are also presented.

Table 6: Interview Summary to Question 3

Ranking	Organisational enablers	Frequency of constructs mentioned
1	MSC	16
2	Enabling environment	10
3	LDPs	9
4	Leadership	8
5	Networking	7
6	Flexibility	6
7	Training	3

Per the analysis of the top three enablers as viewed by the participants, participants indicated 16 times that their organisation's enabler was based on MSC, ten times that their enabler was based on the enabling environment, and nine times that their enabler was based on LDPs.

Each theme is analysed in detail below.

5.4.2.1 MSC identified as an enabler

Interview participants highlighted the importance and need of having MSC and pegged these as highly recommended for internal success. One participant who strongly supported having a sponsor said:

> "So, I think the sponsorship thing, I mean I can't get over how obvious it's been in all of the places where I've worked that there's always, there's always someone that believes in you, you know, and then gives you an opportunity to be on certain

projects, to show more of your skills, to develop more of them and then that sort of continues."

Some female interview participants detailed the benefit of having mentors by saying that mentors supported them, paved the way for them and were quite powerful. Participants benefited from business mentors that were able to show them the ropes and develop their journey in addition to taking them under their wing and assisting in every phase of the mentee journey. Furthermore, interview participants looked for an outcome-based result and encountered journeys where knowledge was imparted. The best outcome was achieved when mentors understood the path that mentees were on.

In addition, participants were quite adamant in expressing that there is a difference between mentorship, sponsorship and coaching. One participant expressed her concern by saying:

> "In the early days there was this concept called a mentorship, okay, I'd like to believe that mentorship has evolved into another concept called sponsorship and I think that only now organisations are beginning to understand the difference between the two."

In many organisations, MSC is offered as part of a formal programme. In other organisations, mentorship was not formal but was highly encouraged. Some participants expressed that mentorship was offered only to senior management employees, while some organisations offered these programmes to all levels of staff. With regards to the formal, structured programmes, a list of mentors is made available to all prospective mentees. Moreover, one organisation monitored and tracked completion of the mentorship, which was linked to the individual's development programme. Overall, there was huge support for MSCs.

Participants articulated that mentors were both a mix of internal and external mentors and both male and female mentors. Participants expressed their belief in having many mentors by stating:

> "…I at the moment have three mentors that I look up to and one is male and one is female and the other is also male so I get different things from different mentors. So, from a female perspective, I know she would understand completely that juggling between work and home and some males don't really get it but they do get it but I think females get it better."

"I myself have three mentors and I picked them up over the last 15 years from different companies. Find someone that has a lot of experience and someone that wants to help and is progressive and innovative."

Another participant articulated her views on male versus female sponsors by saying:

"Yeah, I think I think male sponsors still carry the gravitas more than female sponsors. But hopefully that's going to change as we get more and more females in senior and powerful positions and in positions of influence."

In identifying mentors, interview participants mentioned individuals that were in senior positions in organisations that would mentor someone in a junior role or someone that had vast experience. It was interesting to note the emergence of reverse mentoring, which was expressed as follows:

"What I find incredibly amazing is that we have something called reverse mentoring where the junior women in staff in fact mentor the senior women so this whole generation X … we find that in the workplace for the first time ever you get senior people working with children and I say children in the most respectful way… so I can say for example our CEO has been mentored by a youngster who is very tech savvy and my CEO is in his 60's and I think he's far beyond most people in that age gap as far as technology is concerned, so he is really very good with social media and postings and all of that yet he has learnt so much from this youngster because he is now looking at things from a young person's perspective."

"Don't look at your mentor as somebody ahead of you from a level point of view, but even your subordinates, those are people you learn a lot from because you see things as subordinates see things differently from your own perspective. And they might just be saying something that spikes another thought, so I have used it."

5.4.2.2 Enabling environment identified as an enabler

Interview participants explained that a conducive environment which encompassed culture, values, progressive actions and making women comfortable in the workplace served as enablers for women to advance into executive positions. One male leader expressed the following view in this regard:

"So, I guess we need to create the environment where it's okay for women to be a mother or a wife and still be a successful career woman."

In addition, participants also stressed the importance of organisations being open-minded, where one male participant expressed his view as follows:

> "… I can't say the culture at [company name] is a hundred percent but I think we have a fairly open, cultured environment. That environment has been completely supportive all the time. They [women] have had the resilience to work through things and can we do more to make the environment more supportive for women that they are able to give themselves the opportunity to be successful and we have to keep doing that."

> "I think it's the enabling environment. It's our duty is to give people the opportunity to expose them to empower them. And where there's a need for the support to always say we are open for you to come in and ask."

This was supported by a female participant that shared her experience by saying:

> "It's because I have always worked in global companies that were open-minded and have a broader perspective on these things as opposed to maybe smaller local companies."

Participants also shared that the enabling actions of organisations are conducive to exposing women to core parts of the business and enabling their advancement into executive positions. One female participant shared her exposure which she considered as enablers:

> "We allow heads, we allow senior account managers to be on those platforms and be part of the panel, that in itself is personal development because it makes you have confidence, it makes you [to] be able to be there and actually sell [the company] but you [are] selling yourself. So that in itself is something that ordinarily, I know that from some companies from a hierarchy point of view, and that maybe is probably one of the value propositions that [the company] has, is to allow people most junior to be exposed but in another corporate environment, they would not have been given that opportunity."

In addition:

> "...one of the enablers [was] to make me exposed to different parts of the whole investment process, to be able to engage with different stake holders, to have an appreciation of different conditions you know."

A male participant shared intentional actions of his organisation to create an environment of being more balanced. In this regard he shared:

"When we are having conferences, team building events we ensure there's a balance. E.g. When we have a panel of five we ensure that two women are included, if an exhibition then there is two female and two male consultants. Our mindset on all official events are very balanced. We don't have golf days anymore nor boxes at wanderers. Everything we do is focused on technology or education or health, very industry sector use case. What we trying to do is, what are the business problems we are trying to solve? How do we help customers? We then built stuff around that and then made sure that we get a balanced team that presents it. We want to do all progressive things that make females more comfortable."

Participants highlighted the importance and impact of support and initiative from the CEO and leadership team, which drove the focus of advancing women into executive positions as well as the implementation of enablers. Participants articulated the importance of CEO-led initiatives by stating:

"So it took the board to have a target or an objective to advance women and an objective remains an objective and if it is not implemented and for it to have happened I think one needed the CEO's way to actually implement. So, when it comes to me specifically it [was because] the CEO was committed."

"It starts with the CEO, who sets the tone of the leadership scene."

"I was the first female CEO employed and the company was 30 years old so when I got onto that board I made sure that the CFO, the male CFO had resigned, I made sure I had employed a female CFO. I must say I do it intentionally and deliberately because for me from a personal perspective, I really want to see more females seated around the boardroom table."

Other mechanisms that participants considered as enablers relate to human resource intervention and development plans that enabled them to advance once they were able to deliver on their targets. These were further explained by stating:

"So, in terms of that, inside of the pipeline developments and human resources (HR) would look at certain things during the performance appraisal process that said how many females are getting the top ratings and to choose versus how many males and how many of those females are black females and what categories and talk in [which] South African race discrimination categories do they fall, where does that compare in terms of our employment equity plan or our

transformation plan? So those are additional measures we built again into the fabric of the institution to try and move the numbers."

Female executives promoting other women was also pegged as an enabling environment. Participants shared their insights as follows:

"Because I think as you get two types of women, the ones that want to be the queen bee and the other ones that want to promote. Exactly. And I've been just fortunate because X was a promoter of women and you know Y promotes a woman. She's the executive from human capital. So that's sort of been, you know, we've got to like pay it forward. Now I'm going to stay here so that I can [do the same]. So, it can be a different place if I leave."

"I actually do it deliberately and more aggressively, how I can bring more females with the influence that I have, how I can bring more females around the boardroom table and in my previous role, I was the only, I was the first female CEO employed and the company was 30 years old so when I got onto that board I made sure that the CFO, the male CFO had resigned, I made sure I had employed a female CFO. I must say I do it intentionally and deliberately because for me from a personal perspective, I really want to see more females seated around the boardroom table."

5.4.2.3 LDPs identified as an enabler

Many of the interview participants stated that LDPs enabled their advancement into executive positions. Participants shared various programmes that they had participated in or to which they were exposed. One male participant shared his insight as follows:

"We have now deliberately created and focused on our talent programmes, so we have introduced the EA (Executive Associate) programme here. We created the programme about eight years ago and then it was a case of let's bring in a case of very smart people to shadow CEOs, to shadow COOs and based on that, get exposure to the business, add value and then within one to three years, move into a senior or exec management position in the business. It has been very successful and was wide open in terms of EE [employment equity] candidates, what we have done in the last year, we have focussed on African female candidates and so that is the current pipeline coming in. And that's another way in which we are getting great talent in at a level where they will be exposed to the broader business I suppose start at the bottom you know, sort of let's see what

happens, coming in with the expectation that there will be a senior executive manager within two to three years."

Another male participant shared his organisation's approach on a women-only LDP, which is:

"Female executive programme – if at senior management, females are identified to have potential, they will be put onto a leadership accelerated programme. This allows females to meet other top talent women and then there's a whole of bunch of training and coaching that they go through to enable them to be successful at these levels. How do you manage your time, do you understand the stock exchange, do you understand finance, public speaking? Very specific programme for high potential [women]."

A female participant shared her insight and experience on accountability on these LDPs and what should occur to prevent women from having no real advancement or growth in their careers even after accessing these programmes. She went on to explain:

"We call it road maps between the manager and the employee, they are both accountable for that road map. So, it's very important to have accountability like that with time lines. By six months you have done that, what are you doing in the system? And you should be here so when opportunities arise, and we include HR in it, so if there is an opportunity and we know this person has done this programme and there is an opportunity that is suitable to this candidate, that candidate would have first preference to apply for the position. So, it's a very robust process, not training and developing somebody and they are just sitting and floating through the system."

5.4.3 Results for research question 3

Research question 3: Which of the previously mentioned enablers has been the most impactful in advancing women into executive positions in organisations.

Research question 3 aimed to establish which of the enablers above, female and male executives perceive to have the most impact with regards to assisting women in advancing to executive positions. It is expected that through this question, a common theme might emerge whereby one of the enablers might be identified as more influential or impactful than the other enablers.

Interview question 4: In your experience/view, which of the previously mentioned enablers has been the most impactful?

The fourth interview question sought to understand which of the above-mentioned enablers have been the most impactful in terms of women advancing into executive positions.

Some participants mentioned two enablers which were most impactful, hence the frequency of constructs mentioned in total exceeded the total sample size of 16. The most impactful enabler adopted by organisations to advance women into executive positions are detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Interview Summary to Question 4

Ranking	Most impactful enabler	Number of Mentions
1	MSC	7
2	LDP	3
2	Networking	3
2	Not sure	3
2	Enabling environment	3
3	Flexibility	2

5.4.3.1 MSC identified as the most impactful enabler

MSC was again expressed as most impactful with regards to advancing women into executive positions. The following experiences were shared regarding the impact of MSC:

"Phenomenal transformation, phenomenal transformation. I am a huge, huge mentor fan so I am going to be very biased with that as well."

"…One of the key things in terms of how you progress to leadership positions is if you have a sponsor that's [how] important that was. And that I think that's, that's, that's irrespective of gender."

"So, I think the sponsorship thing, I mean I can't get over how obvious it's been in all of the places where I've worked that there's always, there's always someone that believes in you, you know, and then gives you an opportunity to be on certain projects, to show more of your skills, to develop more of them and then that sort of continues."

One participant considered mentorship combined with LDPs as impactful and shared her experience as follows:

> "As I said, I am biased towards a mentorship so I would say I wouldn't peg it as one is better than the other because for me it's a simultaneous journey and completing a degree or completing a course or completing whatever is the one aspect and then you mentor actually advises you to navigate that journey, so I wouldn't say the one is going to accelerate. Personally, I think it's a joint journey."

Another participant considered mentorship combined with networking as impactful and shared her insights by stating:

> "So, it was definitely the combination of the mentor and the network because if I have the network, it's like I have the network to be able to suss out who was the best person to become a mentor, but at the same time I had a lot of formal mentors that at any given time of my career that I could whether I was taking over a new industry or I was dealing with new clients or new solutions, I had mentors to assist me in that process."

5.4.4 Results for research question 4

Research question 4/interview question 5: What are the deficiencies of enablers identified, if any?

Research question 4 aims to establish the deficiencies of enablers identified, if any, to enable a more corrective approach to be adopted, which might result in enhancing the number of women advancing to executive positions.

The enablers with identified deficiencies are detailed in the table below. In addition, the number of deficiencies mentioned per enabler that emerged during the analysis of the data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Interview Summary to Question 5

Ranking	Enablers with identified deficiencies	Number of deficiencies mentioned per enabler
1	MSC	9
2	LDPs	4
3	Enabling environment	3
4	Networking	2
4	Flexibility	2

Ranking	Enablers with identified deficiencies	Number of deficiencies mentioned per enabler
5	Leadership	1

Participants indicated nine types of deficiencies in MSC, four types of deficiencies in LDPs and three types of deficiencies in the enabling environment. Each enabler with their identified deficiencies are analysed in detail below.

5.4.4.1 Deficiencies in MSC

A common pitfall identified by interview participants is being mentored by individuals for MSC that participants either do not resonate with or with who participants do not have a connection. In identifying potential mentors, interview participants were quite adamant in that there needs to be a connection between the mentor and the mentee, as having the wrong mentor can take the mentee down completely. One participant suggested an initial interview with a potential mentor to ascertain a connection with him/her to address this concern. Another participant expressed worry that individuals look for role models that mirror themselves and further expressed:

> "The one thing we have still got to work on a bit is people still tend to look for role models that look and sound like them and that is one of the barriers, when you talk about glass ceilings, that is one of the barriers from a mentorship perspective; how do I find a mentor I can relate to and that inspires me then I can look, you know, I look at this person and say I belong and I can actually reach executive levels."

With regards to the actual MSC process, participants felt that there was a mismatch in some instances between what the mentee required versus what the mentor provided. A participant stated that she was not sure about what she was supposed to be getting from her coach and overall, when coaching is not done correctly, it does not work. It is also necessary to identify what value the mentee wants to extract from the relationship. Moreover, some individuals do not know what to do with mentors and were not sure what to talk about. The concern echoed out to this effect was:

> "Some people say, oh but I got a mentor for that okay, but this person's behaviour hasn't improved for the last two or three years. Oh, but I got a mentor for that but it's not enough so it's got to be – you have got to close the loop and say this is what we have done, is the outcome, is it working, what are we going to do that's different, right."

While some mentorships were formalised into a programme, access to these programmes was limited only to a few. Some participants could only access these programmes if their immediate line managers approved their access, while one organisation only offered mentorship at the very senior and executive levels. One male interview participant mentioned:

> "I can't force people to get coaches and mentors right, everyone knows we have a panel of mentors, everyone knows we have at least a one-pager in the development plan and if the outcome of that is you need some coaching or mentoring, then you must do it. I also find that people are lazy – I also don't push coaching or mentoring unless it's required."

However, based on an informal conversation the researcher had with women in management positions within the same organisation in relation to the direct quote above, these women were not aware of the panel of mentors or how to even access the mentors in this regard.

Participants went on to express that some of their MSC was informal and therefore had no way of being tracked to ascertain if the MSC was successful or if objectives were being met. Participants expressed their views by stating:

> "They have access to mentors so they can network with senior women in the organisation and I think there is a concerted effort really to fast-track. We made access to leadership, training, mentoring and also access to opportunities and I don't think that's as structured as it should be. And there's really room for improvement but I think as a start it's a good it's a good way to maintain young ladies."

> "I think we've got to institute a proper formalised mentorship programme. So, I've been, I mean people have approached me for mentorship, but then I say yes, I will do it and mostly it's people in my discipline. We've got to institutionalise it."

A female participant highlighted the need for a mentor to be held accountable for his/her role in advancing women in organisations. To this effect, her views were as follows:

> "Today we talk about sponsorship where we say build in to your partner personal plans, your KPI performance measurement processes the fact that you need to take a woman through all the way up into executive leadership. So, they would put on their KPI plan, they would support a woman to get to partner level and they would do that and it's a great programme and you know it's formalised and now [has] become part of the institutional fabric of the organisation."

5.4.4.2 Deficiencies in LDPs

The core constructs that emerged from deficiencies identified in LDPs related to the vagueness of career paths subsequent to attending LDPs. Interview participants stated that individuals get frustrated as these individuals attend these programmes but do not progress in their careers. Their concerns were expressed as follows:

> "There are so many women studying, highly educated but they are sitting in the lowest positions and there is no plan for them. If you speak to them on what has HC [Human Capital] said they say no, HC says there is no policy that once we help you to study then we move you. There is no policy and I think that there is a gap that companies need to consider."

> "We have got programmes to bring women into the company but not specifically programmes to help them grow. So, I think that is something we have to address."

Participants highlighted that although leadership programmes were implemented, these were not widely communicated with all levels of staff on how they work or on how to access them.

Another deficiency identified was that these programmes are designed without consultation with the users and designers of these programmes do not obtain feedback from attendees to identify shortcomings or potential areas for improvement. This was further explained as:

> "So, I think a lot of the times, these senior people come up with these ideas and we see this in society all the time where they never really take into account- what is the feedback of people that are going to be involved? And I think that feedback becomes a really important element in all these LDPs because that's what can be done better, is the feedback you solicit from the people that have kind of participated in that."

5.4.4.3 Deficiencies in Enabling Environment

A male participant shared how his organisation still has a very dominant male culture and therefore restricted the advancement of women into executive positions. His insights were:

> "…yet we are not as progressive as we need to be because, it's still a very dominant male culture so no matter what the policies are, if the music you choose for the year end function or the way the year end function is run with alcohol… If

73

you have a golf day and have ladies running around in crop tops, no matter how progressive your policies are, you just still have a very sexist, male-dominated innuendo culture that is there and for me culture and values and making women comfortable in the workplace is beyond the mission statement and values. It's about how does the dress code look, what jokes are made at the water cooler. It's not about what's said at the meeting, work place forum, it's what said after hours at dinner and what's said at the parking lot. In general, the male domination is very prevalent. It comes from the boys' schools, from the home environment. I think organisations have done all the HR stuff but implicitly there is a sub-culture that still exists that still doesn't treat women 100% as equal to men."

A female participant stated that even though women do advance to executive positions, male executives do not engage or value their input:

"Those guys that sit around the boardroom table and completely not engage with the women and pretend they are non-existent are the ones that are doing it to meet quotas and are doing it to get BBBEE ratings and all other number of reasons."

In addition, another female participant articulated that organisations are not structurally organised to support women. Her views were:

"We [are] not structurally organised to support women in the workplace. We don't have express rooms. So, you will have to go sit in your car somewhere and express milk if you came back from maternity leave. So that's a woman thing. We have [to] tangibly say we acknowledge that you've got different needs so we're going to cater for that."

5.4.5 Results for research question 5

Research question 5: What approach has been adopted to address the in-group bias and out-group members as highlighted in the social identity theory by female leaders in advancing to executive positions?

Research question 5 endeavours to understand the best approaches to adopt in order to break the barrier of the in-group bias in organisations that prevents the advancement of women into executive positions.

Interview question 6: In terms of social identity theory, where individuals socially lean towards individuals that are alike to them and draw back from those viewed as different, what insights from personal experience or advice would you offer to females facing the in-group bias that is trying to advance to an executive position?

The approaches adopted by females and the advice from male leaders in organisations to address social identity theory are detailed in the Table 9. In addition, the number of participants that mentioned these approaches are also presented.

Table 9: Interview Summary to Question 6

Rank	Approach to the in-group bias	Number of mentions
1	Exhibit one's value	5
2	Adaptability	3
3	Managing one's self	2
4	Create own group	1
5	Seek direction from senior	1

Thirteen out of 16 participants acknowledged the existence of gender-based in-group and out-group bias in either their current or previous organisations. One participant stated that she is currently part of the out-group based on gender in her organisation. The top three themes emerged whereby five participants indicated that their approach to the in-group members was to exhibit one's value, three participants indicated their adaptability and two participants indicated managing one's self.

Each approach is analysed in detail below.

5.4.5.1 Exhibit value

Participants expressed that a female must exhibit one's value and deliver on tasks thereby highlighting the benefits to the in-group. These women then easily penetrated the in-group. In this regard, the following advice was given:

> "Then (male name) sees you now as a person of value and [with] things to offer because you create great networks and great networks into business and therefore you have now given (male name) something useful that he can think about when he wants to go and target somebody."

"I think being in the in-group and the out-group if you demonstrate your value to the organisation or demonstrate the contribution that you can bring in whether you are in or out, they force to recognise you, absolutely forced to recognise you. And I also think even being in the out group, you have got to be assertive enough, tell me why I didn't get that role. You know because sometimes the in group would get it and you wouldn't get it. You have to challenge the system."

5.4.5.2 Adaptability

A female interview participant mentioned that one should aim to find a connection with the existing culture of the organisation and if not, then the organisation is not a culture fit:

"…so maybe this is the more practical example and you don't really want to change the culture and maybe in many cases you can't because of the level you are, then you should really try and understand what it is and say, well, how can I find the connection into that culture? Okay. So, sort of to just come in and say, no, this is why I am. And if this place doesn't gel with me, it doesn't actually work."

A male participant, however, expressed his view that females must make an effort to try to cross the chasm and adopt progressive ways of thinking.

5.4.5.3 Managing one's self

Interview participants who experienced or had advice on social identity theory articulated that in order to penetrate the in-group, women must manage themselves and manage their interaction and ultimately step back and form their own in-group. One female participant's experience was expressed as follows:

"The male club. Internally here what I find is that with time you get to know who is in the clique and who is out. You manage yourself around these people you smile at them but you don't interact, cos you are outside of the clique and you learn that certain people are in a clique so you step back but you get measured on what you say to them you become very cautious around those people and those cliques are usually for people that have been here longer so for the newbies. I think there must be some trust that happens for you to get into that clique, it becomes very difficult to penetrate so what you can do you is form your own clique."

5.4.6 Results for research question 6

Research question 6: What leadership traits as highlighted in the social role theory are applicable to women that have advanced or want to advance to executive positions?

Research question 6 seeks to understand if women are expected to conform to masculine leadership traits, women leadership traits or a combination of both to advance to executive positions.

Interview question 7: In terms of the social role theory, the female role is considered communal, supportive, kind and nurturing and the male role strong, authoritative, controlling and of demanding behaviour. In your experience and view, should the male, female or combination of male and female leadership traits be portrayed by women in organisations to enable them to advance into executive positions?

The approaches and advice of the leadership traits of females in organisations to address social role theory are detailed in Table 10. In addition, the number of participants that mentioned these approaches are also presented.

Table 10: Interview Summary to Question 7

Rank	Approach to the leadership traits of women	Number of Mentions
1	Authenticity	7
2	Hybrid approach	5
3	Organisational culture	3
4	Play down female traits	2
4	Profession and industry dictates the traits	2
5	Male orientated	1
5	Ineffective leadership style	1
5	Traits do not matter	1

The top three themes emerged whereby seven participants indicated that their approach to the female leadership traits which enabled their advancement were to be authentic, five participants indicated that the traits should be a hybrid of male and female leadership

traits and three participants indicated that the organisational culture plays a role in female leadership traits adopted.

Each approach is analysed in detail below:

5.4.6.1 Authenticity

Seven interview participants highlighted that women should not adopt male leadership traits in their path of advancing into executive positions, but should rather remain true to themselves and portray to the organisation and leaders who these women really are. Female participants mentioned that they largely stayed true to who they were and didn't have to depict male leadership traits to be recognised. The following insights were shared:

> "It comes down to your purpose and knowing yourself being comfortable in my own skin. I'm here cos of merit and not because nobody gave me favours to get into this position so I'm going to stick to my guns."

> "I think I largely stayed true to who I am because you can only take your own self with you, I battled to adjust to the culture because I brought a difference and I was fortunate that my difference, I like to believe, was appreciated okay so, I have a certain personality and when people still see me today after I have left the organisation, they still recognise that personality."

5.4.6.2 Hybrid approach

Five interview participants articulated that they believed that there were situations which required them to adopt both male and female leadership traits, while one participant believed that the future is the progression of a combination of both leadership styles. Their experiences were shared as follows:

> "It should be a combination; the world is changing so much. Technology is changing so mindsets have to be completely progressive. The future is the hybrid of the two. The male construct is outdated, it will not work in the future. The future is progression of a combination of all of these things."

> "I tend to think I actually take both to be honest. I don't want to say I am leaning more towards a female or I take a bit of male but there are things I take from a male but as a female there's things that resonate with me."

"So, I think there is that balance where I have learnt to be absolutely firm and unapologetic and masculine in my demand and then there are moments where my vulnerability and honesty and femininity have worked."

"A leader wears different hats and there are situations where you have to be authoritative because we work in such a faced-paced industry and technology changes at a rapid rate."

5.4.6.3 Organisational culture

Three interview participants expressed that the culture of the organisation largely influenced which leadership trait they had to exhibit. Their insights were:

"I have also had to learn in my short stint as an executive that at times you have to understand the audience, you have to read your environment maybe today is not the right time to be the person you are so I tend now I think I am more emotionally prepared and matured to understand my environment before I say something so those are some of the lessons."

"So, for me I think that authenticity and being your authentic self is important but you have got to do it in the context of the organisational culture unless you are an absolute rebel."

5.5 Conclusion on findings

The findings for the research questions posed above articulate that:

(i) 94% of interview participants' organisations are focused on advancing women into executive positions

(ii) The main driving factor that motivates organisations to advance women into executive positions was the recognition and need for diverse thinking, views, business perspectives, approach and empathy that females bring to the table

(iii) MSC was identified by participants in their experience, as being the most impactful organisational enabler in terms of advancing women into executive positions

(iv) While MSC was identified as most impactful, the highest number of deficiencies relating to MSC were identified, such as limited access to the programme, not having a connection with the mentor rendering the process unsuccessful, and some mentors and mentees not agreeing on objectives, rendering the process ineffective

(v) The most common approach by participants to the in-group bias and out-group members is to exhibit their value and deliver on tasks, thereby highlighting the benefits of their inclusion to the in-group

(vi) In identifying the correct leadership approach in females advancing to executive positions it was identified that women should not adopt male leadership traits in their path of advancing, but should rather remain true to themselves and portray to the organisation and leaders who they really are. Authenticity is this regard was considered as most effective in terms of leadership traits.

Chapter 6 will discuss the findings in Chapter 5 in greater detail and link the findings to the literature in Chapter 2. A framework based on these findings will also be devised to guide organisations and leaders when aiming to advance women into executive positions.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

The results of each research question in Chapter 5 will be discussed in this chapter relative to the literature in Chapter 2. By analysing the responses from the in-depth interviews, the results will then be discussed and compared to the literature review in Chapter 2 in order to answer the research questions in Chapter 3. Finally, a Model for organisational enablers will be presented based on key findings. This model will depict the successful organisational enablers identified and key success factors articulated by research participants in Chapter 5.

6.2 Research question 1: What are the factors motivating organisations to advance women into executive positions?

6.2.1 Advancement of females into executive positions within organisations is actually a key focus area

6.2.1.1 Shifting attitudes and thinking of male leaders

The findings suggest that there is a concerted focus by 15 out of 16 organisations that have been successful in advancing women into executive positions. This informs the census results by Business Women's Association of South Africa [BWASA]) (2017) indicating an increase in female representation at executive and CEO level. This also supports Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) who posit that intensive constant individual and joint efforts are required to dismantle the barriers that women face in advancing to higher levels in organisations. The joint efforts based on the findings include leaders of organisations who drive this key focus from the top and throughout the organisation.

Based on the results of this study, 69% of the research participants worked in organisations which were led by men and 15 participants confirmed that the male and female leaders in their organizations supported and played a key role in advancing women into executive positions. It therefore appears that the attitudes of male leaders in organisations are changing towards the role of women which needs to be further analysed and understood and is an area for future research. It seems that while the key positions of power and decision-making are fulfilled by men in 69% of these organisations, this does not pose as a barrier in this study. This is interesting to note as a study by the UN (2015) emphasised that male dominance is a barrier in that positions of power and decision-making in politics and business are still occupied mostly by men.

6.2.1.2 Patriarchal views still exist in some organisations

Only one interview participant articulated the existence and dominance of patriarchal behaviour. This low number is largely influenced by the limitations of the study. The one interview participant that did not consider her organisation as focused in advancing women into executive positions is in support of literature. The literature refers to a patriarchal history and the apartheid era and how its legacy largely impacts women's ongoing mission to equality (Gouws, 2012). This participant's response appears to suggest male domination in her organisation and its influence on attracting male talent only, which resonates with the social identity theory identified in literature as a bias that arises from individuals seeking similarities between themselves and in-group members (Mathisen et al., 2013). It therefore appears that a large number of women in South Africa are still subjected to practices that are discriminatory, which are influenced by gender stereotypes and social norms regardless of constant efforts and progression in this matter (Chengadu & Scheepers 2017).

Mathisen et al. (2013) goes on to explain that based on gender, the out-group therefore would comprise females who experience increased levels of relationship and task conflict. It would seem that the one participant does form part of the out-group based on gender in this organisation and articulated her task conflict by saying:

> "I definitely think it's a legacy mindset… I think the traditional business function remains male dominated… it's breaking through that barrier and the reason I say it's a barrier is because males will always – unless they are open minded – will always bring in more of the same and that's what you see. …I get to sit on exco and that my manager, my CE, is ready to close exco and HR hasn't gone yet, (name) will say no, no, no, it's still HR, do you understand? And then (name) will make a comment, "oh my favourite subject", kind of thing."

From the above it would seem that being part of the out-group does not render her contribution as valuable, as HR is left as the last item on the agenda and her colleague does not value her input, which appears to be evidence of relationship and task conflict.

Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) found that even in instances where women break through the glass ceiling, a second glass ceiling is encountered once the board level is reached, which is largely influenced by the traditional bias demonstrated through gender stereotyping.

6.2.2 Diversity, business imperative and legislation are the major drivers of female advancement

The findings of the major motivating factors of advancing women in organisations relate to diversity, business imperatives and legislation.

6.2.2.1 Diversity – differential thinking, views and business perspectives of women

Gender-diverse boards lead to greater discernment of shareholder trust and trustworthiness in the firm (Perrault, 2015). The findings suggest that the requirement and appreciation for diversity on boards and committees is a key motivator of advancing women into executive positions. Dezso and Ross (2012) found how female representation in positions of top management contributes to benefits of informational and social diversity. Based on the findings, it appears that the differential thinking, views, business perspectives and approach of females are acknowledged, embraced and appreciated by leaders who value informational and social diversity. Based on the findings it also seems that diversity extended not only to gender diversity but diversity in decisions and value-add to the business of having women in senior executive positions.

In addition, the findings suggest that nurturing and feminine aspects were also cited as benefits that women can bring to the table. In considering diversity, a participant also considered the power that women hold as consumers and advocated that this power be extended to business and decision-making. In support of these findings, differences in both elements of perspectives and styles were used as the basis to argue the diversity that women introduce to both boards and leadership teams with the ultimate result of improving organisational performance (Hoobler et al., 2018). The requirement and appreciation for diverse thinking and views among others resonates with a study conducted by Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) who found that the preferred leadership style and characteristics are those that exhibit renewed leadership methods, which, as a result, favour the implementation of feminine ideals and inspiration in both society, government and business.

Based on these findings, it seems that leaders and organisations believe that gender diversity will benefit their organisations and therefore believe this is a basis to motivate advancing women into executive positions. This may be indicative of a shift in thinking in terms of associated benefits of advancing women into executive positions. There seems to be an appreciation of women's care and empathy in their contributions at this level and it appears that leaders and organisations appreciate and welcome the feminine

and diverse ways of thinking by advancing women into executive positions. The result of embracing diversity is that productive discussions are more likely to arise from the amalgamation of male and female attributes, therefore resulting in a positive effect on performance of the group (Apesteguia et al., 2012). Diversity in value, backgrounds, perspectives and skills that women bring to the boardroom drives the importance of increasing the number of women in boards of directors (Torchia et al., 2011).

6.2.2.2 Business imperative – external pressure

Peterson (2015) posits in her study that the motivating factor for the increase in female leadership positions in senior management in academia is as a result of external pressure to advance women. In this regard, it was interesting to note from the findings, that the diversity requirement was not necessarily an internal requirement in the organisations itself, but in some instances organisations were forced by their customers to show diversity in their executive leadership teams to mirror what their clients were doing inside their own organisations and therefore this was considered as a business imperative.

Their views suggest that if the right things are done for society and its members it results in a strong company. In addition, the finding was that organisations must be seen to be doing the right thing, therefore being a good corporate citizen in society is always important. This finding resonates with Ben-Amar et al. (2013) who found that a firm is more likely to have female board members when it is linked to other firms that have female directors.

Based on findings, participants stated that their customers had women in executive positions and therefore expected the same from their service providers or suppliers. It therefore appears from the findings that some organisations, even if they have not identified the benefits that other organisations have identified, are being forced to accommodate diversity in their leadership teams by their customers. This is a result of being associated with customers that have already embraced gender diversity and want to see the same advancement in the organisations with which they are associated. It would seem that these organisations are merely driving the diversity motivation to make themselves appear to be doing the right thing for society and thereby ensuring retention of these customers which in itself needs to be further analysed and understood and is an area for future research This is supported by Dezso and Ross (2012) who state that there may be social and ethical repercussions to companies that possess non-gender balanced teams.

The findings of this study do not appear to support Ben-Amar et al. (2013) who found that diversity may also result in conflict of a group, which in effect can hinder efficiency. The findings all seem to support the benefits of a diverse workforce and the value add that women bring to the table.

6.2.2.3 Legislation – transformation, BBBEE scorecards, the regulatory environment and targets and quotas

Based on the findings, the third largest motivator expressed by interview participants was legislation. This included transformation, BBBEE scorecards, the regulatory environment and targets and quotas. Findings indicated that transformation was huge on the people agenda and formed part of business' imperatives. These findings resonate with literature that refers to both governments and organisations that have taken specific steps to decrease the gap between females and males in senior leadership roles (Klettner et al., 2014; Meier & Lombardo, 2013). The approaches adopted include opportunity-enhancing strategies, reporting requirements, setting gender targets, introducing quotas and equal opportunity strategies. In support, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) state that legislation and governing codes have been updated across the world by government with the aim of promoting gender equality across organisations and management levels and in addition are highlighting their devotion to business ethics and corporate governance. It therefore appears that the South African regulatory environment in terms of EEA and BBBEE codes (EY, 2014) is setting gender targets that organisations must attain, while simultaneously motivating organisations to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions.

6.2.2.4 Legislation – smart economics and tokenism at play

Findings of this study indicate that women are being advanced into executive positions to attain quotas and BBBEE ratings for organisations to merely attain their desired BBBEE scores. Participants explained that it becomes a business imperative by looking at their BBBEE scoring whereby companies want to achieve the levels that they are aiming to reach so that companies can bring in those projects on which they want to work. These findings resonate with literature on smart economics which is using the development method of investing in women and girls to compete and grow in the economy (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). Oliphant (2015) contends that numerical targets are the key driver in South African organisations, which occur at the detriment of upskilling of women or cultural desensitisation. There is evidence of duality in that

equality is prescribed formally by the law but inequality is experienced by women (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). It therefore seems to appear from these findings that organisations are utilising the concept of smart economics to advance women so that women are economically competitive rather than promoting women for their skill and equal rights. In this regard, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) argue that while they themselves acknowledge and support the need to highlight the development needs and inclusion of women at all decision-making levels, it is not advisable for this approach to be adopted merely to satisfy economic or business imperatives. Rather, it should be embraced for the sake of women and gender equality.

The findings above also seem to resonate with tokenism, with Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) positing that there are strong challengers including women to minimal gender quotas as it is viewed as tokenism regarding gender diversity. Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) therefore conclude that the imposition of quotas with the resultant aim of achieving gender balance is perhaps not the ideal approach. It therefore appears that some organisations are appointing females as token appointments to fulfil employment equity legislation and BBBEE scorecard requirements rather than gender equality and for the diverse thinking, views and skills that women can bring to the table.

An area for future research in this regard would be to understand the impact of women that have advanced to executive positions. It is vital to understand if these women actually are part of the decision-making process in the organisation and if these women have a real impact on the operations of the organisation.

The findings in this study did not support the findings of Ahern and Ditmar (2012) who state that due to the adherence of quotas, appointed board members were considered to be less experienced with a subsequent rise in acquisitions and debt and the concurrent deterioration of operating performance of the firm. Findings related to benefits of appointing women and no associated repercussions or negative outcomes were noted by both male and female participants.

6.2.3 Divergence of findings from literature

Literature linked the presence of women in executive positions to firm performance. Some studies found a link between corporate performance and women on boards to be positive, other studies found a negative link, while yet others still did not identify any link at all (Joecks et al., 2013). Dezso and Ross (2012) found that an organisation with top management representation of at least one female generated one percent more economic value and greater accounting performance than an organisation without a

female in their top management team. Cook and Glass (2015) state that firms which are represented by a female CEO and several female board members have an inclination to outperform firms with a female CEO and limited or no female board members. Joecks et al. (2013) found in their study that initially gender diversity had a negative effect on firm performance and that only once a critical mass of 30% women was attained was this associated with firms that performed better than firms which had a board that comprised of only males. During the interviews conducted in this study, no participants made any reference to firm performance and it therefore seems that the findings of this study do not support the findings that link an increase of women in senior leadership positions to an increase in firm performance.

6.2.4 Conclusion to findings for research question 1

	Shifting attitudes & thinking of male leaders	
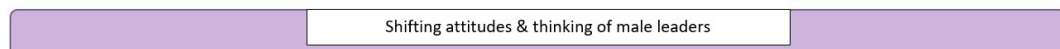
Figure 3: Foundation for the Model for organisational enablers

Source: Author's own

There appears to be a shift in the attitudes and thinking of male leaders with regards to advancing women into executive positions. This is a crucial finding as this shift in thinking informs and supports any enablers implemented or to be implemented in organisations. The shift in thinking which is depicted in Figure 3 above, will form the foundation of the Model for organisational enablers. Based on the findings of this study, there appears to be progress in terms of women advancing into executive positions in organisations. It seems that even though 69% of the interview participants had male leaders, this is not a barrier. Instead, it is seen in this study as an enabler to the advancement of women in organisations. It is, however, evident from one interview participant that there is still gender bias experienced in organisations exhibited by the social identity theory of the in-group bias. This poses as a barrier to women advancing to executive positions with the end result of a lack of focus in that organisation with regards to advancing women. The approaches that women have adopted or should adopt when faced with in-group bias are further explored in research objective 6 below.
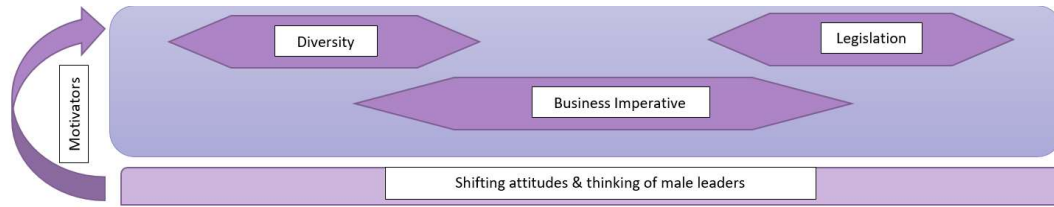
Figure 4: Motivators in the Model for organisational enablers

Source: Author's own

Among the motivating factors of organisations advancing women into executive positions is the appreciation of diversity of views, experience and skills that women possess, which is indicative of a shift in thinking in terms of associated benefits of advancing women into executive positions. There seems to be an appreciation of female care and empathy in their contributions at this level and leaders and organisations appreciate and welcome the feminine and diverse ways of female thinking. However, the findings also exhibit that some organisations are driving diversity to make themselves appear to be doing the right thing for society and thereby ensuring retention of their customers who insist on female empowerment. Thus, from their point of view, participants believe the advancement makes good business sense.

Furthermore, organisations are utilising the concept of smart economics to advance women so that organisations are economically competitive rather than promoting women for their skill and equal rights. Some organisations are appointing females as token appointments to fulfil employment equity legislation and BBBEE scorecard requirements rather than gender equality and for the diverse thinking, views and skills that women can bring to the table.

From the above it is important to note that, although there seems to be progress in organisations that are focusing on advancing women into executive positions, it is concurrently vital to understand the reason behind the motivation. The findings above are mixed, with motivating factors focusing on diversity leading the factors. However, trailing close behind is the pressure from clients and the need to satisfy regulatory requirements to remain economically competitive. It is concerning that the second two factors are forced onto organisations, although this in effect affords women the platform to demonstrate their skills and value, which will enable the future pipeline of women to be considered and grown.

The motivating factors discussed above are depicted in Figure 4 above, and will form the motivating factors in the Model for organisational enablers.

Finally, the findings did not support literature that linked the increase of women in senior leadership positions to an increase in firm performance. The findings also did not highlight associated repercussions or negative outcomes by the appointment of women into senior leadership roles.

6.3 Research question 2: MSC, enabling environment and LDPs are the most significant organisational enablers

6.3.1 MSC identified as a significant enabler

6.3.1.1 Mentoring programmes can help women to overcome barriers and are necessary for internal success

The benefits of mentoring are linked to the advancement of women in the workplace, as mentoring programmes can help women to overcome barriers (Dworkin et al., 2012; Morehead et al., 2012). Coaching is mandatory during different stages in the careers of professional women and would entail advice to those at the beginning of their career and to identify methods to enable women to secure executive positions (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). The findings of this study highlight the importance and need of having MSC and pegged these as highly recommended for internal success. Maloney (2012) states that mentorship has improved several careers and is categorised as a vital factor for job enjoyment and satisfaction.

Glass and Cook (2016) state that a sponsor can make a substantial impact in terms of the support female leaders receive, which enables them to climb the corporate ladder. The findings of this study exhibit that having MSC results in someone who believes in the abilities of women and who gives these women opportunities to assume new responsibilities, exhibit their skills and then develop those skills. Ensher and Murphy (2011) further state that individuals who receive effective mentoring are promoted more quickly, earn more money, and have enhanced mobility and flexibility in their careers as compared to those individuals with mentors who are ineffective or those who have no mentor at all. The findings of this study suggest that the benefits of MSC relate to having mentors who support mentees and who have paved the way for them and were quite powerful. Furthermore, participants benefited from business mentors who were able to show them the ropes and develop their journey in addition to taking them under their wing and assisting in every phase of their mentorship journey. In their study, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) identified a key finding which related to various women expressing

the importance of executive male sponsors in the organisation that could open doors of opportunity and vouch for them.

6.3.1.2 The differences between Mentorship, sponsorship and coaching (MSC)

Ibarra et al. (2010) state that it is important to understand that not all mentoring is equivalent, as sponsorship involves a unique relationship whereby the mentor is not limited to offering feedback and advice but in addition, utilises his or her influence with individuals in senior positions to back the mentee. It is therefore important for women to obtain mentors that in addition to giving career advice, also sponsor them (Ibarra et al., 2010). The findings in this study acknowledge that there is a difference between MSC. This means that in addition to assisting women to know themselves and identify their preferred operating styles, as well as understand the changes required to enable them to climb up the leadership ladder, it is more beneficial that mentors also assist women to map out their moves and how to assume responsibility of new roles, in addition to publicly endorsing their authority (Ibarra et al., 2010). The effectiveness of mentorship versus sponsorship versus coaching on the advancement of women needs to be further analysed and understood and is an area for future research.

6.3.1.3 MSC offered as part of a formal programme

Dworkin et al. (2012) articulate that for sponsorship to be considered effective it should not stand on its own but rather, should constitute a component of a comprehensive programme including performance assessments, succession planning and training and development. Based on the findings of this study, MSC is offered as part of a formal programme in some organisations, while in other organisations, mentorship was not formal but highly encouraged. Sherwin (2014) supports the formal mentoring programme by stating that organisations must aim to get senior leaders to offer additional mentoring and support to females within the firm. Various organisations have instituted formal mentoring programmes for women aiming to advance into leadership positions, but there still exists the absence of sponsorship and specific training required to advance into executive positions (WEF, 2016).

6.3.1.4 Internal mentors versus external mentors

Literature makes reference to internal mentors, as Dworkin et al. (2012) advise that mentors should be strong influencers **within** the organisation. Furthermore, Ibarra et al. (2010) state that mentors must be individuals in **senior positions** to back the mentee.

In addition, Sherwin (2014) refers to **senior leaders in organisations** to mentor and support females **within** the firm. Based on the findings of this study, mentors were both a mix of internal and external mentors, with participants having more than one mentor in some instances. The effectiveness of internal mentors versus external mentors on the advancement of women needs to be further analysed and is an area for future research.

6.3.1.5 Male mentors versus female mentors

Literature was mixed in terms of the gender of mentors. MSC was linked to males mentoring females, such as where MSC was defined as the transfer and development of career capital from a **male mentor to women** (Dworkin et al., 2012; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016). Furthermore, various women expressed the importance of executive **male sponsors** in the organisation that could open doors of opportunity and vouch for them, while women who had advanced shared that they themselves could not have advanced without the influence of their **male sponsor,** even though they possessed superior professional and academic credentials (Chengadu & Scheepers 2017). The powerful impact of **male mentors** to women in male-dominated professions was further highlighted (Beeson & Valerio 2012; Ramaswami et al., 2010).

The support for **female mentors** was highlighted, whereby Dworkin et al. (2012) encourages **female role models** to encourage other women in the advancement of their careers. In addition, Hensvick (2014) states that **female managers** tend to be stronger mentors. It was interesting to note that Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) found in their study that successful women had mentors who were **both male and female**. Some literature did not identify the sex of the mentor and referred to the mentor as a relationship between two people (Maloney, 2012), a more experienced individual (Dworkin et al., 2012; McDonald and Westphal 2013) or senior leaders (Sherwin, 2014).

Based on findings of this study, participants had mentors that were both male and female mentors and one participant expressed that male sponsors are more powerful than female sponsors. In addition, reference was made to mentors understanding issues from a female perspective versus a male perspective due to the female understanding the pressures associated with juggling between work and home while males might not truly understand the pressure that females feel in this regard. The preference and effectiveness of male mentors versus female mentors in the advancement of women needs to be further analysed and is an area for future research.

6.3.1.6 Shift in age and seniority of mentors in organisations

Maloney (2012) refers to mentorship as a specific focus on career development, with the implication of a younger member being offered guidance from a more senior member in order to enhance the career of the younger member (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Furthermore, McDonald and Westphal (2013) stated that "participation process mentoring" refers to mentoring in an informal manner from a more experienced individual who can offer guidance in navigating new terrain and to enable a better understanding of the behaviour norms of an organisation. Based on findings, mentors were individuals who were in senior positions in organisations and would mentor someone in a junior role or were someone who had vast experience. This is in addition to the emergence of reverse mentoring where younger employees mentored more senior and/or older employees in utilising technology and social media more efficiently to enhance the business. Mentoring is normally performed by senior, more experienced employees to junior, less experienced employees, which is still relevant. However, there seems to be a shift in age and seniority of mentors in organisations, whereby mentoring now includes the principle of knowledge sharing and more efficient ways of operating, which can include junior employees mentoring senior employees. Reverse mentoring needs to be further analysed and is an area for future research.

6.3.2 Enabling environment identified as a significant enabler

6.3.2.1 Environment of inclusiveness and diversity

Based on findings, it is evident that a conducive environment which encompasses culture, values, balance, progressive actions and making women comfortable in the workplace is necessary as enablers for women to advance into executive positions. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) are in support of this and state that leaders must create an environment of inclusiveness and diversity to foster an enabling environment that is in support of women empowerment. Sabharwal (2014) further supports this by articulating that diversity management only, is not sufficient for workplace performance improvement and that an enhanced employee inclusion approach that considers views and promotes the self-esteem of employees is required. Employees who experience inclusion tend to feel that they are in a safe environment to voice their viewpoints and ideas, as employees feel recognised and valued for their role in the organisation.

Furthermore, the findings show that an environment which enables a woman to be a mother or a wife and still be a successful career woman is vital for women's

advancement. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) found in their study that interviewees proposed that the support and openness of the environment was one of their key success factors. The findings highlight the importance of organisations being open-minded and supportive of women and exposing women to core parts of the business and enabling their advancement into executive positions. Morahan et al. (2011) propose that increasing visibility and equipping women were required to assist women in the transitions of their careers and to advance and then sustain the advancement of women into executive positions. One male participant expressed his view as follows:

> "… I can't say the culture at [company name] is a hundred percent but I think we have a fairly open, cultured environment. That environment has been completely supportive all the time. They [women] have had the resilience to work through things and can we do more to make the environment more supportive for women that they are able to give themselves the opportunity to be successful and we have to keep doing that."

In this regard, organisations must take cognisance of the varying cultural approaches to gender diversity and how these builds enabling environments to help women advance in their careers (Kogut et al., 2014), as diversity and inclusion are approaches that will address the intersectionality of class, gender and race (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

6.3.2.2 The leader sets the tone of the enabling environment

Nekhili and Gatfaoui (2013) found evidence of the CEO driving the diversity management process and were in support of boardrooms that are gender diverse (Ng & Sears, 2012). Leaders must be authentic and create an environment of inclusiveness and diversity to foster an enabling environment (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Based on the findings of this study, the importance and impact of the support and initiative from the CEO and leadership team drove the focus of advancing women into executive positions as well as the implementation of enablers. It appears that if CEOs are committed to an initiative, it is destined to be successful. Furthermore, based on findings, female CEOs can be deliberate about advancing women in the organisation, which is driven by their passion to increase the pipeline of other women. The inclusive approach requires leaders who are supportive and leaders who empower employees, which assists employees in arriving at vital decisions regarding their roles (Sabharwal, Is Diversity Management Sufficient? Organizational Inclusion to Further Performance, 2014).

6.3.2.3 Human resource interventions

The findings suggest that mechanisms which participants considered as enablers relate to human resource intervention and development plans that enable them to advance once participants were able to deliver on their targets. Participants mentioned a key focus by human resource practitioners on how many women attain top ratings in organisations. This was done to identify ways of enhancing the number of women that attain top ratings which would influence their advancement into executive positions. These findings resonate with the findings from a study by Debebe et al. (2016) which states that programme providers in organisations elicit information from human resources such as performance rankings to get a clearer understanding of development needs. This can classify and address issues that women are currently facing in the organisation with the aim of improving structures and processes. It therefore appears that it is vital that performance is tracked and assessed by an organisation's human resources department against objectives in order to identify bottlenecks in the process and create a clear path of advancement for women. It also appears that human resources as a function and support (enabler) needs to be reviewed and the human resources function needs to be more strategic rather than operational as it currently is in most organisations.

6.3.2.4 Critical mass theory

The findings of this study are that female executives who support and promote other women into executive positions is classified as an enabling environment. Cook and Glass (2015) posit that the single most significant factor for the appointment opportunities of women leaders is at least one woman on the board who is influential, as their finding was that the effect of influence far exceeds the numbers. In this regard, building the number of women in executive positions resonates with critical mass theory, which states that once there is a critical mass of 30% of women in firms, these firms performed better than firms which had a board that comprised only males (Joecks et al., 2013). For women to exercise influence on board tasks and processes, the board of directors has to comprise of at least three women (Torchia et al., 2011).

6.3.3 LDPs identified as a significant enabler

6.3.3.1 LDPs prepare women to ascend the corporate ladder

Based on findings, many of the interview participants stated that LDPs initiated by leaders of the organisation who were motivated to advance women, enabled their

advancement into executive positions. This impact of LDPs on the advancement of women is supported by literature which states that LDPs can effectively prepare women to ascend the corporate ladder (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Sherwin (2014) states that organisations should aim to increase their impact on women's development by uniting increased opportunities for development to all senior managers with the ultimate aim of enhancing the pipeline of women in manager and supervisor roles. The best way of ensuring the effectiveness of LPDs is to embed them into the business needs of the organisation. This ensures that it receives support from top management and is rolled out as a corporate customised programme, as this will offer a chance of better institutional change, which, in the long run, is sustainable (Debebe et al., 2016).

Another male participant shared his organisation's approach on LDPs, which is:

> "Female executive programme – if at senior management, females are identified to have potential, they will be put onto a leadership accelerated programme. This allows females to meet other top talent women and then there's a whole of bunch of training and coaching that they go through to enable them to be successful at these levels. How do you manage your time, do you understand the stock exchange, do you understand finance, public speaking? Very specific programme for high potential [women]."

6.3.3.2 Women-only programmes versus gender diverse programmes

Women-only development programmes are favoured as they deal with the dynamics of gender and how to address these. Women-only development programmes also address gender-specific factors that derail the careers of women, ways to earn sponsorship and seek and obtain mentoring that is correct, understanding biases and their effects on the careers of women (Ely et al., 2011). The other advantages of women-only LDPs as explained by Ely et al. (2011) are women feeling comfortable to learn with other women, a joint understanding of gender biases with other women, assisting women in identifying their personal leadership styles, and addressing the under-utilisation of female resources (Debebe, 2011). Based on findings from this study, women-only LDPs allowed other females to meet other top talented women and benefitted from training and coaching, that enabled them to be successful.

Other advantages relating to women-only programmes pertain to the freedom of women to voice their thoughts and opinions in the absence of men (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Women feel more comfortable to show their weaknesses, resulting in more robust relationships being formed with other women (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Due to

the absence of gender dynamics, women from diverse cultures can discover differences in a more meaningful and deeper way (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Other benefits relate to increased confidence, increase in networks, self-awareness and skills development (Debebe, 2011). Debebe et al. (2016) state that women exchange experiences and utilise and offer support to other women to enable current challenges to be addressed.

Debebe et al. (2016) further state that the disadvantages of women-only programmes are that these programmes can make men feel like men are at a disadvantage by not attending these programmes. This, however, was not confirmed in this study. Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) support gender-diverse programmes due to gender equality and the creation of mutual consideration between genders through the inclusion of men in the process of learning. The disadvantages of gender-diverse programmes were also noted by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) in terms of limiting cultural exploration. However, Ibarra et al. (2013) and Debebe (2011) state that pressure exists in gender-diverse programmes and therefore constrains the safety of women and overpowers their ability to explore their leadership experience. Tanton (1992) further identified that gender-diverse settings can be infiltrated by the pressure of gender and restrain the extent of transformational learning. Neither the advantages nor disadvantages of gender diverse programmes were mentioned by participants in this study.

6.3.3.3 Accountability on LDPs

Based on findings, accountability on these LDPs and clear career growth paths after accessing these programmes were highlighted.

> "We call it road maps between the manager and the employee, they are both accountable for that road map. So, it's very important to have accountability like that with time lines. By six months you have done that, what are you doing in the system? And you should be here so when opportunities arise, and we include HR in it, so if there is an opportunity and we know this person has done this programme and there is an opportunity that is suitable to this candidate, that candidate would have first preference to apply for the position. So, it's a very robust process, not training and developing somebody and they are just sitting and floating through the system."

Baltodano et al. (2012) purport that information and training are not sufficient to ensure successful advancement of women into leadership positions. Baltodano et al. (2012) further note that feedback and encouragement are more beneficial in terms of developing

the skills and knowledge required in the pursuit of their personal goals. According to the WEF (2016) human resource directors need to concentrate beyond administrations and systems to focus on training and talent development which can assist women in overcoming barriers and at the same time attain better talent management.

6.3.4 Conclusion to findings for research question 2
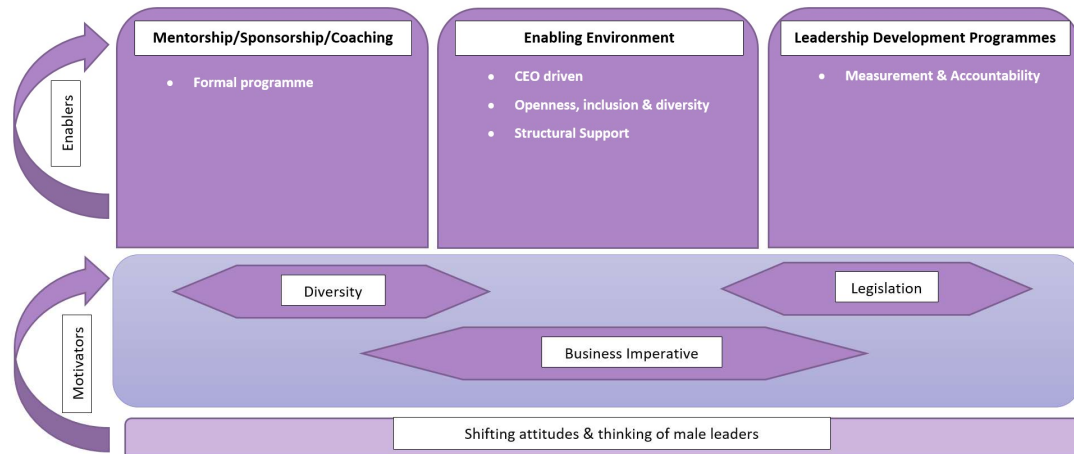
Figure 5: Enablers and key success factors in the Model for organisational enablers

Source: Author's own

6.3.4.1 MSC identified as a significant enabler as depicted in Figure 5

Participants highly value MSC and believe that it has a substantial impact in terms of women advancing in their careers by having a mentor who supports them, believes in their abilities and assists them in developing their skills. MSC seems to have greatly impacted women in their advancement into executive positions.

There is a difference between MSC as each has its own impact in terms of how women are developed and the extent of their advancement in organisations. It seems that sponsorship has a greater impact than coaching and mentoring as it entails the influence of individuals in senior positions to back the mentee.

MSC is offered as formal programmes in some organisations while other organisations encourage MSC but do not offer it as a formal programme. It therefore appears that if programmes are formalised there is greater awareness and access to women in organisations.

There is a shift in selecting a mentor from within the organisation to having external mentors. In addition, participants had more than one mentor – a mix of internal and external mentors and male and female mentors. It therefore appears that mentees valued and benefitted from multiple views, experiences and insights.

There has been a shift from male mentors only to a combination of male and female mentors. Although there was only one mention of male mentors being more powerful, there was no preference in terms of gender by the participants. It seems like some female participants appreciated the contextual awareness that females possess regarding the role of women at work and at home.

Mentoring is normally performed by senior, more experienced employees to junior, less experienced employees, which is still relevant, but there seems to be a shift in age and seniority of mentors in organisations whereby mentoring now includes the principle of knowledge sharing and more efficient ways of operating. This can include junior employees mentoring senior employees.

6.3.4.2 Enabling environment identified as a significant enabler as depicted in Figure 5

A conducive environment which encompasses culture, values, progressive actions and making women comfortable in the workplace is necessary as enablers for women to advance into executive positions. In this regard, leaders must create an environment of inclusiveness and diversity to foster an enabling environment which is in support of women empowerment.

The importance and impact of the support and initiative from the CEO and leadership team drove the focus of advancing women into executive positions, as well as the implementation of enablers. It appears that if CEOs are committed to the initiative, it is destined to be successful.

Human resource intervention and development plans enable women to advance once women are able to deliver on their targets. It is vital that performance is tracked and assessed by an organisation's human resource department against objectives to identify bottlenecks in the process and create a clear path of advancement for women.

Women executives promoting other women also contribute to an enabling environment. It seems that if there is an influential female in a senior leadership position then she can influence and increase the pipeline of female executives.

6.3.4.3 LDPs identified as a significant enabler as depicted in Figure 5

Many of the interview participants stated that LDPs initiated by leaders of the organisation who were motivated to advance women, enabled their advancement into executive positions.

Women-only LDPs allowed other females to meet other top talented women and benefitted from training and coaching that enabled them to be successful. There appears to be disadvantages of women-only LDPs but this was not highlighted during this study.

Accountability on LDPs is vital to ensure success of the programme and encourages both mentor and mentee to dedicate adequate time and resources to attain their desired objectives.

6.4 Research question 3: MSC is the most impactful enabler for the advancement of women

The impact of MSC is highlighted in literature whereby one of the most impactful paths for women to tackle barriers and advance into top management positions is mentoring programmes, as identified by (Dworkin et al., 2012; Glass & Cook 2016; Morehead et al., 2012). This was further supported in a study by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) whereby women who had advanced shared that they themselves could not have advanced without the influence of their male sponsor even though they possessed superior professional and academic credentials. This highlights how the sponsor can back up the mentee and positively enhance her growth within the organisation. Based on the findings of this study, mentorship was a significant enabler that paved the path for women to advance into executive positions. The following experiences were shared regarding the impact of MSC:

> "Phenomenal transformation, phenomenal transformation. I am a huge, huge mentor fan so I am going to be very biased with that as well."

> "…One of the key things in terms of how you progress to leadership positions is if you have a sponsor that's [how] important that was. And that I think that's, that's, that's irrespective of gender."

> "So, I think the sponsorship thing, I mean I can't get over how obvious it's been in all of the places where I've worked that there's always, there's always someone that believes in you, you know, and then gives you an opportunity to be on certain

projects, to show more of your skills, to develop more of them and then that sort of continues."

Ensher and Murphy (2011) further state that individuals who receive effective mentoring are promoted more quickly, earn more money, and have enhanced mobility and flexibility in their careers when compared to those individuals with mentors who are ineffective or who those have no mentor at all.

6.4.1 Conclusion to findings for research question 3

MSC was identified as the most impactful enabler adopted by organisations to advance women into executive positions. MSC assisted in tackling barriers and has been described as phenomenal transformation and affords women the opportunity to develop and exhibit skills.

6.5 Research question 4: Deficiencies identified in MSC, enabling environment and LDPs

6.5.1 Deficiencies in MSC

6.5.1.1 Lack of connection between the mentor and the mentee

Based on the findings, a common pitfall identified by interview participants is being mentored by individuals for MSC that participants either do not resonate with or with whom participants do not have a connection. Having the wrong mentor can take the mentee down completely. This is supported by Ensher and Murphy (2011) who state that individuals who receive effective mentoring are promoted more quickly, earn more money, and have enhanced mobility and flexibility in their careers when compared to those individuals with mentors who are ineffective or those who have no mentor at all. Women should have the opportunity to choose their own mentors, simultaneously addressing their lack of networks within the organisation (Dworkin et al., 2012).

6.5.1.2 Lack of objectives in MSC relationship

With regards to the actual MSC process, participants felt that there was a mismatch in some instances between what the mentee required versus what the mentor provided. A participant stated that she was not sure about what she was supposed to be getting from her coach. Furthermore, when coaching is not done correctly it will not work. Moreover, some individuals do not know what to do with mentors and were not sure what to talk about. Maloney (2012) refers to a relationship between two people with a specific focus

on career development as mentorship. Findings also highlight that it is necessary to identify what value the mentee wants to extract from the relationship as the best outcome was achieved when mentors understood the path that mentees were. This is because interview participants looked for an outcome-based result and to encounter journeys where knowledge was imparted. Furthermore, Ibarra et al. (2010) state that mentors must, in addition to assisting women to know themselves, identify their preferred operating styles and changes required to enable a climb up the leadership ladder. It is more beneficial that mentors assist women to map out their career moves and how to assume responsibility for new roles in addition to publicly endorsing their authority. It therefore appears that mentorship will only work when both parties are clear on the objectives and how both parties will attain those objectives.

6.5.1.3 Flaws when choosing mentors

Based on the findings, participants also expressed worry that individuals look for role models that mirror themselves and that is one of the barriers, rather than finding a mentor to whom participants can relate and who inspires them. Robbins et al. (2013) state that if the mentor is not a strong performer, the impact and success on the mentee may not be successful. This deficiency can be addressed by identifying strong influencers within the organisation as mentors (Dworkin et al., 2012). It is of vital importance that the chosen mentor can open doors of opportunity and vouch for the mentee (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017).

6.5.1.4 Lack of awareness and access to MSC

Based on the findings, some mentorships were formalised into a programme but access to these programmes were limited to only a few. Furthermore, some participants could only access these programmes if their immediate line managers approved the access, while one organisation only offered mentorships at very senior and executive levels. In one organisation, the CEO confirmed the existence of a formal MSC programme. However, based on an informal conversation between some women in management positions within the same organisation it transpired that these women in management positions were not aware of the programme, the panel of mentors or even how to access the mentors in this regard. Fitzsimmons (2012) stated that one of the challenges that relate to the low number of women in leadership positions is the lack of access to mentors. This challenge results in limited transfer and development of career capital from male mentors to women (Dworkin et al., 2012; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016).

It therefore is apparent that transparency within organisations is crucial to ensure success of MSC programmes. All employees should be aware of and have the ability to access these programmes. If all employees are not allowed to access these programmes, then qualification criteria in this regard should be transparent to all employees.

6.5.1.5 Insufficient mechanisms to measure impact of MSC

The findings indicate that some of their MSC was informal and therefore had no way of being tracked to ascertain if the MSC was successful or if objectives were being met. In this regard, Dworkin et al. (2012) articulate that the ideal way to break down barriers is to implement targeted mentoring programmes. Furthermore, for sponsorship to be considered effective it should not stand on its own but rather, should constitute a component of a comprehensive programme that includes performance assessments, succession planning and training and development (Ibarra et al., 2010). It therefore appears that a mentor must be held accountable for his/her role in advancing women in organisations to ensure effectiveness and maximum benefit of the mentoring process. Beeson and Valerio (2012) posit that influential male champions should be recognised for top practice efforts in extending diversity in leadership development and should be encouraged to recruit fellow executives to replicate these initiatives.

6.5.2 Deficiencies in LDPs

6.5.2.1 Vagueness of career paths subsequent to attending LDPs

Based on findings in this study there were deficiencies identified in terms of the vagueness of career paths subsequent to attending LDPs. Interview participants stated that individuals get frustrated as participants attend these programmes but do not progress in their careers. According to Baltodano et al. (2012) the characteristics of LDPs for women purport that information and training are not sufficient to ensure successful advancement into leadership positions. Feedback and encouragement are more beneficial in terms of developing the skills and knowledge required in the pursuit of their personal goals. Furthermore, according to Beeson and Valerio (2012) employers should focus on instituting leadership development practices to support the advancement of women in their careers. This includes succession planning practices, which not only addresses the gender stereotyping barrier but also promotes equality when defining career potential.

6.5.2.2 Lack of transparency in LDPs

Based on findings in this study, participants stated that although leadership programmes were implemented, these were not widely communicated with all levels of staff on how these programmes work or on how to access them. Sherwin (2014) states that organisations should aim to increase their impact on women's development by uniting increased opportunities for development to all senior managers with the ultimate aim of enhancing the pipeline of women in manager and supervisor roles. In South Africa, research conducted by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) found that 54% of organisations offered LDPs to women. This identifies a gap, contributing to the challenges faced by women in their career advancement.

It is therefore recommended, based on these findings, that LDPs must be transparent at all levels of the organisation to enable the advancement of women into executive positions.

6.5.2.3 Lack of consultation and feedback from attendees of LDPs

Based on findings, another deficiency identified was that these programmes are designed without consultation with the users and do not obtain feedback from attendees to identify shortcomings or potential areas for improvement. Debebe et al. (2016) state that LDPs that have been customised to a single organisation are more intricate and therefore require feedback loops between leaders, managers, sponsors, participants and programme providers so that the impact of the programme on women and the organisation can be assessed. Delivery of the LDPs are in most instances the area of concern for organisations with an unwillingness to invest resources in follow up (Debebe et al., 2016).

6.5.3 Deficiencies in the environment

6.5.3.1 Gender stereotypes and dominant male culture

According to Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) a large number of women in South Africa are still subjected to practices that are discriminatory and which are influenced by gender stereotypes and social norms, regardless of constant efforts and progression in this matter. One organisation in this study depicted a very dominant male culture and therefore negatively impacted the advancement of women into executive positions. The dominant male culture was highlighted in terms of biases exposed in organisations. Koch

et al. (2015) state that gender biases are a potential trail to discrimination, which could entail a larger proportion of men being hired than women. To address this, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) state that leaders must create an environment of inclusiveness and diversity to foster an enabling environment which is in support of women empowerment.

6.5.3.2 Smart economics and token appointments

Based on the finding from one organisation it showed that even though women do advance to executive positions, male executives do not engage or value their input. It therefore appears that the dominant male culture and gender bias described in 6.2.1.2 above still prevail in some organisations. Women were merely appointed as tokens or as a result of smart economics in organisations which were discussed in 6.2.2.4. It therefore appears that being a token appointment results in mere representation and being isolated as indicated by one participant in the study. It also appears from these findings that organisations are utilising the concept of smart economics to advance women so that women are economically competitive rather than promoting women for their skill and equal rights. To address this, Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) argue that while they themselves acknowledge and support the need to highlight the development needs and inclusion of women at all decision-making levels, it is not advisable for this approach to be adopted merely to satisfy economic or business imperatives but rather, it should be embraced for the sake of women and gender equality.

6.5.3.3 The in-group, out-group bias

From a social identity viewpoint, Mathisen et al. (2013) looked at directors who are men, who socially lean towards individuals who are like them and draw back from those viewed as different. Consequently, the out-group would be formed by female directors who experience increased levels of relationship and task conflict. It therefore appears that the in-group, out-group bias still exists in organisations, which prevents women from advancing into executive positions. The approach to address the in-group, out-group bias will be discussed in 6.6 below.

6.5.3.4 Lack of structural support

Findings also depict that some organisations are not structurally organised to support women. Women who work, value time in flexibility of working hours, paid maternity leave and childcare based at work. These are classified as "family-friendly policies" and are all

aimed at enhancing the number of women in leadership positions (Bilimoria & Liang, 2014). In male-dominated organisations, the processes and structures most often place women at a disadvantage (Debebe et al., 2016). To address this, specific projects to advance and retain women in leadership positions in science and engineering relate to change initiatives around culture, gender bias and the introduction of family-friendly policies (Bilimoria & Liang, 2014).

6.5.4 Conclusion to findings for research question 4
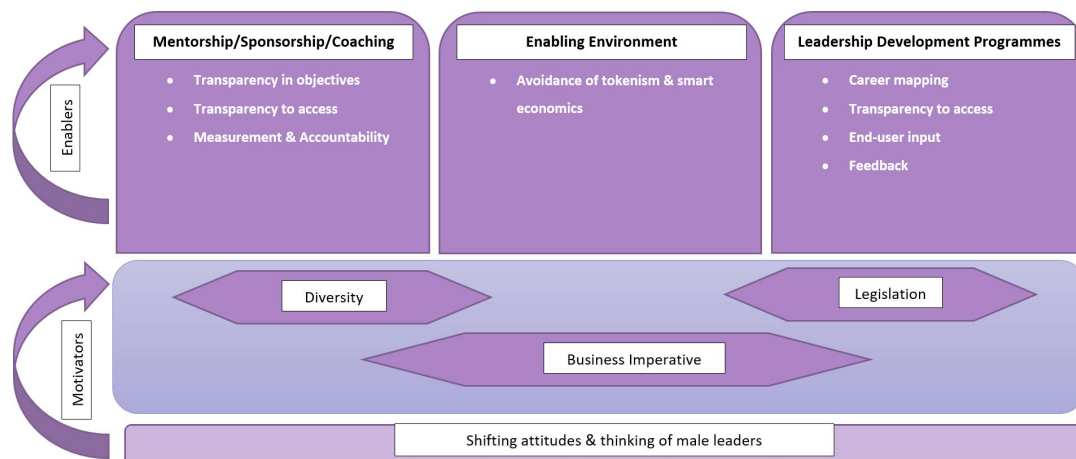
Figure 6: Key success factors derived from deficiencies for the Model for organisational enablers

Source: Author's own

Participants mentored by individuals who participants either do not resonate with or do not have a connection with can take the mentee down completely. There must be a connection between the mentor and mentee for the mentoring relationship to be beneficial. There was a mismatch between what the mentee required and what the mentor provided. Based on findings it is therefore necessary to identify what value the mentee wants to extract from the relationship and it is therefore vital to have transparency in objectives.

Participants expressed worry that individuals look for role models that mirror themselves instead of finding mentors with whom participants can relate and who inspire them. This deficiency can be addressed by identifying strong influencers within the organisation as mentors and choosing mentors who can open doors of opportunity and vouch for the mentees.

Some mentorships were formalised into a programme but access to these programmes were limited to only a few. It therefore is apparent that transparency is crucial to ensure success of MSC programmes. Some organisations only offer MSC at senior levels, which appears to disadvantage those women who still aim to climb the corporate ladder at junior and middle management level. It therefore appears that awareness and methods of accessing of MSC must be created among all employees.

Participants expressed that some of their MSC was informal and therefore had no way of being tracked to ascertain if the MSC was successful or if objectives were being met. It therefore appears that a mentor must be held accountable for his/her role in advancing women in organisations to ensure effectiveness and maximum benefit of the mentoring process.

Vagueness of career paths subsequent to attending LDPs was identified. Feedback and encouragement in addition to instituting leadership development practices to support the advancement of women in their careers is necessary. LDPs were implemented but not widely communicated. LDPs must be transparent at all levels of the organisation to enable advancement of women into executive positions. LDPs are designed without consultation with the users and no feedback is obtained from attendees to identify shortcomings or potential areas for improvement. LDPs must be customised, which requires feedback loops between leaders, managers, sponsors, participants and programme providers.

Dominant male cultures and gender bias still prevail, which negatively impacts the advancement of women into executive positions. Leaders must create an environment of inclusiveness and diversity to foster an enabling environment which is in support of women empowerment. Some organisations are not structurally organised to support women. To address this, specific projects to advance and retain women in leadership positions relate to change initiatives around the introduction of family-friendly policies. Furthermore, women are sometimes appointed as tokens or as a result of smart economics in organisations. It is not advisable for this approach to be adopted merely to satisfy economic or business imperatives but rather, it should be embraced for the sake of women and gender equality.

6.6 Research question 5: Exhibiting one's value, being adaptable, and managing one's self are ways to address the in-group bias and the out-group members as highlighted in the social identity theory

Ely et al. (2011) and Ibarra and Petriglieri (2015) determined that the existence of male networks (the in-group), inflates the domination of males that occupy influential positions. These influential men tend to channel opportunities for career growth to their male subordinates due to the belief that these men possess the confidence to succeed compared to women (Ely et al., 2011). As a result, leadership opportunities for women become scarce and the visibility of women compared to their male colleagues becomes scarcer, diluting the ability of women to advance into executive positions (Ely et al., 2011).

Based on findings in this study, 13 out of 16 participants acknowledged the existence of the in-group, out-group bias either in their current or previous organisations. These participants were therefore able to offer advice based on experiences and insight on how to address this bias.

6.6.1 Exhibiting one's value

Women exhibited their value to the in-group and delivered on all assigned tasks. Women then easily entered the in-group as women were viewed as people of value and with something to contribute. This forced the in-group to recognise the female individual and it seems like the barrier towards this participant was lifted in this regard.

6.6.2 Adaptability

Women should aim to find a connection with the existing culture of the organisation. Being adaptive entails making an effort to cross the chasm and adapt progressive ways of thinking. It therefore seems like women must adapt to the ways of the in-group so the in-group will identify similar traits and potentially let the out-group member in.

6.6.3 Managing one's self

To penetrate the in-group, women must manage themselves and their interactions and ultimately step back and form their own in-group. This entails managing one's self around the in-group by limiting communication as a result of being an out-group member. One must step back and be cautious because one gets measured on what is said to the in-group. It therefore appears that the formation of a separate in-group competes for

recognition and enables women to overcome the existing in-group, thereby advancing into executive positions.

6.6.4 Conclusion to findings for research question 5

To address the in-group bias as identified in the social identity theory, women exhibited their value to the in-group and delivered on all assigned tasks. Women then easily entered the in-group as women were viewed as people of value.

Women should aim to find a connection with the existing culture of the organisation. Being adaptive entails making an effort to cross the chasm and adapt progressive ways of thinking.

To penetrate the in-group, women must manage themselves and manage their interaction and ultimately step back and form their own in-group. It therefore appears that the formation of a separate in-group competes for recognition and enables women to overcome the dominant in-group, thereby advancing into executive positions.

6. 7 Research question 6: Authenticity, hybrid approach and organisational culture inform the leadership traits of women who have advanced to executive positions

6.7.1 Authenticity

Based on a study by Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) women mentioned the importance of the change of behaviour from a masculine nature to a more authentic behaviour exuding more feminine traits. The capability to transition and show authenticity was a critical part of their leadership journeys. The study found that during the initial years of a woman's career, their leadership style exhibits masculine traits but subsequently, with the passage of time, women became more authentic by feeling more comfortable with themselves, thereby exhibiting leadership styles that were more feminine (Chengadu & Scheepers, 2017). Based on the findings of this study, seven interview participants highlighted that women should not adopt male leadership traits but rather, should remain true to themselves and portray to the organisation and leaders who they really are.

Women who supress their femininity to exude more of a masculine personality if they themselves are perceived to be too feminine in a negative way, will experience a loss in authenticity. (Ely et al., 2011; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). Based on the findings of this study, female participants mentioned that they largely stayed true to who they were and did not have to display male leadership traits.

The trait of authenticity seems to contrast with the female leader role as described in the social role theory.

6.7.2 Hybrid approach

Chengadu and Scheepers (2017) found that there are various female leaders who do not exude masculinity and do not possess the leadership traits of men. Five interview participants articulated that they believed that there were situations which required them to adopt both male and female leadership traits. One participant believed that the future is the progression of a combination of both leadership styles.

This approach combines both the male role and female role as described in the social role theory. The trait of a hybrid approach seems to contrast with the female leader role as described in the social role theory.

6.7.3 Organisational culture

The style of leadership introduced by women in male-oriented cultures has contrasted with traditional approaches of leadership, which could result in resistance to female leaders (Peterson, 2014). Three interview participants expressed that the culture of the organisation largely influenced which leadership trait they themselves had to exhibit. They mentioned the importance of understanding the audience and reading the environment and adjusting their behaviour accordingly. In this regard a participant shared:

> "So, for me I think that authenticity and being your authentic self is important but you have got to do it in the context of the organisational culture unless you are an absolute rebel."

The trait of being contextually aware and adjusting the leadership role accordingly seems to contrast with the female leader role as described in the social role theory.

6.7.4 Conclusion to findings for research question 6

Women should not adopt male leadership traits in their path of advancing into executive positions. Women should rather remain true to themselves and portray to the organisation and leaders who they really are. Female participants mentioned that they largely stayed true to who they were and did not have to depict male leadership traits to be recognised.

There were situations which called for participants to adopt both male and female leadership traits. One participant believed that the future is the progression of a combination of both leadership styles.

The culture of the organisation largely influenced which leadership trait women had to exhibit. It is importance to understand the audience, read the environment and adjust behaviour accordingly.

6.8 Formulation of the Model for organisational enablers

The model below has been formulated to summarise the significant organisational enablers identified during the study – MSC, an enabling environment and LDPs. To enhance the summary of the enablers identified, the corrective action to deficiencies identified and key success points per enabler has been included in the model. This is to ensure that the enablers are implemented correctly and that leaders succeed in their objectives.

The model depicts what motivates organisations to implement enablers and advance women into executive positions. These motivating factors have been identified as diversity of women, business imperatives and legislation.

Lastly, to ensure the existence and success of both motivators and enablers there must be a shift in the thinking and attitudes of male leaders.
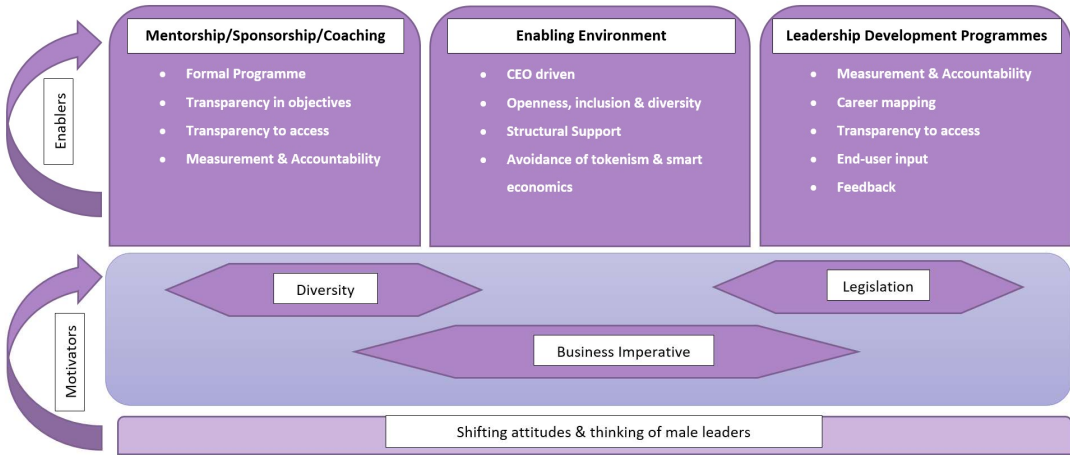

Figure 7: The Model for organisational enablers

Source: Author's own

110

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a summary of the key findings of this research study. The Model for organisational enablers is discussed along with the application for business. The implications and recommendations for management of this study are also discussed. In conclusion, the limitations of this research along with suggestions for future research are presented.

7.2 Principal findings

The formulation of the Model for organisation enablers depicted in Figure 7 in Chapter 6 above, was conceptualised based on the findings of this research study. Careful consideration was applied in developing the key themes, deficiencies identified and key success factors of each enabler identified. The conceptualisation was then further enhanced by the motivating factors that organisations use to advance women into executive positions, including the key requirement from male leaders to ensure that the implementation and execution of these enablers are successful.

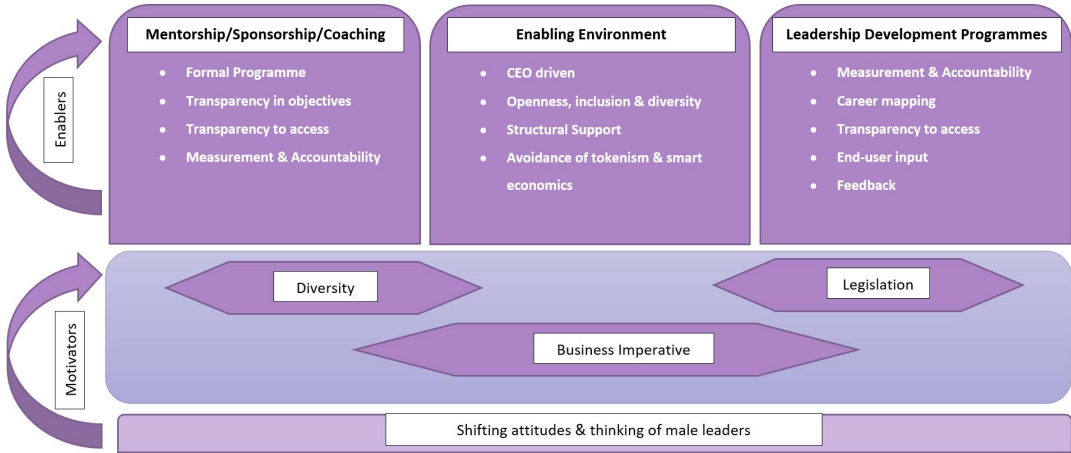The model is presented below again to assist in the discussion that follows.

Figure 8: Reproduction of the Model for organisational enablers

Source: Author's own

The analysis of the model should begin at the foundation of the model which is "Shifting attitudes & thinking of male leaders". This is a core requirement extracted from the findings of the study and informs the motivators that organisations use to advance

women into executive positions. This relates to male leaders of organisations who drive this key focus from the top and throughout the organisation.

As this foundation feeds directly into the motivators these factors are then analysed. The key motivating factors are diversity, business imperatives and legislation. With regards to diversity, this relates to the appreciation of diversity of views, experience and skills that women possess, which is indicative of a shift in thinking in terms of associated benefits of advancing women into executive positions. There seems to be an appreciation of female care and empathy within their contributions at this level and leaders and organisations appreciate and welcome the feminine and diverse ways of female thinking which women bring to organisations. With regards to business imperatives, some organisations are driving diversity to make themselves appear to be doing the right thing for society and thereby ensuring the retention of their customers who insist on women empowerment. Thus, from their point of view, organisations believe that the advancement makes business sense. With regards to legislation, some organisations are appointing females as token appointments to fulfil employment equity legislation and BBBEE scorecard requirements rather than gender equality and for diverse thinking, views and skills that women can bring to the table. Although customer pressure and BBBEE scorecard requirements are not the ideal motivators, they serve as motivators nonetheless and have resulted in women advancing to executive positions in organisations.

The motivators then lead to enablers which have been identified as Mentorship/sponsorship/coaching (MSC), an enabling environment and Leadership development programmes (LDPs). MSC was identified as the most impactful enabler adopted by organisations to advance women into executive positions. Participants highly value MSC and believe that it has a substantial impact in terms of women advancing in their careers in tackling barriers and resulting in a phenomenal transformation, along with affording women the opportunity to develop and exhibit skills. With regards to an enabling environment, a conducive environment which encompasses culture, values, progressive actions and making women comfortable in the workplace is necessary as enablers for women to advance into executive positions. With regards to LDPs, many of the interview participants stated that LDPs initiated by leaders of the organisation motivated and enabled women in their advancement into executive positions. The importance and impact of support and initiative from the CEO and leadership team drove the focus of advancing women into executive positions as well as the implementation of enablers.

Key success factors per enabler identified are also listed to ensure success in the conceptualisation and implementation for organisations. The key success factors relating to MSC are that if MSC programmes are **formalised**, there is greater **awareness and access** to women in organisations. It is also necessary to identify what value the mentee wants to extract from the relationship to ensure an outcome-based relationship so that there is **transparency of objectives**. Furthermore, awareness and methods of **accessing** of MSC must be created among all employees. Finally, MSC must be **measured** against objectives and mentors must be held **accountable** for his/her role in advancing women in organisations to ensure effectiveness and maximum benefit of the mentoring process.

CEOs must create an environment of **openness, inclusion and diversity** to foster an enabling environment which is in support of women empowerment. In addition, organisations must include change initiatives around the introduction of family-friendly policies **(structural support).** Finally, it is not advisable for women to be appointed as **tokens** or as a result of **smart economics** in organisations merely to satisfy economic or business imperatives, but rather, this should be embraced for the sake of women and gender equality.

It is vital that performance in terms of LPDs is monitored and **measured** by an organisation's human resource department against objectives in order to identify bottlenecks in the process and create a clear path of advancement for women. Managers and participants must be held **accountable** for career progression or advancement after the LDP. Furthermore, mentors or managers must assist women to **map out their career** moves. LDPs must be widely communicated and **transparent** at all levels of the organisation to enable **access** to the LDPs. LDPs must be designed with consultation from the **end users** and **feedback** must be obtained from attendees to identify shortcomings or potential areas for improvement.

7.3 Implications and recommendations for management

The implications of the model for organisational enablers to management is that the advancement of women into executive positions in organisations can only be driven if there is a shift in the thinking and attitudes of male leaders. This is due to the fact that males mostly occupy leadership positions in organisations and are therefore responsible for key decisions. Leaders thus need to be mindful in their strategic decisions and acknowledge the current state of female advancement. Leaders also need to understand and support the advancement of women for women to succeed in climbing the corporate ladder in organisations. Cognisance must be taken of the key success factors and

implemented to ensure that the enablers are developed optimally and so that objectives are attained. The graphic representation can be applied by leaders in organisations to increase the effectiveness of existing organisational enablers or the effectiveness when implementing organisational enablers.

7.4 Limitations of the research

7.4.1 As the researcher is not an expert interviewer, the interpretation of the results could have been impacted as the analysis is dependent on the individual analysing the data (Patton, 2002)

7.4.2 Geographical bias could have influenced the response of the participants due to the sample being limited to Gauteng and Pretoria

7.4.3 Difficulty maintaining neutrality during interviews, as the researcher could have been somewhat biased when interviewing female executives as the researcher identifies with these individuals based on their gender

7.4.4 Qualitative research is essentially interpretive, and interpretation characterises the researcher's individual and theoretical considerations of the topic under analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2015)

7.4.5 Due to the topic choice being of high interest to the researcher, there is a risk of bias being a part of the research process. This could have resulted in the researcher making their individual interpretations of the subjects' conclusions. Due to this, mindfulness, flexibility and intellectual awareness was exercised throughout the research process as this is a crucial aspect of grounded theory

7.4.6 The findings are researcher-dependent. Alternate researchers may reach differing conclusions based on the same interviews. This is due to qualitative research lacking intersubjective certifiability, which refers to the ability of alternative individuals adhering to the same methods to yield the same findings or arrive at the same conclusion. This results in varying insights (Zikmund et al., 2013)

7.4.7 Data analysis and interpretation is highly subjective and it is difficult for the researcher to settle on a true interpretation (Zikmund et al., 2013)

7.4.8 Zikmund et al. (2013) highlight the limitation of interviews by stating that the researcher must be a person who is highly skilled, although the researcher has not conducted interviews prior to this study

7.4.9 Transferability across various industries may have been impacted by the use of snowball sampling, especially due to the sample being skewed to financial services

7.4.10 The results cannot be transferred across all industries, even though findings were based on multiple views, as only seven different industries formed part of the sample size

7.4.11 Views of only senior executives were incorporated and the views of lower level employees were not included. This could potentially lead to results that are biased, as various, balanced views from all levels within organisations, were not obtained

7.4.12 Due to familiarity based on the researcher knowing six of the interview participants, there is a likelihood of their responses being influenced or affected.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

Due to the nature of this research being exploratory, there are other probable avenues available for future research to focus on motivating factors and enablers in organisations to advance women into executive positions. These include:

7.5.1 The attitudes of male leaders in organisations are changing towards the role of women, which in itself needs to be further analysed and understood and is an area for future research

7.5.2 Organisations are merely driving the diversity motivation to make themselves appear to be doing the right thing for society and thereby ensuring retention of these customers. This in itself needs to be further analysed and understood and is an area for future research

7.5.3 An area for future research would be to understand the impact of women that have advanced to executive positions. It is vital to understand if these women are part of the decision-making process in the organisation and if these women have a real impact on the operations of the organisation

7.5.4   The effectiveness of mentorship versus sponsorship versus coaching on the advancement of women needs to be further analysed and understood and is an area for future research

7.5.5   The preference and effectiveness of male mentors versus female mentors in the advancement of women needs to be further analysed and is an area for future research

7.5.6   Reverse mentoring, whereby junior employees mentor senior employees needs to be further analysed and is an area for future research

7.5.7   The sample could be extended to lower levels of women in organisations to understand how existing enablers can be improved to assist them in advancing to executive positions

7.5.8   The sample could be extended to lower levels of women in organisations to understand in their experience what enablers are lacking and therefore required to assist them in advancing to executive positions

7.5.9   The sample could be extended to include more diversity in industries analysed, as 38% of interviews were from financial services.

7.6 Conclusion

This study explored the significant organisational enablers to advance women into executive positions as well as key success factors to ensure that the enablers are developed and implemented optimally. The findings highlight the importance of support of leaders and their influence in the implementation and success of organisational enablers. The Model for organisational enablers is presented to assist leaders in both improving current organisational enablers and to develop and implement successful organisational enablers. The ultimate aim is to assist leaders in enhancing their pipeline of female executives in organisations.

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9. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ethical Clearance

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Dear Jessica

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

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

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

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

Appendix 2 – Informed Consent Letter

Enablers in the advancement of female executives in corporations

My name is Jessica Singh and I am an MBA student at Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), University of Pretoria.

I am conducting research into the enablers in the advancement of female executives in corporations in Pretoria and Johannesburg, Gauteng. The study attempts to establish the different types of enablers used in organisations for the advancement of women and which of the identified enablers are perceived to have the greatest impact in the advancement of women. In addition, the study aims to gain insight into the experiences of women with regards to organisational enablers for their advancement in their environment and where improvements can be made to unlock more female talent candidates for leadership roles and to also gain insight into the male perceptions of organisational enablers for the advancement of women and how their organisational environments can be made more conducive for female leadership.

Your personal experience and views on the approaches adopted by corporates towards the advancement of women will form the basis of the interview. It is hoped that the understanding of these enablers will also influence the levels of attracting and retaining female talent in organisations. This, in turn, should influence the company's pipeline of future leaders, which will replicate the diversity of the global environment, which in itself is a strategy for growth. It is important to understand the enablers in order to dismantle current barriers both to ensure equal opportunity at a society level and also because a competing economy cannot underestimate half its talent pool.

Kindly indicate your willingness to participate in the study by signing below. In addition, your permission is requested for the use of an audio recorder to capture the content of the interview. The duration of the interview is approximately one hour.

Please be informed that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All data will be kept confidential and only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the information obtained from you.

If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Details are provided below:

Researcher: Jessica Singh

Email: 17386315@mygibs.co.za

Tel: 080 000 0000

Research Supervisor: Shireen Chengadu

Email: chengadus@gibs.co.za

Tel: 080 000 0000

Signature of Participant: _____

Title of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix 3 - Initial Interview Guide

	Advancement of Women in Organisations
1	In your opinion, is the advancement of females into executive positions within your organisation a key focus area?
2	In your opinion, what motivates your organisation to advance females into executive positions?
	Enablers in Organisations
3	What enablers does your organisation employ to advance females into executive positions?
4	In your experience, which of the previously mentioned enablers has been the most impactful?
5	Why is this enabler considered as most impactful?
6	How have mentorship or sponsorship, networking and leadership development programmes and practices been experienced or implemented in your organisation?
7	What are the deficiencies of mentorship or sponsorship, networking and leadership development programmes and practices?
	Social Identity Theory in advancement of women
8	In terms of social identity theory, where individuals socially lean towards individuals that are alike to them and draw back from those viewed as different, what is your experience or view of the in-group bias and the out-group members?
9	In terms of social identity theory, how has this impacted females advancing into executive positions?
	Social role theory in advancement of women
10	In terms of the social role theory and your role in your organisation, is the female role considered communal, supportive, kind and nurturing and the male role strong, authoritative, controlling and of demanding behaviour, or are the leadership traits a combination of both?
11	In terms of social role theory, how has this impacted females advancing into executive positions?

Appendix 4 - Refined Interview Guide

Advancement of Women in Organisations	
1	In your opinion, is the advancement of females into executive positions within your organisation a key focus area?
2	In your opinion, what motivates your organisation to advance females into executive positions?
Enablers in Organisations	
3	What enablers does your organisation employ to advance females into executive positions?
4	In your experience/view, which of the previously mentioned enablers has been the most impactful?
	~~Why is this enabler considered as most impactful?~~
	~~How have mentorship or sponsorship, networking and leadership development programmes and practices been experienced or implemented in your organisation?~~
5	What are the deficiencies of enablers identified, if any?
Social Identity Theory in advancement of women	
6	In terms of social identity theory, where individuals socially lean towards individuals that are alike to them and draw back from those viewed as different, what ~~is your experience or /view and advice of the~~ insights from personal experience or advice would you offer to females facing the in-group bias that is trying to advance to an ~~and the out-group members in terms of its impact on the advancement of women~~ into executive positions?
	~~In terms of social identity theory how has this impacted females advancing into executive positions?~~
Social role theory in advancement of women	
7	In terms of the social role theory, ~~and your role in your organisation is~~ the female role is considered communal, supportive, kind and nurturing and the male role strong, authoritative, controlling and of demanding behaviour. ~~or is the leadership traits a combination of both~~ In your experience and view, should the male, female or combination of male and female leadership traits be portrayed by women in organisations to enable them to advance into executive positions?
	~~In terms of social role theory how has this impacted female advancing into executive positions?~~

Appendix 5 – Final Interview Guide

Advancement of Women in Organisations	
1	In your opinion, is the advancement of females into executive positions within your organisation a key focus area?
2	In your opinion, what motivates your organisation to advance females into executive positions?
Enablers in Organisations	
3	What enablers does your organisation employ to advance females into executive positions?
4	In your experience/view, which of the previously mentioned enablers has been the most impactful?
5	What are the deficiencies of enablers identified, if any?
Social Identity Theory in advancement of women	
6	In terms of social identity theory, where individuals socially lean towards individuals that are alike to them and draw back from those viewed as different, what insights from personal experience or advice would you offer to females facing the in-group bias that is trying to advance to an executive position?
Social role theory in advancement of women	
7	In terms of the social role theory, the female role is considered communal, supportive, kind and nurturing and the male role strong, authoritative, controlling and of demanding behaviour. In your experience and view, should the male, female or combination of male and female leadership traits be portrayed by women in organisations to enable them to advance into executive positions?