

**Social identity theory and self-efficacy theory: exploring
narratives of female executives in corporate South Africa**

By
Seshnee Pillay
18378383

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

11 November 2019

Abstract

High achieving women are in the minority, especially in the corporate world, and as such, have not received much attention from researchers (Wolontis & Hoff, 2018). For the sake of equity and organisational success, corporates have started to encourage the employment of women in senior management positions. However, women do not generally occupy a representative sample of such positions, both in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. There are a number of studies that explore the barriers that women face in terms of gender equity, however, little is known about the barriers that women face on a personal level and what encourages them to reach executive or board level positions (Sadler & Linenberger, 2017).

The objective of this research was to uncover and understand what influences a females' career progression. Social identity theory and self-efficacy theory provide a theoretical foundation for this research. Twelve semi structured interviews were conducted to understand the lived experience of the participants. The participants were senior female executives from various industries in the Gauteng province. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using inductive methods.

The participants noted that the experiences they had throughout their life did impact them on a personal and professional level. During childhood, the participants mentioned that their mother had the most influence on them, and both parents in general, did influence their career aspirations. Societal influence has many consequences for a woman's career progression and success. Barriers that women face such as stereotypes in the form of the gender wage gap, the glass ceiling phenomenon, and inequality in terms of opportunities and promotions, are based on legacy thought patterns of communities, people and businesses. Changing the patriarchal, legacy thought patterns of communities, people and businesses could have a positive ripple effect on the female experience in the corporate world.

The importance of self-efficacy was also highlighted. Women with higher self-efficacy were able to succeed, regardless of their situation or circumstances. As such, the social identity and self-efficacy of a female does impact her career, future development and success.

Keywords

Social identity, executive women, self-efficacy, stereotypes, inequality

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.



Seshnee Pillay

11 November 2019

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Chapter 1: Definition of Problem and Purpose

1.1 Introduction and description of the problem

Gender equality is a topic of much debate and contention in the public domain. Academics, policy makers and general governing bodies have highlighted the importance and need for gender equality (Koehler, 2016; Maphalala & Mpofo, 2017). According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey released by Statistics South Africa (2018), of the total workforce that is employed, 43.8% are women, and a mere 32% are South African female managers. The article highlighted that the status of females in the labour market has not changed much over the last ten years, and may even have gotten worse. Women are less favoured than men in the South African labour market. The Global Gender Gap Report 2018 by the World Economic Forum (2018), states that the gender gap in Sub Saharan Africa will close in 135 years.

Women play a role in the economy of a country and the inequalities that they face also has an impact on the economy. Gender inequalities and strong economic performance are related. Gross Domestic Product (GDP), investment and competitiveness at a macro level of a country is much higher when gender inequalities are eliminated (Yucel & Onsel Ekici, 2017). It has been noted that the empowerment of women through education can help address the inequalities in society (Yucel & Onsel Ekici, 2017; Batool & Batool, 2018). Research by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), indicate that the disempowerment of women results in a loss to the economy that ranges from 10% of GDP in developed countries and around 30% in South Asia, Middle East and North Africa (Dabla-Norris & Kochhar, 2019).

The statement, “Empowered women empower women” reiterates that the empowerment of women ensures the empowerment of future generations (Woods, Wetle, & Sharkey, 2018, p. 21). Women with equal opportunities will contribute to the GDP of the country and lessen the burden on the state. It will also increase the country’s ability to compete internationally (Wang, 2018).

Many countries including China, United Kingdom, France, United States and South Africa, have an underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (Smith, Crittenden, & Caputi, 2012). Literature has shown that as much as there is awareness of transformation, gender equality and female representation, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to get women to the executive level or C suite positions (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013). According to the Department of Labour (2019), 19th Annual Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) report, during the 2018 employment equity reporting period, 76.5% of top management positions were held by males and 23.5% by females. It was further noted that in Gauteng province, for males, 52.1% of top management positions in the private sector was occupied by the White population group, with 10.8%, 2%, 6.4% and 4% represented by the African, Coloured, Indian and Foreign National population groups respectively. The numbers for females in the province at top management level was 13.6% in the White population group, and 6.3%, 1.3%, 2.8% and 0.7% for the African, Coloured, Indian and Foreign National population groups respectively. The percentages for senior management positions in the private sector were 66.9% male and 33.1% female. In the senior management category, it was noted that the private sector is the highest employer of the white population group who are predominately male in both the government and the private sector (Department of Labour, 2019). This report does note an increase in the percentages for the designated groups from the previous year, but female representation is still below the Economically Active Population (EAP). EAP is defined as the “Economically Active Population which includes people from 15 to 64 years of age who are either employed or unemployed and are seeking employment” (Department of Labour, 2019, p iii). Literature supports the notion that women are underrepresented in executive positions in corporate South Africa (Smith et al., 2012).

The CEE report also states that at a professionally qualified level, women are represented at 44.9% and men at 55.1% which is a fair representation of qualifications. This shows that women are qualified, yet they are underrepresented at management level. The numbers show that although there is an increase in senior management representation, when compared to top management level, men still dominate. Male dominated workforces encourage the stereotypes, personal biases and barriers that women face on a daily basis. The consequence for companies is

that their culture will remain as it is. There will be no transformation and they will not have the opportunity to experience the benefits of having women on their team.

Female executives are just as competent as their male counterparts. Typically, a woman's style of leadership will be transformative as opposed to her male counterpart who tends to be more commandeering. Evidence of gender equality at board level is compelling. There is an association between gender equality at senior executive positions and benefits for a company. Research has shown that a company sees financial benefits from having equal representation at board level, and there is also a return on investment and profits, indicating better organisational performance (Sadler & Linenberger, 2017). Regardless of the benefits associated with female representation at senior executive level, there is still an underrepresentation. Therefore, there is a need for further research to explore the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women at senior executive positions and, more importantly, the drivers to assist women to get to senior executive positions.

1.2 Purpose of Research

High achieving women make up a minority, especially in the corporate world and as such, have not gained much attention from researchers (Wolontis & Hoff, 2018). For the sake of diversity and organisational success, corporates have started to encourage the employment of women in senior managerial positions. This could be a sign of women being recognized for the value they bring. Research has shown that executive women provide good board governance and bring a different style of management to a team, and as such, their representation at board level is beneficial to the company (Irem, Rehman, & Rehman, 2016; Sadler & Linenberger, 2017). Another study indicates that although there is an awareness around gender equity and transformation initiatives, the number of women in executive positions has not improved (Sadler & Linenberger, 2017). As stated in the CEE report, there has been an increase in the numbers when it comes to female participation in the workforce (Department of Labour, 2019), however, women are still profoundly underrepresented at executive level (Brockmann, Koch, Diederich, & Edling, 2018; Irem et al., 2016).

The way women are treated in the work environment, is a result of government policies and firm-level decisions (Wang, 2018). It is important to understand how a

woman's journey and life experiences would have impacted her career decisions and success. There are a number of individual and situational factors that impact a woman's career success. There are two situational factors, the first being the culture and practices at work (work situation) and the second, family responsibilities (domestic situation) (Irem et al., 2016). There are three main elements at an individual level. The first is their attitude and behaviour, which is related to having a "high self-efficacy, level of commitment, internal attributions of success, passion towards goal attainment", (Irem et al., 2016, p. 22). The second is demographic characteristics. It has been noted that women who succeed have higher education and socioeconomic status. The third is the enculturation in society. This is associated with "paternal encouragement and maternal professional background that are positively associated with women successful career orientation" (Irem et al., 2016, p. 22).

With this in mind, it is critical to understand why women are underrepresented at senior executive level. There are a number of studies that explore the barriers that women face in terms of gender equity, however, little is known about the barriers that women face on a personal level and what encourages them to reach executive or board level positions (Sadler & Linenberger, 2017).

1.3 Research Problem

The objective of this research was to uncover and understand what influences a females' career progression. Social identity theory and self-efficacy theory provide a theoretical foundation for this research.

This research aims to:

1. Explore the role of societal expectations on the goals and future direction of female executives' career goals.
2. Uncover if it is a mind-set problem of the self, or their drive for success and perseverance, that motivates females to continue on a career path.
3. Understand if there is a link between the individuals' social identity and self-efficacy for executive women in corporate South Africa?

The answer to these questions will help to enrich the existing knowledge of why women are underrepresented in executive positions in a South African context. The societal norms of SA are expected to be different from those of our European or American counterparts. The history of the country is different, and this may have had an impact on the individual experiences of the South African executive women. Historically, traditionally and post-apartheid, South Africa was known to be a patriarchal society (Mukhuba, 2017). This study will shine the spotlight on the female experience in what is considered to be a male dominated area.

The business need for this research involves the economic impact that gender equality has on the country and the people. By investigating the reasons behind the lack of representation of females in a South African context, policy makers and chief executive officers can understand why we are making progress towards the ultimate goal of gender parity, yet the problems around gender equity and female representation still persists. This study aims to provide businesses with insight into areas of concern for a female on an individual level. The data will bring to light issues that are perhaps not considered or seen on a daily basis but have an impact on women. With this information, managers can be more aware of their business and social environment, as well as be more self-aware of their skills and behaviours that may impact their employees. In line with this, it will also aim to show managers that the stereotypical view of women being inferior, that is noted in the literature, is not based on female traits but the stereotypes that are held by individuals, specifically male managers (English & Jeune, 2012).

The next chapter will cover the literature that supports the research aims of this study. It details the basis of social identity theory and self-efficacy theory, and how this in turn influences female executives. It will also cover the stereotypes that women face, as this is seen as a hindering factor to the career progression of women.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the pertinent literature on gender equality, social identity and self-efficacy theory. It also explores the literature on motivation, societal roles and the various factors that influence a female throughout their career. The chapter then concludes with a review of the various barriers that women face during their career progression.

2.2 The need for gender equality

Gender equality, female representation, transformation and female empowerment have been key words that one would find in newspapers, social media, news reports and even government legislation over the last couple of decades. Over the years, there has been a drive to empower women to ensure there is an even playing field between the genders. For example, one of the goals, of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 from the United Nations, is to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls (United Nations, 2016). The South African government has played a role, with the employment equity act, in trying to encourage a fair distribution between the employment of males and females in the private and public sector. Women are, however, still underrepresented in corporate South Africa (Chinyamurindi, 2014).

Social injustice, discrimination and inequality were exacerbated as a result of Apartheid. The South African government, in an attempt to compensate for this, introduced a number of policies to address and correct the injustice. The Labour Relations Act of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, and the Employment Equity Act of 1999 (amended in 2004), all focused on employment equity and affirmative action. The Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999 shifted the focus on appointments from affirmative action to recruitment, planning for the future, and the training and development of employees from designated groups, which included African, Indian and Coloured people as well as women and people with disabilities. These acts also focused on the need for skills and the gap that existed with skilled labour. This was then followed by the implementation of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE)

policy to aid with black ownership of businesses and help with black representation in management positions (Booyesen, 2007). The policy also aimed to incorporate social change by having a more inclusive society and reducing poverty and inequality. The success of these policies, specifically the BBBEE policy, and the benefit to the designated groups, appears to have been limited based on the limited data that is available (Patel & Graham, 2012).

Research has shown that there were many reasons why companies could not retain their staff in line with the policy. Company culture was one reason. This manifested in a number of ways, including a lack of awareness programs to assist employees and creating a culture that did not value diversity. Traditionally, firms were white male dominated, and groups were created either formally or informally that excluded black males. Black people were appointed as token placements with little responsibility and this compounded stereotypes. There was also little development that took place with these employees so they sometimes lacked the required skills that were needed for the job. Employment Equity initiatives were carried out by companies, but they did not have management engagement to ensure successful implementation. There was also a lack of black leadership that could guide and mentor future black leaders (Booyesen, 2007).

An individual's career path is generally unique and there are a number of opportunities or challenges that they face as they progress through life. Men and women have their unique experiences but there are certain phenomena that overlap based on shared experience that are gender specific. Historically, women were not educated, as the social belief was one of patriarchy where the women's place was at home. The man was the one who worked. This has now changed. The number of women that attend tertiary education for an undergraduate degree has increased in the last 25 years and in some fields are higher than that of their male counterparts (Redmond, Gutke, Galligan, Howard, & Newman, 2017). A similar trend is noted in research done by Seo, Hedayati Mehdiabadi, and Huang, (2017). They have noted that there has been a positive increase in the academic achievements of women. This, however, does not translate into a higher number of women being represented in academia or positions of leadership. The number of women passing through the system and progressing to the next level of leadership, tends to decrease at each

level. It is therefore understandable to question and attempt to understand why their representation decreases and what causes this effect (Redmond et al., 2017).

It has been noted that the career paths for men and women in leadership differ in large organisations. Their career structure and timing are different (Redmond et al., 2017). Even though this may be the case, in some instances, female academics and corporates forsake a promotion or the opportunity of a leadership position in order to avoid compromising on their work life balance, sexist cultures and the political nature that comes with a leadership position. It could be for this reason that many remain in middle management positions or stay in a particular position for their entire career even (Redmond et al., 2017).

2.3 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is based on the notion that individuals relate to people that are similar to themselves. This theory is applicable to the challenges and opportunities that women face throughout their careers, as it is based on identifying oneself with one's beliefs and social identity. Later in the chapter, stereotypes will be discussed. These stereotypes create an identity for women which they can then decide to adopt if they want to. Their actions will be guided by what they identify with. "Social identity theory posits that individuals validate their social identity, and in doing so build their self-esteem, by demonstrating favouritism towards their own social category or 'in-group' at the expense of those who are unlike them or 'out-group's", (Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2005, p. 440). Social identity theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner, is also linked through emotional and value attachment to a social group (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017). It would then make sense that, based on this theory, men would identify with other men and male leaders would place other men in their "in-group" and women in their "out-group". The same would apply for women leaders. They would place other women in their "in-group" and men in their "out-group", (Kjeldal et al., 2005). It can be further explained that perhaps women are not part of the "in-group", due to their lack of power, influence and experience to have an impact on the leader who is making the decisions and forming relationships with employees. Stereotypes can be formed with "in-group" discussions and when there is no one there to refute or correct it, it can be accepted as the truth. Based on this, gender inequality in academia and the corporate sector could be exacerbated by these multifaceted informal networks (Kjeldal et al., 2005).

“According to social identity theory approaches, identity is defined as self-meanings that describe who one is, which can relate to any group, role or person-based identity that the individual assumes”, (Skinner, 2014, p. 108). A leader is a role that a person assumes and as such, a leaders’ identity is based on the individual characteristics and personality traits of that individual. The social context and organisational culture of the individuals’ work environment will also play a role. Women as leaders need to understand who they are and their leadership role must be in line with the perception of themselves. An identity approach to leadership has this perspective. It is about who you are and not just what you do. This could be one reason why women sometimes struggle to identify with the male paradigms of leadership that are dominant in their corporate setting (Skinner, 2014).

Social identity theory is based on three principles. The first is that it is relational. If this is the case, then an individual’s social identity is developed by the way in which that person relates to others within their social group. Secondly, it is based on an experience with other people, so it is a shared construct. Thirdly, it is a collective phenomenon as it is based on an accumulation of life’s proficiencies and lessons (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017). Social identity is based on an individual’s context to a situation based on their individual life experience. Women in academia shape their identities in context to their role in academia and will require three principles, namely relational, shared and contextual or collective identity in order to function as a group in academia (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017). The same can be applied to women in corporate South Africa.

Social identity is based on shared traits in a group that the individual identifies with and belongs to and is part of one’s self-image. It is complex and involves many layers such as cognitive, evaluative, affective and behavioural mechanisms. In order for people to identify in social terms and be able to self-identify, some assume numerous social identities. This will vary depending on the context and importance of a situation (Lyons et al., 2019).

2.4 Self-efficacy theory

Self-efficacy is a theory based on an individual and their belief in themselves (Gu, Zhang, & Smith, 2015). This theory is relevant as it determines the actions an

individual will take, based on how high their self-efficacy is. It relates to the challenging circumstances that many women in senior positions face and their decisions to persevere and attain the success, that they have achieved and as such, affects their career.

Self-efficacy is defined as “belief about one’s capabilities to learn or perform behaviours in particular situations”, (Gu et al., 2015, p. 703). It is the process by which an individual will process information about themselves based on various sources of information (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy findings impact the way in which individuals make decisions, persevere with set tasks, react to environmental stimulus, and determine if an individual has self-hindering or progressive thought patterns (Bandura, 1986). People with higher self-efficacy tend to embrace challenges and persevere with them, rather than avoid them. They also tend to excel in whatever they do (Gu et al., 2015). Self-efficacy also impacts the way in which an individual looks at their career. It can determine if an individual will persevere and overcome any possible obstacles that may lie in the way of their success or career development. Self-efficacy can therefore be used to measure the success, or lack thereof, of an individual (Seo et al., 2017).

The way a person feels about their capabilities in a particular situation, according to Bandura, is determined by the following four major factors of self-efficacy (Gu et al., 2015):

- Mastering experiences which relates to performing a task with skill.
- Vicarious learning which speaks to learning by watching someone else do a task.
- Vicarious persuasion which relates to verbal encouragement, either from people around you or people you may know.
- Lastly, psychological responses which speaks to the emotional reactions that one could have in a particular scenario.

Motivation in an individual is linked to how they behave and is grounded in an individual’s cognitive activities. If an individual can process what future outcomes may look like, this provides a basis for motivation of current behaviour. With this in mind, behaviours are reinforced to achieve perceived benefits and mitigate future problems (Bandura, 1977). Self-motivation is driven by evaluating one’s performance

against a set standard or expectation. This ensures that the individual perseveres and exhibits a behaviour that allows them to be self-rewarded against the standards that they set for themselves. If an individual does not achieve the standard that was set, they self-correct their behaviour in order to achieve the desired outcome. The satisfaction of achieving the outcome and the negative association with not achieving an outcome, provide the motivation required for action. The benchmark is generally moved to a higher status once the goal is achieved (Bandura, 1977).



Figure 1: Diagram representing the difference between efficacy expectation and outcome expectation (Bandura, 1977).

“An outcome expectancy is defined as a person’s estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce outcomes,” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). If an individual doubts themselves or their ability to do something (efficacy expectation), even if they know certain actions will result in a particular outcome (outcome expectancy), this will not affect their behaviour. The idea as depicted in figure one is that people base their behaviour on their expectancy of their skills and capabilities to cope with a given situation. If an individual believes they are good at something, and can cope with a situation, they will get involved in that task. If they believe the task requires mastery that they do not possess and the situation is something that they fear, they will avoid that situation. Expectancy determines the behaviour of an individual and the amount of effort an individual will put into a task, however, it is not the only factor to consider. Incentives and having the right skill set for a task also plays a role (Bandura, 1977).

2.5 Types of Motivation

In order to reach success, an individual needs to be motivated. Reaching senior executive status requires serious motivation. In order to understand what motivates

these individuals, it is important to understand the concept of motivation and the various types of motivation.

Self-determination theory (SDT) points to two types of motivation, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is governed by one's desires and what an individual may find interesting. It is autonomous. Extrinsic motivation is governed by having an end goal in mind. There are four types of extrinsic motivators, which are detailed below (Hicklenton, Hine, & Loi, 2019).

- External regulation is the most controlled form of extrinsic motivation. It is dependent on behaviour that is dependent on other actions determined through other eventualities. For example, men may support women empowerment initiatives if their bonuses depend on it.
- Introjected regulation is a form of internal regulation. Individuals are motivated towards a certain behaviour as they feel pressure from themselves to act in a certain way. They are compelled to do something. For example, someone will throw waste into the bin because that is what they need to do, to avoid feelings of guilt. They do not expect a reward or punishment if they do not comply.
- Identified regulation is when someone accepts the value of an action but has not integrated fully with their own behaviour. For example, people may take on an action out of convenience because they believe in the action, but if it is not accessible or easy to perform the action, they will not do it even if they believe in it. Recycling of waste will be done but if a bin is not accessible, then the waste will not be recycled.
- Integrated regulation is when the individual completely identifies with the action, it is integrated into their behaviour, and it is part of how they identify with themselves.

These intrinsic and extrinsic motivators guide an individual's behaviour and actions. With the use of self-efficacy theory, the aim of this study is to identify key characteristics, thought patterns, capabilities or behaviours that may lead to female executives' success or lack thereof. It will also identify what coping mechanisms, if any, the individuals use.

2.6 Emotional Intelligence

The skills required for success today has evolved from what it was ten to twenty years ago. There are a number of requirements of an executive in terms of their skill set. They have to have technical knowledge, be intellectual and have emotional intelligence (EI). Research has shown that leaders with technical knowledge and intelligence with low emotional intelligence are outdone by those with high emotional intelligence (Decker & Cangemi, 2018). EI is considered more important than being intellectual. Individuals with EI are able to motivate themselves, persevere when situations are unfavourable, think rationally, empathize and stay hopeful (Rathore, Chadha, & Rana, 2017). EI is defined as being able to identify and comprehend emotions, not only in one's self but with others. Leaders with EI manage emotions in themselves and the relationships that they share (Arora & Marwah, 2014; Decker & Cangemi, 2018).

Leaders with high EI display character traits that involve listening, coaching, mentoring, motivating, compromise and respecting and honouring diversity within a group of people. Emotionally intelligent people do not use monetary gain or titles as their primary motivators (Decker & Cangemi, 2018). Executives that develop their emotional intelligence, will be able to develop better relationships with the people they work with, be it co-workers, juniors or their seniors. (Arora & Marwah, 2014). They do this by developing psychological contracts with these people. They also achieve self-actualizing mannerisms by being self-aware, through self-management, social-awareness and relationship management, thereby achieving Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Decker & Cangemi, 2018).

Emotional intelligence of an individual, especially an executive, translates to an enabling work environment, employee morale and a positive outcome for an organization (Rathore et al., 2017). Having noted this trend in the literature, it would be interesting to note if senior executive women have noticed the benefits of having EI.

2.7 Societal roles

In a social context, women in senior leadership positions are unconsciously expected to lead in a certain, masculine management style. This could however, have adverse effects for women when they act in a manner that is not socially accepted and

expected of a female (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019). When women lead in a non-masculine way, they challenge the norm. This could also lead to social and economic consequences (Cundiff, Danube, & Zawadzki, 2018). The status quo is thus propelled further by unconscious bias (Johnson, Warr, Hegarty, & Guillemin, 2015). This is another reason why women find it difficult to progress in these leadership roles.

The definition of gender is, “the attitudes, feelings and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex”, (Skinner, 2014, p. 103). Gendered roles that are built into organisations are based on a societal construct and not a biological one. The societal construct is based on historical, cultural and social beliefs and values. Society generally values masculine views and as such, masculine views dominate in society. This in turn results in the dominant role of males in organisations, to the detriment of females and gender equality. (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012).

Gender inequalities and preferential treatment of individuals still exist in a corporate environment. This is due to stereotypical views of women and is exacerbated as women reach leadership positions. There has, however, been a change in the trend, which has been noticed in the United States and other western countries, but not necessary in the Asian countries (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019).

As a result of “societal mores”, one third of white male managers believe that women are less capable of doing a job than their male counterparts (English & Jeune, 2012, p. 146). They believe women are less competitive and not as aggressive and will not contribute to the company’s goals and objectives. For this reason, there is a lack of advancement of women in many industries, specifically male dominated ones. This is also the reason why male managers will not look at the effects of institutions or organisational factors that are the cause of the lack of advancement of women. They have a stereotypical belief that it is due to female personality traits and behaviour (English & Jeune, 2012).

2.8 Women and their work environment

A place of work is supposed to be a professional setting, where people are expected to be professional and work towards a common goal. Researchers have noted that the work environment is rather nuanced. It is not just a rational environment where people are working towards the same goal. It is nuanced in the sense that the work environment is based on culture, historical practices and beliefs, and tends to favour certain groups. Traditionally, it was white men who had opportunities for career progression into executive positions. Stereotypical views of men and women and the action of affording opportunities to men have contributed to the gender inequality and culture in workplaces (Yavorsky, 2016). In order to improve and promote gender equity in a professional setting, it is important to create an environment that promotes inclusivity between colleagues and allows for solutions to be implemented that encourages gender equity and diversity (Holmes, Jackson, & Stoiko, 2016).

2.9 Childhood Influences

The self-schemata of children are influenced by the beliefs of the parents. This in turn impacts the child's expectation for success and their professional ambitions (Lazarides & Watt, 2017). A study by Piatek-Jimenez, Cribbs, & Gill (2018), indicates that parents play a role in the gendered stereotypes adopted by children. A mother's belief tends to be more influential than a father's. Furthermore, they found that children had a higher self-efficacy for gendered careers if the mother had a traditional gendered attitude towards those careers. The inverse was also true for children whose mothers shared a non-traditionally gendered attitude for certain careers. They showed a higher level of self-efficacy for the non-traditional gendered careers. Children whose parents exhibited an egalitarian view, showed an interest in career paths that were not gender stereotyped. Parents and people that come into contact with children at an early age, have the ability to influence their future career decisions.

2.10 Family structure and career success

Women tend to want to put their families first, which tends to lead to career sacrifices (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019). Due to being a token or a minority, women are generally placed in a position where they are carefully evaluated. This adds extra pressure on

them and women have to work harder to prove themselves. They also tend to pursue further education and training in an attempt to advance their careers (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019).

Family structure has an impact on the career success of women. Working women have the added responsibility of their families in terms of childcare and household responsibilities. Their male counterparts generally rely on their wives for this support. The added responsibilities add to their stress. It has been noted that executive women do not benefit as much as men from spousal support (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013). It is for this reason that it is imperative that women have social as well as psychosocial support (Wang, 2009).

2.11 Quotas for Women in Leadership

As part of some of the affirmative action in place to support female representation, countries are also looking at enforcing a quota system for women in leadership. Some countries will legally enforce the requirement to help with the development of women in leadership positions. At company level, some voluntarily adopt this approach. Some organisations believe in the quota system and some do not support it. The logical argument for the quota system is to ensure gender equality in management positions. As mentioned earlier in this document, the number of females that graduate with degrees does not translate into the positions that they hold after graduation. This is one way to ensure they receive a fair chance. Quotas are a means to overcome some of the barriers that women face in the workplace. The counter argument is that quotas favour women and are against liberal principles and possibly prevent a competitive environment. Quotas are noted to challenge the status quo in companies and as such act as a culture changer, especially in male dominated industries. The disadvantage of a quota placement for a female is that it can create a perception of doubt around their ability to do the job. This can also impact how their employees view them (Mölders, Brosi, Bekk, Spörrle, & Welppe, 2018).

2.12 Barriers that women face

Women have faced many barriers in their career progression. The most relevant barriers are discussed below.

2.12.1 Stereotypes and Bias

Stereotypes are defined as “beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of certain groups”, (Piatek-Jimenez, Cribbs, & Gill, 2018, p. 1433). These stereotypes are accepted by a society as a whole and are based on their beliefs and generalisations about a particular group. Everyone within the group may not share the same belief about a particular group but it is the culturally accepted or dominated belief within that group. These collective points of view within a society can become problematic when it imposes the negative beliefs about certain groups in society on others (Piatek-Jimenez et al., 2018).

Masculine traits in society seem to be more desirable than feminine traits. An example of these traits are listed in the table below (Piatek-Jimenez et al., 2018).

Table 1: Masculine and Feminine traits

Masculine Traits	Feminine Traits
Aggressive	Emotional
Competitive	Talkative
Logical	Affectionate
A leader	Gentle
Ambitious	Dependent
Confident	Sensitive to needs of others
Analytical	

It has been further noted that female attributes, such as nurturing, indecisive, emotional, intuitive and passive, are typically female gendered stereotypes that are not associated with a good leader. Instead, a good and effective leader is expected to be dominant, direct, aggressive and self-confident. These are typically associated with a masculine leadership style (Powell & Mukazhanova-Powell, 2019). Leadership, according to research, is defined according to the male characteristics of being assertive, competitive and in search of self-promotion, however, a leadership role can be fulfilled by a male or female (Skinner, 2014).

These stereotypes are set by cultural or historical beliefs. Cundiff, Danube, Zawadzki, and Shields (2018), state that men are generally assigned greater value, leadership abilities and overall competence due to gender bias, that may not be very pronounced, but are engrained by culturally based assumptions. Although this kind of bias is generally unconscious and unintentional, it does affect how women are viewed and treated professionally. “Stereotypes are one type of cognitive shortcut that make it possible to process large quantities of complex information but also

make people susceptible to unintentional errors and biased judgement”, (Cundiff et al., 2018, p. 614).

Gendered stereotypes are prevalent and can unconsciously impact the behaviour of the most egalitarian person. The result of this is that it impacts women and men. For women, it impacts their work environment and career progression by creating barriers that may not be as pronounced. It is for this reason that a conscious effort needs to be made to change and identify such behaviour. Personal bias can be difficult to identify but the simple acts such as the wage gap at the start of a woman’s career that is based on her gender, can have a multiplying effect over time. Social exclusion and limited access to prominent networks or highly powered mentors can also hinder a woman’s career progression into positions of power and leadership (Cundiff et al., 2018).

Research using social role theory indicate that gendered stereotypes are changing. With the increase of financial pressures on home, women are now seeking employment and their social roles are taking these characteristics into consideration (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019). This shift seems to be evident in women becoming more accepting of women and not necessarily men becoming more accepting of traditional female stereotypes of women being good managers (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019).

2.12.2 Wage Gap

The gender wage gap has been noted to be a widespread problem that exists in developed and developing countries. International Monetary Fund studies have shown that there is no difference between the productivity of men and women. It has been noted that women are believed to take more leave due to family responsibility and that is one reason why there is a difference in pay. Another reason is based on the perception that women believe that their manager will recognise their hard work and effort and as such, they would be rewarded accordingly. Women are less able to negotiate a higher salary. The perception of men, on the other hand, is that they are more assertive and will speak about their achievements and ask for what they want (van Staden et al., 2019).

2.12.3 Boys Club, Networks and Mentors

The boys club is a notion that was brought about by a patriarchal mind-set that was adopted by most traditional societies. It is a term that is used to describe a group that consisted of only men. White males generally hold the power and privilege in these societies. This is toxic for themselves and the people around them. In order to defeat this problem, women and men need to align and stop these type of groups from forming. The ongoing status of a boys club, further marginalises women and exacerbates their oppression by not allowing them to voice their opinion (Jordan & Luzader, 2016). By marginalising women, a system of patriarchy will continue and an equal society will not be attainable. The boys club is also a way for men to network amongst themselves. This is sometimes done in an informal, private setting (J. Wang, 2009).

Male dominated management teams can create in-group and out-group divisions, as per social identity theory, and this could result in unfair treatment of their female colleagues through unequal pay, or fewer opportunities for promotion (Larasatie, Baublyte, Conroy, Hansen, & Toppinen, 2019).

Women have started to form their own networking groups with people that can either aid or help them progress in their career. In contrast to the way men network, women formed networks that are more open, formal and publicly visible. Their networks tend to be smaller and hold less power which gains support from strategic sponsors, which in turn helps them with their career progression (Wang, 2009).

A mentor is generally a person that holds a position of power within an organization. This person can help an individual with their career development (Wang, Zhang, Chen, & Duan, 2016). Mentoring plays a pivotal role in the career development and progression of women by giving them access through the mentorship to people of power within the organization. This in turn also helps when dealing with gender inequality in a corporate setting, however, the empirical evidence available is still unconvincing in this regard (Srivastava, 2015). Women, however, struggle to find mentors that can assist them. A reason for this is that traditionally, men served as mentors, as they held the leadership positions in companies. Men are generally more comfortable with male protégées than female ones, as they can relate to another man on a personal and professional level. Women struggle to find female mentors as there is a lack of female representation in leadership positions. As a result,

mentors are not easily accessible to women (Wang, 2009). Men tend to gain more network advantage from mentoring than females (Srivastava, 2015; Wang, 2009).

Studies have shown that women in senior roles will take on challenges and endure difficult situations if they have more resources available to them, such as interpersonal relationships and networks or mentors (Skinner, 2014). There are many professional and personal benefits associated with the mentor process. Mentors can identify challenges that the protégées may face and teach them how to overcome such challenges, thereby strengthening their professional skills and their personal development. Mentors also encourage resilience within their protégées, thereby developing a skill set for the individual that will see them through many challenges and circumstances that are imminent in the evolving corporate world (Arora & Rangnekar, 2014).

2.12.4 Glass ceiling and Queen Bee syndrome

Glass ceiling is a metaphor that is used to describe the countless number of barriers that a woman faces as she tries to progress to a leadership position. Women can progress professionally, up to a certain level, at which point, there are invisible barriers that prevent them from progressing further. These barriers stem from prejudice and discrimination against women. This manifests itself in the form of unequal pay for the same job description, harassment, stereotypical beliefs or bias towards women, and a non-inclusive culture within a company (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013; Smith et al., 2012). It also stems from the traditional boys club institution, a lack of female mentors and role models, and tokenism (Smith et al., 2012).

Research has shown that women in leadership positions will support quotas for other women in leadership if there is no threat to their own career. Women who have more agentic traits seem to be less of a threat to women in leadership positions, and as a result they will generally receive more support than those who are less agentic. Furthermore, female stereotypes typically assume that women are less agentic than men. Women who are in leadership positions tend to distance themselves from women who seem to be less agentic than themselves (Mölders et al., 2018). This could then manifest as women not supporting other women. This is commonly known as the “queen bee” phenomenon. It generally happens in a male dominated environment, where a woman has a senior position and would have aligned herself

with her male counterparts. This further propels the inequalities that women face in the workplace and solidifies the gender hierarchy (Larasatie et al., 2019).

2.13 Conclusion

The underrepresentation of women in executive positions has been well documented. The need for further research to understand the reasons behind this has also been validated. There are a number of factors that play a role in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and factors such as cultural influences, societal influences, stereotypes, unconscious bias as well as the individual lived experience has been the main focus up to now. Wanting to avoid the political nature of a leadership position, and not wanting to compromise on their family, and work life balance are some of the reasons why some have chosen to decline promotions or positions of leadership.

Information is lacking around these factors in a South African context. South African culture and individual lived experience will be different to that of American or European women as they have a very different foundation to base their life experiences on. There may be some similarities, but there may also be some differences. South Africa is noted to be a patriarchal society, where women were considered to be inferior to their male counterparts (Mukhuba, 2017). This research will be based on social identity theory and self-efficacy theory. The underlying foundation is that female representation in corporate SA, is based on the social context that is created for them, their personal belief in themselves, and the skills and behaviours that they have.

Literature states that parents are noted to influence a child's belief in themselves and their career aspirations (Lazarides & Watt, 2017). This study will serve to uncover if this is the same for South Africa executive women. Society and the community are notorious for creating stereotypes that impact a woman's career. This is something that will be explored further in this study. Motivation and personality traits are also a key driver of success. This study will look at what the key drivers and motivators for these senior executive women are. It will also explore the role that self-efficacy and social identity play in the career progression for senior female executives.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

The objective of this research will serve to uncover and understand the lived experience of executive women in the corporate sector in the Gauteng area. Social identity theory and self-efficacy theory provide a theoretical foundation for this research.

3.1 Research Questions

Research Question 1: Explore how past experiences influence a females' career goals and their future planning.

This question aims to uncover if past experiences plays a role in how an individual would plan her future and career goals. The expectation from the data would be to identify which experiences play a role, what role it is, and who the influencers are. It will identify the key people who determine the direction of the individuals' career. Experiences are related to people and the social setting that such an individual would have experienced in her life. The social setting may include people or institutes that the individual has either grown up with or come into contact with throughout her life, be it during childhood, adolescence or adulthood. It will also focus on how the current work environment impacts an individual and the way they feel.

Research Question 2: Uncover to what extent mind-set, motivation and perseverance play a role in senior executive women's career paths.

This research question is linked to self-efficacy theory and how an individual will persevere even when times are tough or the odds are stacked against them. This question will identify key attributes, skills or behaviour that the individual possesses or perhaps lacks and would have resulted in their current career position. It will also identify what character traits are perceived to be required for success.

Research question 3: How do individuals' social identity and self-efficacy relate to each other for senior executive women in corporate South Africa?

This question will help identify if there is a link between past experiences, social identity and the individuals' self-efficacy and their career progression. Females are underrepresented in senior executive positions. For those who have made it, it is

important to understand how they got to their current position and to what extent their experiences, social identity and self-efficacy impacted their journey, so that we can relate that information to other women in corporate South Africa.

The research questions mentioned above will be the basis of this research. The next chapter will focus on the methodology undertaken to conduct this study.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology that was used in this study. This was a qualitative study that focused on data collected from senior female executives in the corporate sector. Semi structured interviews were used to gain insight on their lived experience. The chosen methodology was based on the research questions, which in turn were derived from the literature review.

4.2 Research paradigm

The philosophy that was used was interpretivism. This was a qualitative research project that gathered data from individual senior executive women and was based on people and not objects. The key role of this philosophy is understanding the view point of the participant (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

An inductive approach was used as the explanation that was developed was based on the collected data. This approach was chosen as it allowed the researcher to understand the participant's perspective on events. It is flexible and relies on qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2009). The data collected from the participants gave the researcher a better understanding of the factors that resulted in the phenomena and as such, theory was built around this. This approach allowed categories to be formed that were based on the data and as such would allow for the emergence of new insights (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

A mono method was used for data collection. Mono method is a single data collection method which is a semi structured interview. This allowed the researcher flexibility in gathering the data and getting the most data from the participant. Semi structured interviews allowed the interviewer to probe for further information when required. Refer to Appendix one for a copy of the interview guide.

The research design was descriptive. As stated by Saunders et al., (2009), this design requires a sound understanding of the phenomena and provides an accurate profile of people or events. The strategy that was used was narrative inquiry. This

strategy was favoured as the researcher needed to gain insights and a deeper meaning into the organisational realities which are closely related to the employees' experience (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Narrative analysis provides insight into an individual's lived experience, through the stories that are told by individuals, or speech, which is a socially and culturally accepted form of expressing the understanding of an experience (Thorne, 2000). Narrative analysis can also be used to understand how an individual sees themselves and how they express their identity (Burck, 2005). The nature of this study fits into this strategy. It required the interviewer to understand the lived experience of senior executive women in the corporate sector, and understand what is important to them and has impacted their success (Howe-walsh & Turnbull, 2016). The study focuses on senior female executives which allowed data to be collected directly from the target audience as per their account of events and experiences.

Due to time constraints, a cross-sectional study was conducted. Interviews were conducted with 12 senior female executives over a period of six weeks. It was expected that saturation would be demonstrated after 12 interviews. A semi-structured interview was used to gather data. This method is flexible and allowed the researcher to gain a sense of camaraderie and understanding with the participant (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016).

4.3 Population

The population for this study was senior female executives in the Gauteng area. The reason why this area was chosen is because the Gauteng province contributed over a third of the GDP for the country in 2017 and as such has the biggest economy in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Most of the major industries such as finance, manufacturing, construction and many others, are present in the province and is home to the majority of corporate head offices in the country.

4.4 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was individual, senior female executives. They were chosen as they are able to provide the most insight and background as to their

lived experience in corporate South Africa and the factors that either hinder or help them progress.

4.5 Sampling method and size

Purposive sampling method was used to help define the criteria required for the sample. The senior executives were female, between the ages of 29 – 65 years old and represented various industries. The participants had to be in an executive position for over two years. More information on the participants is provide in table two and three of Chapter 5. Maximum variation was used in terms of identifying participants from various industries. Participants were identified based on individuals that met the above-mentioned criteria. A search was done based on the researcher's current personal network and referrals from that personal network to access appropriate respondents.

The executives provided insight as to whether they have all shared the same or similar experience. Acquiring an executive position in corporate South Africa is an achievement and individuals at this level have developed a specific skill set and behaviour in order to achieve their success. Selecting senior executives from various industries allowed the researcher to gain insights into the progress attained without considering industry specific factors. It also allowed insights into what is needed to be done to get to this executive level and what would be required if there were intentions to progress towards C suite positions or higher.

4.6 Measurement instrument

A semi structured interview guide was used. The questions in the interview guide were open-ended, thereby allowing the interviewer to probe when necessary and allowing the participant to express their interpretation of the question (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As stated by Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016), the interview guide consisted of descriptive, contrast, evaluative and structural questions. Each of these questions provided information on the participant's experience, based on the literature covered in chapter 2. The descriptive or background questions ensured that the participants fitted into the biological or demographic category. The descriptive

questions focused on the participants' background and experience profile. This ensured that the targeted group of senior executives all met the set criterion.

The structural questions covered participants' impressions of their environment and experiences. These questions provided an understanding into the participants' feelings and experiences that have led them to where they are. It also helped to identify the mechanisms in place to ensure that females progress through the system or alternatively, what the hindering factors to the problem may be.

The contrast questions compared experiences and events in the participants' lives that have impacted them or shaped them to be the person that they currently are. It was important to note these events as there may be a link between these events and the participants' social identity and self-efficacy.

Finally, the evaluative questions provided insight into the participant's feelings. These questions allowed the interviewer to understand how the participant feels about their current situation and if it is an empowering or hindering environment that they are working in (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016).

4.7 Data gathering process

Once ethical clearance was received, the researcher reached out to her network and highlighted the individuals that met the set criteria for the study. Refer to Appendix 2 for a copy of the ethical clearance form. A list of all the senior female executives with two years' or more experience in the position was generated. Contact was then made via an email or telephone call. The nature of the study was explained to the potential participant. They were informed that their participation is voluntary and they can opt out of the study at any time. Once the potential participant agreed to participate in the study, a time and date was arranged for the interview.

The interviews took place at a location that was convenient for the participant, such as their office. The informed consent form was signed by the participant at the start of the interview. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix 3. Permission was requested for the recording of the interview. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 78 minutes. Interviews were recorded for validity and

reliability purposes. Once the interviews were completed, the data was transcribed by two independent transcribers. Each file was saved by an easily identifiable pseudonym and the participants' names were not used. Data collection took around six weeks.

4.8 Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was through induction. Induction is used when the current knowledge and research on a topic could benefit from further investigation (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As stated by Myres (2018), the data was rich and descriptive. The researcher read all the transcripts before coding them in order to get a sense of the data and the overlapping information. Data collection allowed the researcher to identify codes, categories and themes that came through from the interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The transcripts were read and the coding process had begun. A code was derived from data based on key thoughts from the transcripts. The coding process refers to a large amount of text that is organised into fewer content categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). An initial set of codes were highlighted. Codes that were related or linked in some way, were then grouped into a code group or category. Categories were based on the research objective and purpose of the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The process was followed for all 12 interviews. Any data that did not fit into a category was given a new code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Codes were formed until the point of saturation, as per the graph shown in figure two below. Please refer to Appendix 4 for a sample list of some of the codes generated. Data saturation is achieved when there is a decrease in new code creation from new information (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

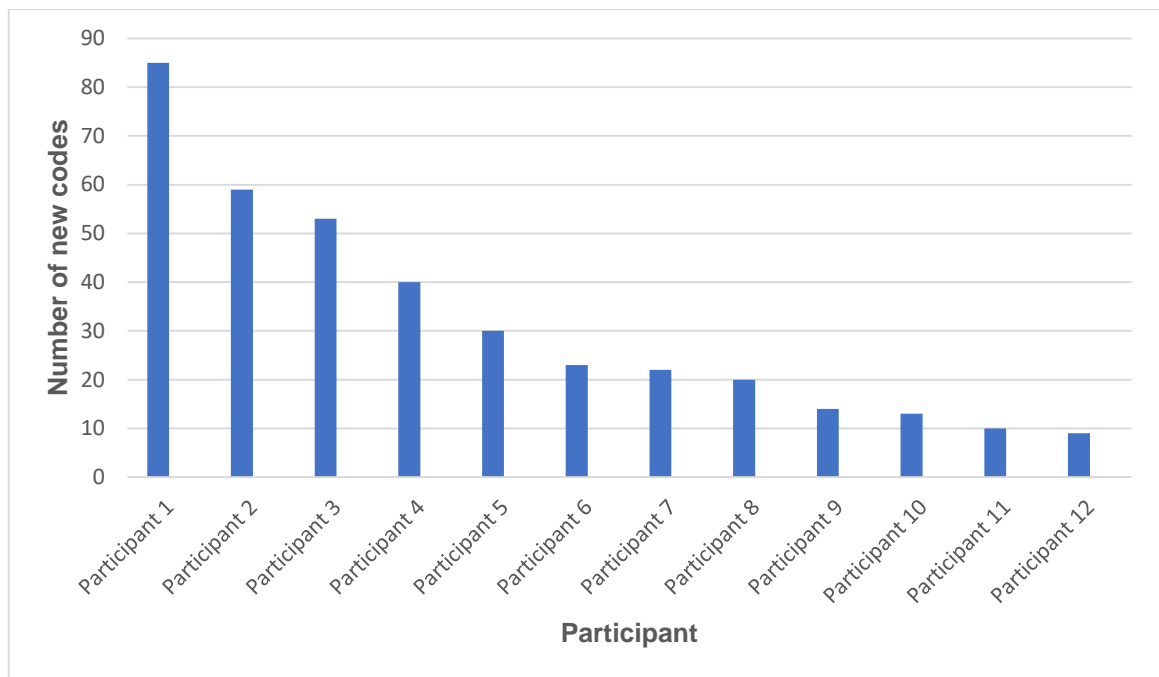


Figure 2: Graph showing the number of new codes generated per participant, reaching a point of saturation (Guest et al., 2006).

Analysis of the data was generated in a third-party software, namely ATLAS.ti. Verbatim quotes were used from the transcribed data. After the categories were created, a relationship between the categories were identified (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A list of eight themes were formed. There were three themes for the first and second research question and two themes for the last question. Categories and codes were then described based on the highest frequency of the codes that were generated. This ensured that the findings were discussed as it related to each research question.

4.9 Quality controls – including validity/ trustworthiness criteria

To ensure validity of the data, the interviews were recorded on a cell phone and transcribed by two independent transcribers. Both transcribers have signed confidentiality agreements and these appear in Appendix 5. Once the data was analysed, the researcher looked for saturation. This was done using the Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) method of saturation, as per the graph in figure two. Saturation of the data ensures that categories are replicated, which in turn ensures that the data is comprehensive and complete. This is a method of verification which is required in qualitative studies to ensure the rigor of the study and to demonstrate that the sample size is sufficient to draw reliable conclusions (Morse, Barrett, Mayan,

Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Reliability of the data was also confirmed by using the same data collection method and protocol for all interviews. All information was documented (Myres, 2018). The individual lived experience is subjective and therefore may not be a true source of scientific knowledge or a true reflection of the societal reality (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014).

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was needed to ensure the study was conducted in an ethical manner. Ethical clearance was obtained from the university's ethics committee and a copy can be found in Appendix 2. Once ethics was obtained, the participants were contacted. The participants were assured that their personal information would be treated confidentially. No names were shared. Each participant signed an informed consent form, a sample of which is included in Appendix 3. The participants were given a pseudonym of p1-12 for each participant and the quotes used are under these pseudonyms.

4.11 Limitations

The first limitation of the study is that the study focuses on female executives in the Gauteng area. It would be interesting to note if a similar outcome would be applicable in other provinces or if the lived experience in other provinces are different from what it is in Gauteng. Different provinces within SA have different norms and traditions. It would be worthwhile to investigate if this would translate into the lived experience of women in these areas.

Another identified limitation would be the nature of the study, which is qualitative in nature. A broader perspective could be given with a quantitative study and a correlation between the determining factors could be drawn. A quantitative study could also bring in information from the various provinces.

The lack of generalisability is a limitation.

The last limitation of this study is that the individual lived experience is subjective and therefore may not be a true source of scientific knowledge or a true reflection of the

societal reality (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014). Being qualitative in nature, this study is also subject to biases (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Chapter 5: Findings from the research

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will cover the results obtained from the semi- structured interviews. The purpose of this study was to understand the narrative of a female executive and as such the semi- structured interview was designed to understand the participants' journey and their lived experience. Questions were asked with this in mind. Once the data was collected and analysed, a number of categories were identified. The results are presented in categories based on the research questions mentioned in chapter three. As stated in chapter four, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior female executives in corporate South Africa. The interviews served as a tool to understand the narrative of these executive women and their journey to reach their level of success. They were from various industries and all have responsibilities at an executive level. For the purpose of this study, executive level was defined as someone who either has representation at a board level or is part of senior management.

Details of the participants are shown in the table below.

Table 2: Background information of participants

Participant	Age	Marital Status	Children	Qualification
P1	59 years	Divorced	Two children	Medical Doctor (MBCHB)
P2	36 years	Married	One child	BComm IT, MBA
P3	50 years	Single	No children	Lawyer, LLB degree
P4	47 years	Married	Two children	Bachelor of Business Administration, Marketing degree, MBA
P5	50 years	Single	One child	Bachelor of Arts,

				Marketing degree
P6	43 years	Married	Two children	Bachelor degree in Pharmacy, Masters in Health Economics
P7	49 years	Single	No children	BA Fine Arts degree, BSc IT
P8	47 years	Married	One child	Medical Technologist
P9	38 years	Single	No children	Chartered Accountant
P10	37 years	Married	Two children	BA HR, Industrial Psychology Qualification
P11	34 years	Married	Two children	Lawyer, LLB degree, Diploma in Pension Fund Law
P12	38 years	Single	One child	Lawyer, LLB degree, Post graduate diploma in Cyber Law

The majority of the participants were above 36 years old, with the exception of one, who was 34 years old. The majority of participants also held a degree and several post graduate qualifications or short courses. The importance of education for career progression was noted during the interviews.

Table 3: Industry participant operates in with their title.

Industry	Number of participants	Title	Type of company
Medical Device/ Pharmaceutical	3	Regulatory Affairs Manager, Africa	Multinational
		Regulatory Manager	Multinational
		Area Manager, Africa	Multinational
Telecommunications	3	Executive Head, Digital Marketing	Multinational
		Executive Head, Operations	Multinational
		Executive Head, Legal and Compliance	Multinational
Health	1	Deputy Director	Multinational
Property	1	Human Resources Director	Multinational
Legal	1	Director	Multinational
Multimedia	1	General Manager, Africa	National
Motor/Manufacturing	1	General Manager, Chief Marketing Manager	Multinational
Engineering	1	Chief Financial Officer	National

Participants were spread across 7 industries. They had more than two years' experience in an executive position and all except one participant, had a seat on a minimum of one board. The board seats were either as a board member for an industry association, or as a member of the board for the company that they worked for. Many sit on more than one board. This allowed insight into the working environment for the various industries and to understand if there is a link between

the lived experiences of an individual, the specific industries in which they operate, and what it takes as they progress to higher executive level positions.

5.2 Results: Research Question 1- Societal Influence

5.2.1 Research Question 1: Explore how past experiences influence a females' career goals and their future planning.

This question aims to uncover if past experiences plays a role in how the individual plans her future and career goals. The expectation was that the data would help to identify which experiences play a role, what role is it and who are the influencers. It would identify the key people that determine the direction of the individuals' career. Experiences are related to people and the social setting that such an individual would have experienced in her life. The social setting could be people or institutions that the individual has either grown up with or come into contact with throughout her life, be it during childhood, adolescence or adulthood. It will also focus on how the current work environment impacts an individual and the way they feel. A total of five categories were identified and are detailed in the table below.

Table 4: Categories of societal influence on females' career

	Category
1	Childhood Influence
2	Social expectations of women
3	Demand of an executive
4	Challenges and opportunities at work
5	Identification with work environment

The codes with the highest frequency (subcategory) are listed in the table below.

Table 5: Subcategories that relate to research question 1 with top 3 frequency.

Category	Subcategory	Frequency
1. Childhood Influence	Childhood Influence- Mum	7
	Wanting to get out	6
	Childhood Influence- Family	4

2. Social expectations of women	Societies expectation of roles	6
	Women expected to give 100%	5
	Wife, mum, social role identification	4
3. Demand of an executive	Trying to prove yourself	11
	Women work harder	3
	Roles are changing	3
4. Challenges and opportunities at work	Male dominated	15
	Female pay gap	6
	Glass ceiling	3
5. Identification with work environment	Women empowerment	9
	Mentors assisted success	4
	Women oppose women	3

5.2.1.1 Childhood Influence

The first category dealt with childhood influences. Family and parents play a big role in influencing a young child. Children are impressionable and the experiences that they have in their childhood homes and what they are exposed to as children, influence the decisions that they make as young adults. Generally, for all participants, the overall influence was from their mother or the entire family in some way or another. One participant also indicated that her teacher influenced her career path:

“I think with my mother, it's, it's always telling us that “Don't settle for less”, You know, “prove yourself to everybody” and “prove your worth”, you know, and “be acknowledged for who you are, and the values that you have”...and always pushing us to succeed and wanting us to study and wanting us to be the best version of ourselves, you know, because I think they weren't given the opportunity.” P10

“I suppose probably my mother impacted it the most.” P3

"The closest one would be my mother. Her influence was no matter what the circumstance just get on with it." P6

In some cases, the childhood experience was not a desirable one and that was the motivation behind being successful and choosing another type of life for themselves. They had a desire and need to change their future and felt that their current circumstances should not determine their future path. Many of the participants grew up during the apartheid era and this experience is evident in their narratives, their expression of the injustices felt by their parents, and the need for an education to support a better future for themselves.

"My dad said, "Just look at this academic family." It's his pride because that's what he aspired for all of us, he encouraged us, he pushed hard to say, "Get an education because the only way you will rise out of the apartheid system is if you have knowledge." So I thank him every day for that, but that was his driving principle." P1

"I didn't have an easy childhood, but a lot of people don't. So certainly everyone has got a worse story than your story and I think you want to get out of that cycle of where you were." P4

"I think your parents generally have a massive impact...My dad, the drive the ambition comes from not having and watching from how he tried and failed." P11

Another point that was raised was that even though siblings grow up in the same environment, their individual experiences mould them into the people that they become. People influence individuals differently, based on their own experience through life.

"And I know that if I look at me and my sister we had the same upbringing but completely different personalities at the end of the day, which could just be genetic but it could also be the fact that that we had different things that we had to deal with as a child." P3

"Here you had to fight really hard to get ahead because the environment just didn't support this. I am a largely personality driven and also I think it depends on your life, if you've had strong women in your life you're likely to be quite strong elsewhere and not take it." P6

5.2.1.2 Social expectations of women

The main points that were raised in this category was that women have many roles to fulfil. In some cases, the various roles are not recognised, and women are assumed to either not have a significant career, or only have one role, and that is one of a nurturer or carer. Society has set a standard or expectation of the role that a woman plays. These roles are generally assumptions based on historic or cultural beliefs. It was also noted that society has a role to play in changing these expectations.

“You know I still think there is this expectation again of being the homemaker, being the softer one, the caregiver which is I am not saying is right or wrong, I think it is an important part of who you are but that is not the only person you are. I think there is still some boxing in of certain types of people in our society in general.” P7

“I think as a society our real responsibility is to make sure that the generations that we’re bringing up now don’t have that. Try very hard to not impose certain expectations. You know, progressive friends. Have like... even the toys they play with, the colours that they see – all of these things kind of impose a stereotype. I think it is still there.” P7

“I think the expectation of women generally in society is to be miracle workers, and no one can be that. You can’t, you have to give and take, there has to be a compromise somewhere you can’t be everything for everybody. And you have to... society, either has to allow you those opportunities, to give you that time”. P3

It has also been noted that women have to choose between their career and the cultural or historic roles that are imposed on them. Those that do not choose have to juggle the various roles and make it work as they need to be present in all the roles that they fulfil and that society deems necessary.

“The perception is that women don’t always have a career or a significant career. As a person here people don’t always think you have a full time job, they just see you as the homemaker and, of course, on the professional front they just assume that all you do is work. They don’t realise you actually have a family.” P4

“There's lots written about the pressures of women in the working environment, particularly you know, trying to build a career. Raise a family. Be a mother, wife, whatever the case may be. And I think we, we still experience that.” P5

“So I want to be present as a mother and it's a challenge to then prioritize that with being here as a leader. So it's definitely a challenge. I don't for one minute ever dismiss the way women manage to juggle that in an executive space.” P6

Furthermore, it was also noted that women are expected to do a lot more. They have to make choices around their career and personal life. Women are expected to perform at their highest level and give off their best at all times, in all the roles that they fulfil.

“I would definitely say the woman is when they are in a professional environment definitely 100% there, but then they need to be 100% home as well. So it's very difficult for women to divide their responsibilities.” P4

“I don't know at what point socially, where, where we're noticing it shifted where the woman must now do everything.” P8

5.2.1.3 Demand of an executive

In terms of the demands that an executive position commands, participants have said that the demands of the job are the same. However, due to the various roles that women have, such as mother, wife, care giver and so forth, the demands are greater at an executive level. They are trying to find a balance between their professional and personal life.

“Professional demands are equal, but then you have your social demands, which is more demanding.” P1

“I get very frustrated when people just expect females to do everything all the time. Perfectly. Wonderfully. I think we have to find boundaries between all of our lives and recognize that there's different roles and different times and different priorities allocated to them. But we're far way away from that.” P3

Times are changing and society is becoming more open minded on the expected roles of a female. Some believe that individuals need to set the standard and

expectation instead of conforming to traditional definitions. The role that one takes on can be a choice. One can choose to change society and promote an equal society. There needs to be a compromise.

“A lot of women and men are successful outside of the normative context of what success is and that is also a choice.” P7

“Social expectations are certainly, its two pronged, I think it’s less and less how were are chastised for choosing work over family and starting families later, that is good, you know I think we starting to see both moms and dads being proud of a female executive”. P2

“It’s a lot more open and a lot more equal than, than it used to be”. P5

Many female executives work harder because they feel the need to prove themselves time and time again. Men automatically get respect and acknowledgment, but women need to continuously prove themselves.

“I think generally women at the same level as men work harder than men to be there and to stay there. I think we work slightly harder to get the recognition and the progression than men do still.” P7

“I think generally there is an innate need by women to prove themselves and because of that there is even more hours that are put in and also in order to be taken seriously. It’s not a given. You need to prove yourself actually.” P12

5.2.1.4 Challenges and opportunities at work

Some of the challenges and opportunities that the participants spoke about was the male dominance in the majority of the industries that they operate in. This male dominance is prominent and as a female executive, they have had to find ways to adapt or blend in. They have had to prove themselves and work harder to get a seat at the table and stand up for themselves. This is another factor that has impacted how they progress throughout their career.

“If I compare men do the minimum and then they manage to progress whereas women would have to do a lot more, but maybe it’s just my perception.” P4

“It’s your reality. I think, I think it’s South Africa. Generally speaking, if you are in a corporate, you are in a male dominated environment. I think there are

certain areas where it's been traditionally female environments, like marketing or HR. But other than that, it mostly is male dominated.” P3

“The issue of white male domination, we have such terrible white male domination, white males being CEOs and GM of the companies that we... and that still remains a massive problem. Transformation is something we focusing heavily on as a Board.” P6

Another concern was the wage gap between males and females. This seems to be an issue that is based on gender and what society feels is acceptable or not acceptable in terms of pay. Women struggle to understand the reasons behind this. They are aware that it exists in all industries but are unsure of how to remedy the problem.

“Gender that gap, that wage gap is also a big thing. I don't understand why females get paid less than males, I don't get it.” P12

“South Africa has a long way to go in terms of having females, not just in executive roles, but just have so you the disparity in pay, for example, between males and females is shocking.” P9

“It's still the male gender that's, that's getting paid more, that gets more bonuses, that gets more acknowledgement and yet we do the same, the same work, right.” P10

The glass ceiling is a phenomenon that has been around for a long time. These ladies have experienced it, broken through it (in some cases) and attested to it. It has been acknowledged that the access or opportunity to get to board level has improved, but as a society, we are far from reaching consensus on the situation.

“A female and Black. I really used to believe that there were a lot of opportunities for Black females. But you reach a ceiling and sadly it's becoming more and more blatant that people or so many Black females have reached that ceiling.” P12

“There was definitely that glass ceiling it goes without saying, but also you have to get over that as a female as well. I think it also changed with times. I think there was an era where definitely there's a line in the sand and you

couldn't progress much further, but I think things are becoming more open nowadays." P4

"I think females in general have been hindered in the workplace and you know, potentially still are in, in a lot of different areas today." P5

5.2.1.5 Identification with work environment

Lastly, participants described their working environments and how they identify with it. Some mentioned an empowering work environment, where people are nice and work towards the same goal. Others mentioned platforms that are created to ensure transformation and ensure that as a group, females have a forum where they can speak their minds and address their concerns.

"So in terms of our specific company definitely a lot of emphasis on raising the women through the ranks and as I said with the different diversity groups specifically the one for women, they want to help equip women and enable them to go up the ranks because they don't have the opportunities as you well know that the men do, but clear focus, clear goals in terms of improving the representation at higher levels." P4

"So they are doing their best as an organisation and also you know fitting in as a woman, I feel like there is a specific program that is garnered towards my development." P2

"There is a mentorship program specifically for our people. So it's important that people get developed, that they grow and that they, you know, they are motivated."

In some cases, women are their own worst enemies when it comes to the workplace. Some women feel that they need to oppress other women. Women are judgemental towards each other and can at times be extremely critical.

"I think women are the greatest non-supporters for other women at the workplace. We have our own inbuilt patriarchy against our own people, be it people of the same race, women alike and then against other Indian women, other Black women, Black on Black like that kind of stuff." P11

“The criticism or some of the challenges ironically enough were from other women as well, because you’re the single few, you know, the why you type thing.” P2

The relevance of mentorship and the impact that it has had on the progress of some participants’ career is evident. Sometimes what is needed is to have someone else believe in you and take the necessary leap of faith with you and support you in order for a female to grow and progress in the corporate world. This also relates to the boys’ club phenomenon in male dominated industries. Men generally mentor or support the development of their younger male colleagues which also helps in their progression and dominance.

“Senior male partners take younger males under their wings and groom them and hone their skills. Women rarely do that. Men also are not perceived as being lesser than for playing golf with their male clients. I get joked at all the time for taking my clients to the spa.” P11

“I have had good mentors who push me into spaces that I didn’t think that I had the potential to achieve and for me that yes attitude, I can do this, I can do it no matter how hard you are burning inside and uncertain and insecure.” P1

“It was very quickly that I progressed quite quickly into senior into senior roles in my early career, but all under the guidance of my mentor.” P9

The results highlight that parents, especially the mother, play an important role in influencing the future career path of a female. Family and the support system that surrounds an individual also play a role. A feeling of support tends to encourage future development. In tough situations, a woman’s undesirable current circumstances could serve as motivation for a brighter future.

Society has shaped what people deem to be acceptable or unacceptable in terms of a career path and this is usually based on historic or cultural beliefs. Society is, in some cases, changing and is becoming more acceptable of non-traditional views. The demands for an executive position is the same between genders. The added responsibility that a female has adds a level of complexity to the situation.

Having an empowering and enabling work environment encourages future development. The importance of mentorship was also highlighted. A major challenge

that female executives face is the male dominance in most industries and as such, the evident wage gap and glass ceiling still exists.

5.3 Research Question 2- Self efficacy

5.3.1 Research Question 2: Uncover to what extent mind-set, motivation and perseverance plays a role in women executives career path.

This research question is linked to self- efficacy theory and how an individual will persevere even when times are tough or the odds are stacked against them, if they have a strong sense of self. This question serves to identify key attributes, skills or behaviour that the individual possesses or perhaps lacks and that results in their current career position. It will also identify what character traits are required for success.

Participants were asked questions as per the interview guide that would help answer this research question. The questions that provided answers to this research question were centred around what motivates them, who their roles models were, how they deal with challenges and opportunities, and what they face as a female in the corporate world.

There were many codes generated for these questions. These codes were then grouped as per categories highlighted in the table below. The main categories were motivators, career progression, individual character traits and character traits for success.

Table 6: Categories of self-efficacy that impact females' career path.

	Category
1	Motivators
2	Career progression
3	Individual character traits
4	Character traits for success

The codes with the highest frequency (subcategory) are listed in the table below.

Table 7: Subcategories that relate to research question 2 with top 3 frequency.

Category	Subcategory	Frequency
1. Motivators	Growth mind-set	5
	Internal drive	4
	Fear of failure	3
2. Career progression	Bias between male and females	23
	Value that you bring	7
	Adapt for success	5
3. Individual character traits	Driven	3
	Structured individual	3
	Assertive, focused	2
4. Character traits for success	Education linked to success	9
	EQ importance	7
	Self-aware	6

5.3.1.1 Motivators

With regards to the motivators for an individual, having a growth mind-set, being able to provide for future generations and an internal drive is what keeps a female executive motivated. The growth mind-set for an individual was stated as always wanting to improve themselves, both personally and professionally. On an individual basis, having the maturity to acknowledge that you do not know everything and can still learn, also formed a basis to continuously grow.

“In my earlier years even if courses weren’t related to my specific line of work there was once a bed and breakfast course or the King Report I always did additional learning to make sure that... I think it was just a hunger for learning and knowledge and always trying to be the best I can in a range of areas as well.” P4

“If I get to a point that I know I can do more and I want more and I can, you know, see a different way of doing things then I will ask for it.” P5

"I think that's a motivator, just be the best you can be and tomorrow grow. Be better tomorrow than what you are today." P1

"I always want to be the best at what I am doing. It comes from a space of some kind of assurance I know I can do it. So I do what I know I can do best."

P6

Some were motivated by being the best version of themselves. Some were motivated by a challenge and being acknowledged once they have overcome the challenge. Proving disbelievers wrong was also a motivator. Proving to people that you can exceed their expectations and achieve what they think is not possible, as stated by P10, was also important:

"I think that, for me, it's knowing that I've achieved something, it's knowing that I've been faced with a challenge, and I've achieved it is motivation for me. And I look for challenges and then look for things that people said, Oh, no, maybe she can't, can't do. And for me, that's the internal driver that I have, a want to challenge, I want to be challenged, I want to achieve. And I like to be acknowledged, also, you know, so the more of that, that I get, the more it drives me to do something."

Four participants stated that their motivation started internally, through an internal drive that they could not explain. They knew there was something in them that kept them driven and motivated to persevere.

"I do think that they there is an internal drive as well. My motivation is completely internal." P3

"I think my drivers are internal." P10

"I think it is an internal driver thing." P7

Some participants stated that the ability to provide for their children and future generations was a source of motivation. The results also showed that having a growth mind-set and being able to provide for their families motivated the participants to do more.

"The ability to provide and the ability to succeed in what I am doing makes me want more of." P11

"Be able to provide for my future generations. I am really driven." P2

Other participants indicated that a fear of failure and wanting to achieve in their life, be it in school, college or the corporate world, kept them motivated. Others mentioned an overall feeling of being driven and motivated as what they have known their entire life and that it was built into their personality.

"I'm completely not competitive, but I am super against failing. So, I will do enough to make sure that I don't fail. Fear of failure it's terrible for me." P3

"I have a phobia for failure so it's really bad." P11"

One very interesting topic that came up during the interviews was the pay gap between men and women. One participant indicated that she was motivated by money. Another two participants acknowledged the financial aspect, however, said it had no bearing on their desire for work.

"I am motivated by my salary." P5

"My main focus, if I could put a smile on someone's face, and one day and add value to something that they are doing, for me, that's more accomplishment than any financial gain." P10

"I like money, of course, everybody does, but money... Money allows you to have experiences and that's the value of money. Money is, as, as a motivator doesn't have any value for me at all. What motivates me is just, just a job done well. I just want to. I want to know that I did my best." P3

5.3.1.2 Career progression

In terms of female career progression and their experiences to date, there were a few key opinions that came through. As much as there has been progress with female empowerment, there are stereotypes and bias towards either males or females that still exist. Some women have noticed this and felt the impact of it in their careers. Some have stated that it has hindered their progress. The bias could take on different forms, from a wage gap based on gender, to stereotypes around personalities and expectations of genders.

"I definitely think because I was a female in the earlier years I couldn't progress higher." P4

“He had a discussion with the, with the MD the one day and he said to him... Why am I getting so much more money than Mary, because he had found out one way or the other what I was earning, and the MD said to him, because you're a male and you have to, you're the breadwinner of a family, Mary is a female.” P3

“I think there, there's, there are still some, well there's still lots of bias in the work place... I think sometimes we expect males to make decisions maybe a little bit quicker. Maybe to make better decisions, make more strategic decisions. Um, so I think there's sometimes an expectation that their decision making holds greater gravitas than a female's decision would”. P5”

Many echoed the importance of being adaptable, and constantly reinventing yourself to ensure that you add value as an individual. Your personality has to allow you to engage and seek to understand people. As an individual you need to bring value to the organisation and the people around you. Bringing value to people make them more accepting of you and they want you to be on their team.

“You need to constantly reinvent and diversify yourself for as long as you are a profitable person in some or other way you will have support in the workplace. The day you aren't and you try and assert yourself is the day you're out of there.” P11

“I think you have to add value to your company every single day... And, you know, and then to adapt or its adaptability. I know of corporate executives who've been retrenched in their positions, and simply because they haven't been able to adapt they are jobless.” P8

The importance of being relevant and updated with regards to knowledge and skills on what is happening inside the organisation as well as the outside environment, was also noted. One needs to be adaptable in order to stay relevant in an ever-changing corporate environment.

“If you don't learn, and if you don't evolve into what the global village is growing into, you're going to be left behind”. P10

“I think we're incredibly agile, we have to be.” P6

Living in a democracy also came up, as did the implementation of Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). Some participants acknowledged that their progress was due to designated appointments for people of colour and female candidates.

“The Government platform the affirmative action, the BEE platform has opened up opportunities like somebody like myself that I feel is very deserving you know, aside from my raising the fact that yes, some jobs were prejudiced, you know, did they have to kind of think, of yeah she is BEE but she doesn’t have that qualification and never had to, but I don’t think I would have had a fair chance if there were not those restrictions on certain jobs, so the legal legislation, if you will, has opened up certain opportunities and selectively, not completely up to their own discretion.” P2

“So, to be quite honest, I think my, you know, my gender has, because of BEE, to be very honest, like this role was created for a female. And if it wasn’t, I probably would not have gotten the job. So I noticed that were roles are created for female, the female of colour, that’s really where you would, you would actually get called, for a job.” P9

Another factor that came up was the added responsibilities that females have in addition to their careers, such as the role of mother, wife, sister, and daughter. This was also mentioned in question one. It plays a role in their career progression, how they handle their day to day job, and how they approach life. It was also noted that women are not good at promoting themselves. They have their own internal barriers and bias that prevent them moving forward. Women also have their own style of leadership and that difference is now being noted and acknowledged to some extent by the corporate world.

“I think women are inherently worse at selling themselves. They are less likely to kind of make people aware of how good they are and what their skills sets are and their achievements.” P7

“I think I could probably be further if I was not female but I think in the areas it has helped is my ability to be a different leader than those people are used to. So when you’re used to a certain type of leadership and I bring a different kind of leadership because I am female. I think that has enabled me to grow.” P6

5.3.1.3 Individual character traits

The individual character traits that each of the participants possessed mainly involved being assertive, driven and structured. They shared similar character traits.

"I am really driven." P7

"A stickler for rules. Very structured, very process driven" P10

"I'm quite a structured individual... I'm kind of straightforward, no frills kind of, assertive individual" P5

5.3.1.4 Character traits for success

Character traits that are needed for success include education and constantly learning and reinventing yourself. Staying relevant and up to date, through education, with what is going on in a particular industry, is important for career success. The importance of experience, which is gained over time and opportunity, also came up.

"I think education in any industry goes a long way, there is a lot to said for experience, I mean some of our older less educated colleagues have seen this company through crises, global crises after global crises and they are not without their valuable contribution definitely, but every time I see a brilliant lesser educated person I wonder what a smidge of education would have done." P2

"From a knowledge perspective, I continuously keep my myself up to date with through either training. And through, you know, being just to just being knowledgeable about your general affairs and things like that." P9

Emotional intelligence and awareness are gaining attention and momentum in the corporate world. As people evolve, so do the requirements for being a leader in the corporate sector. The corporate world is changing and the requirements for being emotionally aware and conscious have increased in value.

"I also trained myself on a lot of what they call emotional intelligence. So I think as accountants, we may be born with it. But I, the reason why we the reason why I do that is because I feel that if I learn skills, on how to handle, you know like, how to address people, it will assist me better in progressing further." P9

“Experience and time has been my success, my experience and my maturity over time and building up EQ in terms of character traits, just knowing how to deal with various cultures as well from a cultural diversity, emotionally, intelligent point of view also works in your favour.” P2

With the increasing awareness regarding transformation and gender parity, the need for leaders at a corporate level to create a platform for success is critical. As much as the responsibility for change and success is on an individual level, corporates need to provide a platform that encourages this success and development.

“But also creating a platform for people to shine. I think a lot of us, both female and males we like to hog and we need to recognize and acknowledge that if someone in my team does well it actually also reflects well on me so I don’t need to be the one that runs around like a headless chicken trying to get all the glory.”. P12

“I think that is the big change, the focus on people and people development, and team dynamics and seeing how people can perform if you give them the environment to do it in”. P7

Another trait for success was being self-aware in the sense of knowing what is going on around you, what needs to happen, and what your boundaries are. You must know who you are and what drives your success. It is also about having a passion and love for what you do. If you are not passionate about what you do, you will not want to excel at it.

“So the one thing I found is you become aware of. I don’t know if that makes sense but when you move around between firms or you have been left to fend for yourself long enough you acquire a sense not awareness just a heightened understanding of what’s happening around...You always keep your ear on the ground you know what’s happening around you and you stay very aware to what’s not being said.” P11

“You can’t be too worried about other people’s perspectives or perceptions because then you, then you’re not going to be convincing, you’re not going to be able to sell your concept.” P3

“You have to have the love, you have to have the passion for it and you have to want to continually grow.” P1

The importance of having a good support system and family came up as enablers for success. With additional support, an individual can take the necessary steps and go the extra mile to ensure their success.

“Just I can do it and just having good support systems around you that encourage you to say yes you can; you can do this that for me has been probably the greatest lesson. There have been other people around me that moulded me into the concept of Ubuntu, you are because of others. So family, my immediate family, my extended family, my colleagues, mentors, teachers.” P1

The results for this question showed that mind-set, motivation and perseverance through different circumstances, ensures career progression. Women face many challenges on a daily basis and at times, there are biases that are not under their control. Their individual character traits have aided their success. Education, self-awareness and emotional intelligence are all important for senior female executive success.

5.4 Research Question 3- Social identity and self-efficacy

5.4.1 Research Question 3: How do individual’s social identity and self-efficacy relate to each other for senior executive women in corporate South Africa?

This question will help identify if there is a link between societal influence and the individuals’ self-efficacy which leads to a females’ current career status or position. It serves to unpack to what extent social identity and self-efficacy impacts women in corporate South Africa.

Table 8: Categories of social identity and self- efficacy

	Category
1	Perceived Image
2	Expectations of women
3	Underrepresentation of women
4	Cliques

The codes with the highest frequency (subcategory) are listed in the table below.

Table 9: Subcategories that relate to research question 3 with top 3 frequency.

Category	Subcategory	Frequency
1. Perceived Image	Firm to enforce rules	3
	Maturity professionally and personally	3
	Perception that you are less than	2
2. Expectations of women	Expectation to look good	3
	Women critical of women	1
3. Underrepresentation of women	Underrepresentation of female executives	7
	Token placements	4
	Societal support	2
4. Cliques	Boys club	12
	Cliques- male and female	9
	Perception and legacy thought patterns	6

5.4.1.1 Perceived Image

In terms of the way people or associates see the executives and the way in which they view them, it was noted that they needed to be firm to be taken seriously and enforce the rules of the company. It was noted that if they were too friendly, then it becomes difficult to draw the line between being professional, enforcing a decision and having a friendship.

“The rest of the staff, I have to be, I can’t be as friendly, I need to be a bit firm, I need to be seen as the custodian of fools also. So I tend not to be too friendly, I tend to maintain that professional relationship with them.” P10

“And really speaking in a working environment, someone like myself has to make decisions, some decisions are liked and some decisions are not liked. Now if I have to have call it work friends, you know, it’s going to be very difficult for me to be objective and for me to be neutral and for me to enforce certain decisions on them.” P9

Furthermore, it was noted that as the executives gained experience and matured in their careers, it helped them gain perspective on what was important to them both personally and professionally. They learnt how to deal with situations and how to evaluate a situation from many different perspectives and evaluate holistically. As

they gained personal maturity, they could remove the emotions from a decision and understand the reasons behind decisions on a professional level.

"I just think that if I had stayed in sales forever, some things are not that serious, I know that now, whereas back then because I had a number to make they were life and death right, I really just think maturity, maturity in the role itself, maturity personally as well." P2

"I think... you know we just get more mature. What that means is that you... I think you are just a lot less emotionally affected by things like changes in organisations; changes in leadership; changes in strategy. You kind of have maturity to understand there are reasons for changes." P7

It was also noted that some female executives felt like because they are female, they are not good enough and are perceived to be inferior. There seems to be a perception that certain traits are specific to males and certain attributes are appropriate for females, which can be disconcerting.

It's always a perception that you are less than. It's different because you're younger, you're browner, and you haven't been in their circles long enough. So I experienced all of it." P11

I think there's definitely a perception of, of, of how different roles require different types of attributes. And some attributes may be more suited to male rather than female." P5

5.4.1.2 Expectations of a women

The one point that came across from the female executives was the expectation for them to look a certain way, all the time. There is an expectation that female executives need to have a glamorous, flawless, and to an extent, an elegant look or physical appearance.

"I think woman are expected to look good." P2"

"I think that, so number one, in my view, is a female exec is always expected to look like she walked out of a salon. Yes. Always, like, really nicely dressed." P9

It has been noted earlier on that women seem to be extremely critical of themselves. They are also noted to discredit themselves and have self-doubt. In line with this, it seems like women tend to be critical of each other. When you are in an environment that is critical, or disabling, one needs to overcome that and understand the reasons behind it. This is surprising as the expectation would be to support each other, rather than be critical.

“I do find that other women are most critical of women in the workplace.” P4

5.4.1.3 Underrepresentation of women

With regards to female representation at executive level, it has been clearly stated by the participants that there is a clear underrepresentation of females at the executive level in companies and on boards. There certainly is awareness of the underrepresentation and companies are trying to change this but there is little progress towards parity.

“Also I read an article yesterday in terms of women on boards, I have got a friend who is the head of IOD, Institute of Directors as well, once again hardly any women specifically on the African continent on the boards even though they are trying to reverse that.” P4

“So we have those two, two challenges in this environment and I think there is, you know, we, we doing more in terms of the race representation, and we can do that through employment etcetera, but we not getting to where we need to in terms of women representation. We are very male dominated at the, the kind of Exco level.” P5

“I think that, you know, we are we are at a point now where people are looking for female executives.” P10

In an effort to reach parity, companies are looking to hire female executives. However, in some cases, some females are hired as token placements and this seems to be doing more harm than good. Females are placed in positions, in some cases, to reach a specific equity score and are not equipped with the correct skills to fulfil their roles and as such, this has a knock-on effect of giving the female employee a bad reputation.

“I think that was also is something that we sometimes it's just token placements, you know, the females are put in positions just because, you

know, they need a female on seat, and then you see how much how much damage that does, because there's no skill behind the actual placement.” P10

“If you have a look at how many successful women they are in positions for an executive role, there's not that many, but those that are there, I wonder sometimes, how much of them are there because they are trying to, because you'd have your, your big corporate trying to show that they are, you know, they have found a really talented woman, they actually are listening to her. And they and, she's actually running her role? And How many are there because it's just what the law or it's what our law requires now and are they actually running their role, are their ideas being valued.” P9

In order to overcome some of the challenges faced of female representation, it is important to have the support of society and the people around you. Society has a role to play in changing the mind-set of people and it was noted that it has to start at schools and with parents. Society needs to change the perception of what is possible and what is allowed for females so that it becomes acceptable, inclusive and equal between genders.

There was a time when certain careers, career choices, education and training was very like kind of boys did this and girls did this. So I think South Africa started with a huge deficit of qualified females, even like I'm talking twenty years ago and fifteen years ago. I think the education system has changed slightly in the fact that there is now a lot of awareness that women can also be an engineer. It sounds very basic these things, but it is very important.” P7

“Women should be encouraged to pursue their goals...What I'm saying is, is that society doesn't need to take it on extreme where a woman is expected to be like a man for her to get equal rights, but what society can do is, they can say that, you know, if a female wants to pursue something, to give them that encouragement, and that starts from the teachers, it starts from parents, So and I think that because of a lot of our cultural background.” P9

5.4.1.4 Cliques

There is also the boys club which was mentioned which some ladies said has a negative impact on the organisation, whilst some noted that it has no impact on them or the organisation. It has been noted that the boys club is a way for the men to hold their position and high status in a society that is moving towards equality. Some pointed out that the formation of cliques or a boys' club can be negative in the sense that people that are not included in the circle or club, can feel like they are being left out of the loop. As such, this can be unhealthy and has a negative effect. Some females have worked their way into the boys club and have dissolved the notion and showed the members the damage that it can cause. As such, in many cases, the traditional boys club is slowly falling away.

"I think that still happens today it might not be as obvious in terms of them all going off to play golf, but some of them still do...There's definite cliques. And it's not always very healthy for a company, but there are." P4

"I think for me, it was what also broke the ice was getting involved more from a personal point of view, rather than just business, start talking about, okay, what are you kids doing, you know, what's happening with them, Can I help you with your salary structure, can I help you with your taxes or whatever it needs to break that ice to break the barrier, you know, and once that barrier is broken it at that point was I didn't realize how difficult it actually was going to be to be accepted as part of the boys club, you know." P10

"It is not large but it is powerful and they do tend to side-line you a bit if you're not really assertive and in there. Then I guess, you know there are some cultural groupings, but personally I haven't found it to be restrictive." P7

"I think its self-preservation by males because if you're getting more women representatives then it means more of the males will need to let go of their seats if you know what I mean. Because males believe that they know everything compared to females there isn't an intention, an intention to get it right." P12

The formation of cliques in a corporate setting seems to be based on a need for support. This could involve both males and females and are formed based on things people have in common and the need for support. People identify with certain people and as such can relate to them and turn to them for support.

"There are definitely cliques, both male and female cliques. There is a group of men that will support each other, there is a group of females that will support each other." P2

"I think these definitely gender based cliques, ja, I would like to see an organization where that doesn't happen." P3

"I think you always going to find groups, you know, people will gravitate to people that they feel comfortable with. I think it, it's about making sure that even if people are gravitating that they have to feel part of the bigger organization so that what they learning in those groups where it's relevantly shared for what they doing in their roles or to support their teams, you know." P5

Other participants said that the formation of a boys club was based on a legacy thought pattern. It is based on the fact that men typically held executive positions and women were not expected to have a position of power. The boys club started many years ago and continued through time. Quotations below illustrate this.

"It's the boys club, the men. I suppose it's also from when the women didn't have the vote. It's just the whole legacy and the perception that women aren't good enough and maybe the woman's place is in the home. The inner circle, outer circle, which can be good in one way for an organisation, but in another way destabilising, not good for the culture, it is actually quite sad." P4

"I think typically the CEOs and GMs of these companies were appointed, I thinking its legacy. It's got very little to do with qualification rather than legacy." P6

As noted earlier, many women have internal drivers and inherent character traits that helped them reach success. There were other traits that were mentioned that also impacted how they were seen and helped their progression. Creating an environment that is productive, collaborative and encouraging helps people relate to you. Confidence is a trait that is needed in the corporate environment and women especially need to show confidence. It is also becoming more apparent, the unique skills that women possess that may not be skills based but based on inherent character traits.

“I suppose confidence; I think that’s also very important for a woman in the working environment.” P4

“Let’s say natural ability to provide people with more guidance maybe, more support, more friendly working environments than men can. A generalisation because there are men with those skills as well. I think there is a very heightened awareness now both globally and locally around the contribution women make that are not necessarily skill based. They’re inherent characteristics that we have.” P7

The results for research question three indicate that society does play a role on an individual’s career path by setting certain expectations of what is required and acceptable for a woman. The formation of cliques is based on a legacy thought pattern for the boys club. For other cliques that are gender based, this seems to form based on common ground and a need for support. Women are underrepresented in corporate South Africa, even though there seems to be an awareness around this. There has been progress made but not enough.

5.5 Summary of findings

The summary of the results indicates that social identity and self-efficacy can be related to the career progression of a female. These results indicate that childhood experiences mould a females thought patterns and beliefs. Society expects women to fulfil different roles in their lives which does, in turn, impact their career goals and future. The corporate work environment can be enabling or disabling for a female executive. Companies are trying to create enabling work environment and are trying to empower females. There is, however, a perception that women are not good enough and not capable of doing their jobs. This has been exacerbated by token placements.

A growth mind-set, internal drive and a fear of failure are key motivators to career success. Career progression for a female is dependent on internal individual characteristics and external factors. Inherent character traits and developed character traits determine and impact success. A high self-efficacy helps a women create her own social identity. Societal views need to change to support female development. The next chapter will discuss the results in detail and link the literature in chapter two to the findings presented above.

Chapter 6: Discussion of results

6.1 Introduction

The research findings are discussed in this chapter. It takes into consideration the literature review done in chapter 2 and the results described in chapter 5. The results obtained, as well as the literature reviewed, have helped to answer the research questions that are highlighted in chapter 3. The findings in this chapter will identify and discuss key themes that have emerged from the results. Themes were generated by the identification of similarities between the categories and subcategories that could provide meaning to the research questions. The subcategories with the highest frequency were used to analyse the data. The table below lists the themes along with the categories that were identified for each theme.

Table 10: Table showing themes and related categories.

Themes	Category
Theme 1: Childhood experiences mould a females thought patterns and beliefs.	Childhood Influence
Theme 2: Society expects women to fulfil different roles in their lives which does in turn impact their career goals and future.	Social expectations of women
	Demand of an executive
Theme 3: Corporate work environment can be enabling or disabling for a female executive.	Challenges and opportunities at work
	Identification with work environment
Theme 4: A growth mind-set, internal drive and a fear of failure are key perceived motivators to career success.	Motivators
Theme 5: Career progression for a female is dependent on internal individual characteristics and external factors.	Individual character traits
	Career progression
Theme 6: Inherent character traits and developed character traits determine and impact success.	Character traits for success

Theme 7: A high self-efficacy helps a women create her own social identity.	Perceived Image
	Expectations of women
Theme 8: Societal views need to change to support female development.	Cliques
	Underrepresentation of women

The discussion of the results is presented according to the research questions. The results are discussed according to the themes generated for each research question. The themes provide a high-level summary of the data. An abbreviated summary of the literature is then discussed. The results will either confirm what is already known in the literature or it will uncover new information on senior female executives and what they face as they progress through their career.

6.2 Discussion of results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: Explore how past experiences influence a females' career goals and their future planning.

This question's objective was to uncover if past experiences play a role in how the individual plans her future and career goals. The expectation from the data was to identify which experiences play a role, what role it is and who the influencers are. It identified the key people that determine the direction of the individuals' career. Experiences are related to people and the social setting that the individual would have been exposed to in her life. The social setting could be people or institutions that the individual has either grown up with or come into contact with throughout her life, be it during childhood, adolescence or adulthood. The question also looked at the role of society and social expectations and how these aspects would have influenced a woman's career and future goals. This question also focused on how the current work environment impacted the participant and the way that they felt.

6.2.1 Theme 1: Childhood experiences mould a females thought patterns and beliefs.

Based on the data obtained from the interviews conducted in this study, each participant reported being influenced by their parents or sometimes their entire

family. The most influential seemed to be the mother, as stated by the participants. The mothers impacted the career choices that the participants made by encouraging them and reinforcing certain beliefs. Some mothers displayed gendered roles and fulfilled gendered duties such as being the caregiver, cooking and cleaning and being a good wife. Their daughters took on the same role but chose a career path that fitted the gendered stereotype such as a role in HR. On the other hand, there were some parents or mothers, who did not embody the stereotypical roles, with daughters that who followed their own path and made their decisions based on what they wanted to do as an individual.

Participants whose parents shared an egalitarian view of the world chose career paths that were not gender stereotyped. They were encouraged to do what made them happy and as such, they did what they thought would be best for them. The participants, through the encouragement from their parents, believed they had the capabilities to pursue a career of their choice and not necessarily what was expected of them.

Some participants in this study, although their families shared a patriarchal point of view, changed the direction of their future and made a conscious decision not to follow in the same path. They saw beyond what was in front of them and wanted more for their future.

Based on the literature, the self-efficacy of the participants was high given what they could do for themselves and they knew what they were capable of, regardless of what they saw in front of them (Bandura, 1986; Gu et al., 2015). A study by Lazarides and Watt (2017), states that parent beliefs influence a child's self-schemata which in turn impacts the child's expectation for success and their career ambitions. A study by Piatek-Jimenez et al., (2018) supports this.

Literature states that mothers who share a non-traditionally gendered attitude towards certain careers, have children who show a greater self-efficacy toward these careers (Piatek-Jimenez et al., 2018). This also relates to one of the four factors of self-efficacy which is vicarious persuasion. Vicarious persuasion relates to the support that is received from the people around you or people that you know in the form of verbal encouragement (Gu et al., 2015).

Therefore, the findings for this theme, confirm the literature. Childhood experiences does influence a child, their behaviour and their self-efficacy. Parents, especially

mothers, play an important role in their child's aspirations and future goals. Parents' encouragement of their children's career aspirations could lead to their successful attainment. Parent beliefs and stereotypes can be passed on to their children and will influence their future decisions.

6.2.2 Theme 2: Society expects women to fulfil different roles in their lives which does in turn impact their career goals and future.

The participants noted that women are expected to fulfil many roles. They are still expected to take on more and excel in all they do. The participants believe there is the traditional expectation from society of being a mother, homemaker, caregiver and then comes the professional side. The perception is that women need to be boxed into a specific stereotype that was created for them by history or culture. Women are expected to be present in all the roles that they have, and are expected to be at their optimum best, in all their roles. The respondents also felt that they had to work harder to prove themselves and show that they deserve to have a seat at the table. Many participants said they had to learn to juggle their roles and make it work. The participants found a way to have a balance and fulfil their duties both at home and work, but it does add an extra layer of complexity to their daily life.

When the participants were asked about the demands of their job, it was noted that the demands of their job as an executive is the same for anyone in their role. There are, however, added complexities with the additional responsibilities that they have in terms of being a mother, wife, and caregiver. The ladies emphasised the importance of the support systems that they have in place. Their support system could be in the form of family, husband or extended help. They confirmed that their support systems have helped them excel at their careers and personal life.

Furthermore, it was noted that some respondents have noticed a change in the traditional way of thinking and society is becoming more open minded on the role fulfilment of a female. The respondents stated that people are setting their own norms and traditions. It is a choice that a woman makes on an individual level to either conform or adjust. Women are not just conforming and are making changes that will help build a progressive society that will not impose certain expectations on future generations.

Literature supports the notion that working women have the added responsibility of taking care of their families, in terms of childcare, household responsibilities and being a wife, which add another layer of complexity and stress to their lives (Bomбуwela & Chamaru, 2013; Irem et al., 2016). Their male counterparts, generally, do not have the same challenges as they rely on their wives for this support. It has been noted that executive women do not benefit from spousal support (Bomбуwela & Chamaru, 2013). It is, therefore, imperative that women have social as well as psychosocial support (Wang, 2009).

Women would most likely choose to put their families before their career and it is for this reason that they make career sacrifices (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019). Being in the minority in most industries, there is extra pressure on females to prove themselves and work harder. Literature states that women feel the need to prove themselves as their performance and actions are carefully evaluated (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019) .

The data found in this study therefore supports the current literature on the societal expectations of women. There is still an expectation of women to work harder to prove themselves. Women are a minority in the corporate environment and this does shine a light on them and adds an extra level of scrutiny to their performance. Society still expects a woman to be a wife, mother and fulfil her household duties before she is recognised as a working professional that performs the same duties as any executive. This is interesting because South Africa is the same as the developed world, and in spite of our very innovative constitution and all the regulatory frameworks to ensure the equity of women, it appears that even at the most senior levels, where women have a proven track record of performance, the societal expectations still apply and are practiced. Despite this, there seem to be early signs that attitudes are changing, however, it seems like for every one step forward, there are others that remain fixed in their thoughts and beliefs.

6.2.3 Theme 3: Corporate work environment can be enabling or disabling for a female executive.

The data that supports this theme highlighted the type of environment women find themselves operating in and how that influences their experience on a daily basis, as well as their future opportunities. Many of the participants saw the South African

corporate environment as white male dominated. The male dominance further enhances the inequalities faced by these women. Male dominance impacts females career progression in a number of ways. There are a number of barriers that women need to overcome in order to progress professionally.

In a male dominated environment, many participants felt the need to adapt in order to fit in. They purposely worked harder, in order to justify their placement and to progress. Some participants felt like they did a lot more work than their male counterparts and were expected to do so.

There were many barriers that these women have experienced throughout their careers and through their journey as an executive. In one way or another, women are hindered in the workplace. Some of these are shown through the difference in pay for males and females, the glass ceiling, and the difficulty in working with other women.

The issue around salary and the wage gap between males and females is no secret. These senior executive women are aware of the gap and find it difficult to understand the reasons behind it. They believe they work harder and are doing the exact same job as their male counterparts yet they are paid less just because they are female. Some are doing a better job than their male counterparts, yet they get paid less.

Surprisingly, many of the executive women commented on the lack of support and backlash that they receive or have experienced from other women. It is surprising as they would expect other women to be supportive of them but instead women seem to oppress other women. They are more critical of each other than men.

Another barrier is the glass ceiling. These executive women have experienced it in their careers. They have noted that sometimes a woman gets to a certain point in her career and she cannot progress any further. Some have experienced it and have broken through it. Some have noted that in the past, there was a clear line in the sand, and women knew they could reach a certain level but not progress any further. Now, however, there has been progress made in this regard. Companies are becoming more open and transforming their agendas to be more inclusive, allowing females to progress through the ranks. There are a number of initiatives by companies, which are supporting this transformation and it will be discussed below as it ties in with the work environment of executive females.

A number of the participants highlighted company initiatives and transformation agendas that are now part of policy in order to make a change towards an equal and inclusive work environment. Many mentioned working in an environment that instills a culture of inclusivity and empowering women to climb the corporate ladder. Many spoke of programs or groups that were formed to give women a platform to express their feelings, encourage their development, and provide a safe place for them to engage and be motivated. It is acknowledged that women have not been afforded the same opportunities as men and many organisations are trying to remedy that through these initiatives.

Mentorship was highlighted as a key driver in the progression of women through the ranks. Many of the participants attributed their success to their mentors. It was noted that with the help and guidance of their mentors, they were able to gain experience and exposure, and progress to senior levels within their companies and throughout their careers. Their mentors provided them with a platform and opportunity to explore, learn and grow. Without access to their mentors and their support, these executive women would not have had the exposure and opportunities that they had. They also provided them with the support and encouragement to test boundaries and push their development. This also ties back to the male dominated environment that these executives operate in. Without the help of their mentors, which in many cases were male, they would not have been afforded the same opportunities.

Literature states that a work environment is based on cultural, historical practices and beliefs, and tends to favour certain groups of people (Yavorsky, 2016). Traditionally it was white men who had the opportunities for career progression into executive roles. It is through these views that the inequalities in the workplace were reinforced. These views contribute to a work place culture that is not inclusive and reinforces gender inequality (Yavorsky, 2016; Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019).

The reasons given in literature for the gender wage gap is that women are unable to negotiate a higher salary for themselves. They are also expected to take more leave due to family responsibility (van Staden et al., 2019). Literature, does however, support the notion that there is no difference in terms of productivity between men and women. Women tend to believe that their efforts will be recognised by their manager and as such, they will be compensated or rewarded accordingly. Men, on the other hand, are more assertive and will speak about their achievements and ask for what they think they deserve (van Staden et al., 2019).

It has been noted that male dominated management teams and environments can create in-group and out-group divisions as per social identity theory and this can result in inequality amongst men and women at work. It creates an environment where the unfair treatment of women is further perpetuated by unequal pay and fewer promotion opportunities (Larasatie et al., 2019).

The glass ceiling is another barrier that women face as they progress in their careers. This is a metaphor used to describe the barriers that women face in their career. It manifests itself in the form of unequal pay for the same job description, stereotypical beliefs and bias towards women, and a non-inclusive culture within a company (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013; Smith et al., 2012). The traditional boys club, lack of female mentors, and tokenism, contribute to the glass ceiling by not affording women the same opportunities as men (Smith et al., 2012).

Women in leadership positions that view other women as less agentic than themselves, will distance themselves from them (Mölders et al., 2018). This could be seen as women not supporting other women and is commonly known as the “queen bee” phenomenon. It generally happens in a male dominated environment, where women in senior positions have aligned with their male counterparts. This further propels the inequalities that women face in the corporate environment and solidifies the hierarchy (Larasatie et al., 2019).

Mentoring plays a pivotal role in the career development and progression of a female by giving her access through mentorship to people of power within the organization (Arora & Rangnekar, 2014; Srivastava, 2015). This in turn also helps when dealing with gender inequality in a corporate setting, however, the empirical evidence available is still unconvincing in this regard (Srivastava, 2015). Women struggle to find mentors that can assist them. A reason for this is that traditionally, men served as mentors, as they held the leadership positions in companies. Men are generally more comfortable with male protégées than female ones, as they can relate to another man on a personal and professional level. Women also struggle to find female mentors as there is a lack of female representation in leadership positions. As a result, mentors are not easily accessible to women (Wang, 2009). Men tend to gain more network advantage from mentoring than females do (Srivastava, 2015; Wang, 2009).

Taking into consideration the findings in the data and the literature, it can be further noted that while there have been, and are, changes in the work environment, it is still largely a male dominated environment that women operate in. Women find themselves working harder to prove themselves and find the need to prove themselves which is also stated in the literature. The participants reiterated this. It is because of the male dominance that the barriers to females' career progression still exist. Women are not afforded the same opportunities as men when they are a minority in the workplace. The glass ceiling is a phenomenon that has been around for years and even though there are attempts to change this, and work environments are trying to be progressive and transform, it still exists. The data confirms the literature.

Awareness around the difference in salaries between the genders is transparent in most cases yet women are not sure of how to overcome this. Literature provides some explanation but this information contradicts what the participants had to say. Many of the participants could not understand why they were paid less for the same job description which could then translate to a lack of knowledge on the participants' side or a lack of exploration on the theoretical side. Women believe they are working harder, yet the literature states that the productivity between men and women are the same. This is perhaps a topic that requires further exploration to understand why female executives are paid less. The interviews indicated that some participants did question the discrepancy, while others accepted it for what it is, so it is not a case of participants not asking for what they deserve. Women in executive positions have evolved and have learnt to be just as assertive as their male counterparts.

The queen bee syndrome still exists in an environment that is supposed to be transforming. Queen bee syndrome is a phrase that is used to describe the way women treat other women. Women are still critical of other women and as such are the biggest non-supporters of each other. This supports the points made in the literature and extends the literature, in the sense that, even though women know this exists, it is thriving and adding to the problem. It has also been noted by the participants that, as a woman matures, they understand what is important and what is not. They are also more encouraging and forgiving, and this could be a reason why queen bee syndrome still exists among some women. It could be that they are not mature enough yet to evolve and see the bigger picture.

With regards to mentorship, the findings reiterate what is in the literature. It confirms that mentorship does play an important role in female career progression and development. It does give a woman access to people with power and opportunities that she would not have had without a mentor. Mentorship has certainly helped the participants progress through their careers. It also supports the notion that there are not many female mentors, as the participants that did have a mentor, were mainly male mentors. The data does bring into question whether male mentors will relate or be more comfortable with male protégées than female protégées. Female participants were all chosen by their male mentors. They had a choice between male and female protégées and they chose female. It could also be argued that a female was chosen as a transformation strategy or to get a certain BBBEE score.

The data gained here does confirm the literature around the existence of male dominated work environments and some barriers that exist around this. The glass ceiling, wage gap and queen bee syndrome are all relevant in the current work environment. Mentorship programs and transformation initiatives are key in creating an equal, inclusive work environment where women can feel empowered, engaged and motivated.

6.3 Discussion of results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Uncover to what extent mind-set, motivation and perseverance play a role in executive women's career paths.

This research question is linked to self- efficacy theory and how an individual will persevere even when times are tough or the odds are stacked against them, if they have a strong sense of self. This question will identify key attributes, skills or behaviour that the individual possesses or perhaps lacks, that results in their current career position. It will also identify what character traits are perceived to be required for success.

6.3.1 Theme 4: A growth mind-set, internal drive and a fear of failure are key perceived motivators to career success.

Motivation for the participants had a similar meaning. Amongst the senior executive women, there was an overlap in what motivates them. They all spoke to having a growth mind-set, to always push themselves to learn and develop their skill set. They

expanded their skills to areas of interest that did not necessarily cover their professional expertise. For each of them, there was a need to constantly grow and learn. They also saw this as a way for them to further themselves professionally.

In addition to this, they also had an internal drive that pushed them to be the best version of themselves and to always want more. They all had some kind of internal drive that reassured them and gave them the encouragement to know that whatever they pursue, will be a success. Others were motivated by the challenge of knowing that they could do something and prove their disbelievers wrong. It was a sense of achievement that also provided them with the motivation to complete a task and succeed at it.

In some instances, the participants with families and children found motivation in providing for their children and future generations. The ability to provide for their families motivated them to always persevere, stay on track and push boundaries. It all comes down to seeing the bigger picture and realizing why they are working and doing what they are doing. The inspiration and reasons behind their dedication to success is centred around being able to provide. Other participants noted that their fear of failure was so strong that they were kept motivated to succeed. They have an inbuilt fear to fail and that is what has helped them reach milestones during their entire life.

Another interesting point raised during the interviews was the gender pay gap. Two participants acknowledged that money was important to them, but it has no bearing on their desire for work or their work ethic. The human aspect and adding value to someone's life, was more of a reward to them, than was the financial. One participant did however indicate that her salary motivated her and the financial aspect was very important. There has to be equal pay between her and her male counterparts.

Motivation, according to Bandura (1977), is linked to how an individual behaves and is grounded in an individual's ability to process information. Motivation of behaviour is based on an individual being able to process the outcomes of the future and this provides them with the motivation for current behaviour. Individuals set their own benchmark which allows them to self-reward or adjust their behaviour if their goals are not met. This can be used to explain the perseverance and internal drive that these female executives have. They knew what they needed to do and as such, behaved accordingly so that they could achieve their end goal.

According to literature, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be used to understand the actions of these female executives (Hicklenton et al., 2019). A growth mind-set, internal drive and fear of failure are all extrinsic motivators mentioned by the participants. These are all integrated regulations as the individual identifies with these behaviours. The women understand the value of their actions and they identify with it. It is a key part of who they are and how they behave (Hicklenton et al., 2019). Their actions are governed by these motivators.

The motivation to provide for their families and the fear of failure could be an interjected regulation as the female participants may feel obliged to provide for their families and succeed. They have a need and perhaps an internal pressure that they place on themselves to provide. This motivation is an interjected regulation to their given behaviour (Hicklenton et al., 2019).

These motivators are based on the individual experience but add to the content of the literature. This data extends the literature. Many participants experienced these key motivators and as such, can be noted as key motivators that drive an executive female's success. These motivators are based on what a female identifies with and she behaves accordingly. The key motivators are a growth mind-set, fear of failure, and an internal drive.

6.3.2 Theme 5: Career progression for a female is dependent on internal individual characteristics and external factors.

Participants have noted a number of initiatives aimed at female empowerment, however, many still feel stifled in their careers. Some have noted that had they been male, with the same qualifications and experience, they would be much further in their career than their current position. Participants commented on the clear stereotypes and gender bias that impact on a woman's career. The bias that they face take many forms such as the gender wage gap, stereotypes around personality traits, and expectations imposed on them as women.

The participants also noted that women still have doubts about their capabilities. There is still a belief that a man's decision is weightier than a female's. The participants believe that this is expressed by both women and men. They also believe that men are paid more because there is a stereotype that they are the breadwinner of the house and women are not.

The one constant theme that emerged from all the participants was adding value to the team that they belonged to and to the position they held. They emphasised the importance of being adaptable and relevant. They had to reinvent themselves to suit their position, be relevant, and be an asset to their team members. This strategy helped them gain the support of the people around them. They also needed to be fully aware of what was happening in their industry, and their work environment, both internally and externally. They had to adapt their knowledge and skills to stay up to date with the evolving corporate environment.

In line with the initiatives that have been implemented at government level and company level, many of the participants noted that their appointments were based on BBBEE and were positions earmarked for a female candidate. They know that had this not been the case, they would not have been given the chance to perform at this senior executive level.

While these external factors all contribute to a females' life choices and her career, there are also internal characteristics that impact her. The respondents noted that they have their own unique style of leadership and through time and the changes that are happening, their unique leadership style of being more aware, and perhaps less assertive, is gaining momentum. The benefits of this style are increasingly being realised and appreciated. Some women, however, have felt the need to adapt their style to a masculine style of leadership as this is what works in their corporate environment. Each participant adapted to her surroundings.

Many of the participants noted that their inherent character traits were that of being assertive, structured and straightforward. They were all driven and motivated individuals, which they believed, also contributed to their level of success. It can be argued, according to the literature, that these are in fact masculine traits which are associated with being a good leader (Piatek-Jimenez et al., 2018; Skinner, 2014; Powell & Mukazhanova-Powell, 2019).

Male domination in organisations is a result of male dominated views in society and societal constructs which are based on historical, cultural and social beliefs and values (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012; Cundiff et al., 2018). Male managers believe that women are less capable of doing their job as opposed to their male counterparts. This results in the lack of advancement of females, specifically in male dominated industries. There is a stereotypical perception that the lack of advancement of women

is due to their personality traits and behaviour (English & Jeune, 2012). As stated by the participants, these stereotypes still exist. They experience it and as such, feel the need to work harder to prove they deserve their appointment.

Good leadership is associated with a masculine leadership style of being aggressive, dominant, direct and self-confident (Powell & Mukazhanova-Powell, 2019). Leadership is defined as being assertive, competitive and self-promotion which also fits male traits (Skinner, 2014). Men are assigned greater value, leadership abilities and overall competence due to gender bias, which may be unconscious and unintentional but does have an impact on how women are viewed and treated professionally (Cundiff et al., 2018). As noted by the participants, they have felt the effect of this gender bias and it has impacted their career, mainly negatively.

Research has shown that gendered stereotypes are changing as more women enter the workforce. The stereotype that is changing is the way in which women react to other women. Women are more accepting of other women. The stereotype around men being good managers is not affected by this (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019).

Quota systems are a form of affirmative action to help support women in leadership positions and ensure the employment of women in management positions. It is a way for government and companies to ensure that they are taking the necessary steps to reach gender equity in terms of female representation (Mölders et al., 2018; Booyesen, 2007). It has been noted that there is limited data available to evaluate if the designated groups are benefiting from these initiatives (Patel & Graham, 2012).

The findings under this theme confirms the literature. As stated by the participants, stereotypes still exist. They experience it and as such, feel the need to work harder to prove they deserve their appointment. They have felt the effect of gender bias and it has impacted their career, mainly in a negative light. Many participants have recognised the benefit of the quota and BBBEE system. This data therefore extends the literature on this topic. These participants have experienced the benefit of the quota and BBBEE system to the female designated group and as such this finding provides evidence that the designated groups are benefiting from this initiative.

6.3.3 Theme 6: Inherent character traits and developed character traits determine and impact success.

Some character traits as noted earlier, are inherent to an individual, whilst others are developed over time. One such trait is knowledge which is achieved through

education. All participants mentioned the importance of education and staying abreast of current trends and developments within their industries. They also spoke about the importance of experience which is something that is not taught but a skill that is gained over time and developed through opportunities that are afforded to an individual.

Another important trait is emotional intelligence (EI) and this was also mentioned by the participants. The corporate world is changing and evolving. It is largely centred around people from different cultures and diverse points of view. An executive position involves people management and being able to comprehend circumstances from many perspectives. Participants have acknowledged the relevance of being emotionally intelligent and aware of themselves and the people around them. They believe that it is a skill set that will set them apart and give them an added advantage over their male counterparts who may or may not be as aware or as conscious of emotions.

In relation to having EI, another trait that is important is being self-aware. Participants noted that as an individual, they have had to fight for themselves and the positions that they are in. The way to do that and stay on top is to be self-aware. They needed to be aware of their surroundings, the environment that they operate in, and themselves and their own reactions. They have had to be aware of what has been said and what is not said. It basically is a heightened awareness of what is going on around them and in relation to them.

They also need to have a strong sense of who they are and not look at pleasing other people. They have had to stay true to their core being and beliefs in order to succeed. They also had to have a passion and love for what they are doing to ensure the longevity of their career and themselves.

The last enabling factor that was mentioned was the role that is played by corporate companies. The women mentioned the importance of a company's enablement of women. Companies need to provide a platform and environment that is enabling and allows women to progress and develop. It is the next step to ensuring women are afforded the same opportunities as men. This is further supported in the literature by Holmes, Jackson and Stoiko (2016), which states that companies need to create an environment that promotes inclusivity and allows solutions to be implemented that promote gender equity and diversity.

Research has shown that executives that have emotional intelligence, do better in their jobs and careers than those who do not have this trait (Decker & Cangemi, 2018). EI is more important than intelligence because individuals who have EI are able to motivate themselves, are able to stay hopeful, and empathize and persevere when situations are tough (Rathore et al., 2017). Titles and monetary gain are not motivators for individuals with EI (Decker & Cangemi, 2018). They are also able to create a harmonious work environment with the people they work with by building relationships with them (Arora & Marwah, 2014). The participants echoed the sentiments shared in the literature. The reason why they have developed their EI is to be able to handle situations and develop relationships. It is a skill set that will be useful in their careers. As stated by Arora and Marwah (2014), people with EI are self-aware, can self-manage, and they have social awareness. These traits are needed on an individual basis to be able to set yourself apart and progress.

With the added responsibilities that women have, family structure has an impact on the career success of women (Bomбуwela & Chamaru, 2013). It is for this reason that it is imperative that these women must have social as well as psychosocial support (Wang, 2009). The participants reiterated the importance of support, both from family and the people around them, for their career success. It is because of the added pressure that women also feel the need to work harder to prove themselves, and they pursue further education and training in an attempt to further their careers (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019).

The findings for this theme confirm the literature. The participants recognised the importance of EI, being self-aware and education to their career progression. As such, they have taken steps to ensure they develop themselves around these traits. They also have a love and passion for what they do which helps them succeed and reach their goals. The participants also highlighted the role played by companies to ensure progression in a female's career.

6.4 Discussion of results for Research Question 3

Research question 3: How do individuals' social identity and self-efficacy relate to each other for executive women in corporate South Africa?

This question helped identify if there is a link between past experiences, social identity and the individuals' self-efficacy and their career progression. Females are

underrepresented in senior executive positions. For those who have made it, it is important to understand how they got to their current position and to what extent their experiences, social identity and self-efficacy impacted their journey, so that we can relate that information to other women in corporate South Africa.

6.4.1 Theme 7: A high self-efficacy helps a women create her own social identity.

The data indicates that there are certainly expectations around how a female executive is supposed to look. The perception is that she needs to look her best at all times. In addition to this, as mentioned earlier, the participants had to face criticism from fellow female colleagues which surprised them as one would expect support from other females. The participants also mentioned that they had to be firm and maintain boundaries at work in order to be taken seriously and enforce rules. As such, they maintained a professional relationship with their staff in order to be objective around decisions. It was also noted that as they gained experience and matured, both professionally and personally, the participants were able to handle situations better and more objectively. This would also then tie into the executives gaining EI, as mentioned earlier on. Once again, the participants noticed a perception that as a female executive, they are inferior. It is made clear to them that certain roles require a man and there are certain attributes that may be suited to a man rather than a woman. The respondents noted that the most important thing that a woman needs to have is confidence in herself and her abilities to do her job and complete a task.

Social identity theory states that people will assume a number of social identities in order to be able to identify in social terms and self-identify. The identities they assume are dependent on the context and importance of a situation (Lyons et al., 2019). With this in mind, a female executive may feel the need to distance herself from her subordinates in order to maintain an objective point of view. She will change her identity in the sense that she is friendlier with colleagues or superiors. It is also based on her experience with her subordinates, as social identity is a shared construct (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017). One can assume that based on her experience, she believes that she needs to maintain a distance to ensure that she can be objective and her decisions are taken seriously. This has been voiced by the participants.

Individuals with a high self-efficacy, tend to excel at whatever they do. They also take on challenges and persevere through life (Gu et al., 2015). Self-efficacy also influences career success and career development by determining if an individual will persevere through challenges to obtain success (Seo et al., 2017). This can be seen with the female executives that were interviewed. Regardless of the challenges they faced and continue to face, for example, resistance and criticism from other women, being told that they are not good enough, and knowing that some roles are perceived to be for a man, they still persevered and succeeded. This reinforces the importance of self-efficacy and social identity.

The findings for this theme therefore confirm the literature. A woman with a high self-efficacy is able to create her own identity and not necessarily confirm to what is expected of her. High self-efficacy also helped the participants persevere and face challenges and obstacles, as they knew that had the ability to succeed.

6.4.2 Theme 8: Societal views need to change to support female development.

The participants noted that societal perception is a contributor to the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions. The participants are fully aware of this and many of their companies are looking at changing this by specifically looking for female candidates. This then ties into token placements which were mentioned by the respondents and the pros and cons associated with this. While token placements have their benefits, the ladies noticed the harm that is being done by this. The participants noted that in many cases, placements are made without any skill, which further perpetuates the problem of stereotypes and seeing women as incompetent. The women also wonder if the token placements are given autonomy in the positions they hold.

The participants mentioned that a way to overcome the challenges that they face is by gaining the support of the people around them. Societal views for them are very important as it starts with a young child and enabling that child with an education and support to know that she can do anything she puts her mind to. Women noted that they need a society that recognises the equal opportunities that are available to them professionally, and will offer them a good support system and a family that shared their vision. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, with the added responsibilities that

women face, the support of the people around them is vital to their success. It was noted that having the support of their families enabled their success. In some cases, if some participants did not get the support, it was the motivation to succeed that made the difference. By society accepting the additional role that women have to fulfil and giving them the support they need and encouragement to succeed will ensure that the present generations succeed and the trend for future generations will change. It will allow people to be more open minded and accepting of the possibilities of what a woman can achieve. By having a supportive and open-minded community, this could possibly change stereotypes.

The participants mentioned that the boys club has had a negative impact on their organisation and is unhealthy. Some have tried to break into the circle so that they become more aware of what they are doing by excluding certain people. The participants have noticed that perhaps it is an action that men take in order to hold their position and status in an environment that is now open to diversity. It was also noted that the stereotypes and cliques such as the boys club is based on a legacy thought pattern and it has continued over time. It is for this reason that many of the ladies have formed their own cliques and groups of people. They have their own group of people that they identify with and relate to.

Jordan & Luzader (2016) state that the boys club is toxic for the participants as well as the people around them. A way to overcome this phenomenon is for men and women to align and stop these groups from forming. As stated in social identity theory, male dominated management teams can create in-group and out-group divisions which could lead to the unfair treatment of women through unequal pay and fewer promotion opportunities (Larasatie et al., 2019). The participants have also noted that once the men are aware of the effect of the boys club, they chose to be more open or interactive with everyone. By women starting their own cliques, they form strategic relationships with people that can help them in their career progression (Wang, 2009).

With the added responsibilities that women have, family structure has an impact on the career success of women (Bombuwela & Chamaru, 2013). It is for this reason that it is imperative that these women have social as well as psychosocial support (Wang, 2009).

The findings for this then confirm the literature. The participants have made conscious efforts to break into cliques such as the boys club and have requested that they are dissolved due to the toxic nature of the relationships, thereby proving that the literature is correct and it is a practice that is ongoing and has the same effect. The participants reiterated the importance of support, both from family and the people around them, for their career success. It is because of such added pressure that women also feel the need to work harder to prove themselves, and they pursue further education and training in an attempt to further their careers (Boyol Ngan & Litwin, 2019). The participants have had a similar experience.

The next chapter will summarize the findings discussed in this chapter. It will also cover recommendations for future research, the implications for managers and businesses, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to understand and explore the journey to success for a senior executive in corporate SA. The study looked at the lived experience of the individual, in its entirety, from their childhood experience through to their current situation. The research aim of this exploration was to understand what impacts and contributes to a female's career progression. Data was gathered around their childhood experiences, influence of parents and the impact of legacy thought patterns from the community and social circles. It was also important to understand what the journey to success involved. For example, factors such as the work environment, inherent characteristics of an individual and stereotypes, all played a role in their career progression. Some allowed for career progression and others hindered their progression.

The principal findings will be summarised below. Based on the findings, suggestions for future research, implications for management and business, as well as the research limitations will be presented below.

7.2 Research conclusions

An inductive approach was used for this study which allowed the researcher to gain insight from the data that was collected and analysed. With the use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to build rapport with the participants and get the participants to speak freely about their lived experiences (Saunders et al., 2009). The data answered the research questions and provided the insights summarised below.

Conclusions for research question 1: Past life experiences and the work environment

The first research question aimed to uncover whether past life experiences play a role in how an individual plans her future and career goals. It also looked at the impact that society and the work environment have. The participants confirmed that they were influenced in their early years as children by the people around them, such as their family or community. Children's career ambitions and expectations for success

are impacted by the people around them (Lazarides & Watt, 2017). A mother has the greatest influence on her child's life. The participants echoed these sentiments and many of them shared stories of how their mother encouraged them and nudged them towards working hard and achieving the best results possible. Parent opinions and beliefs can be adopted by their children and as such, a parent needs to be conscious of the stereotypes that exist within and around them (Piatek-Jimenez et al., 2018). It is important for parents to be encouraging and enabling towards their daughters.

Society does impose an expectation on women and they are seen as caregiver, wife and mother before being seen as a professional. The participants attested to this. The participants stated that they needed to work harder to prove themselves as they are a minority group within organisations.

Women work in male dominated environments and as such need to overcome a number of barriers to reach leadership positions and success. Some of these barriers, as stated by the respondents, are the glass ceiling, gender pay gap, and the queen bee phenomenon. It is imperative to create an inclusive, enabling work environment for all employees, especially women. Creating a work environment that is inclusive and enabling, will encourage gender equity and diversity (Holmes et al., 2016). The participants commented on this, stating that an enabling environment encourages development and equal opportunities.

Mentoring programs and transformation initiatives are a good way to encourage the development of women by giving them access to opportunities that they would not have had without these initiatives (Zhenyuan Wang, Zhang, Chen, & Duan, 2016). Many of the participants had mentors that created a path for success for them. They noted that they would not have had the opportunities, that they did have, had it not been for their mentors.

Transformation initiatives such as the quota system and BBEE have also been mentioned by the participants. Many noted that they benefited from these initiatives and as such, this extends the literature by confirming that the female designated group is benefiting from these initiatives. The participants also highlighted the caution that needs to be taken around appointing women as token placements. The participants stated that many companies appoint a female candidate in a position but they are not necessarily the right candidate for the job. The candidate may not be equipped with the right skills but is appointed because they are female. The side

effect of this is that this candidate will be seen as incompetent. The participants therefore noted the importance of hiring according to skills and equipping candidates with the right skills once they are appointed. It is stated in the literature that quota placements for females does impact the way in which they are viewed by their employees and creates a perception of doubt around their ability to do their job (Mölders et al., 2018). The literature also states that BBEE initiatives fail because of lack of engagement from managers to ensure the successful implementation and development and upskilling of their staff (Booyesen, 2007).

Conclusions for research question 2: Motivation and career progression

The second research question looked at female characteristics, the key attributes and skills that they have, and what is needed for success. A growth mind-set, internal drive and fear of failure were the key extrinsic motivators for these senior female executives. Motivation is driven by an expectation of future outcomes, which then provides the driving force behind an individual's current behaviour (Hicklenton et al., 2019). External factors such as stereotypes and gender bias impacts a woman's career progression (Cundiff et al., 2018). This has been stated in literature and has been experienced and confirmed by the participants. The participants have experienced stereotypes such as the glass ceiling phenomenon, gender wage gap and personal bias that people have as a result of their historical beliefs and traditions. Women, however, have inherent character traits that have helped them overcome this. Being assertive, structured, driven and straightforward are some of the traits that were mentioned by the participants. The participants also noted that being self-aware, having EI and the support of the people around them also encouraged and helped them reach success.

Conclusions for research question 3: Social identity, self-efficacy and career progression for senior female executives

The third research question aimed to understand the link between the factors of societal influence, the individual's self-efficacy and their career progression. This study highlighted the role that is played by society. The boys club is formed through legacy thought patterns and beliefs which are patriarchal in nature (Jordan & Luzader, 2016). This in turn oppresses women and you find that it is a cause of the underrepresentation of women. The participants have stated that the boys club is based the beliefs and culture of a company and once they are aware of the damaging

effect that they have had, it became easier to change the beliefs. The participants stated that they have started their own cliques that are based on who they relate to and identify with. As stated by social identity theory, in groups and out groups are created based on what you identify with, your personality traits, and individual characteristics (Skinner, 2014). By changing societies' way of thinking and creating an enabling, open minded society, women will be able to progress through their careers and find opportunities that are open to them.

The importance of self-efficacy was also highlighted. Women with a higher self-efficacy were able to succeed, regardless of their situation or circumstances. As such, the social identity and self-efficacy of a female does impact her career, future development and success.

7.3 Recommendations for Managers and Businesses

Based on the findings in this study, it is clear that the work environment is still gendered and unequal. Companies are trying to remedy this but their initiatives fall short due to a lack of engagement from leadership teams to ensure successful implementation (Booyesen, 2007). It is for this reason, that the recommendation is for managers and businesses to engage their leadership team and get their buy in for these initiatives. Successful implementation of transformation strategies is key to creating an environment that is inclusive.

Managers need to equip their female appointments with the skills required for their assigned job. Placements should not be made to comply with a policy but should be all encompassing, recognising talent and developing an individual where necessary. An appointment should be made based on skill. The career aspirations of the individual should be explored and further developed.

Managers should also be open to mentoring their staff and candidates that they identify that have potential. There should be an initiative to mentor women that have potential. Mentoring creates opportunities for females and as such is an important part of their career development and progression. Businesses should also encourage this relationship between a superior and a subordinate.

Equal opportunity should be given to an individual, regardless of their gender. Men need to be made aware that women are just as capable as they are. This can be

done by women being acknowledged and accepted for who they are and the diversity that they bring into a work environment, board room and senior leadership team. Creating a work environment that accepts, promotes and develops females is key to their progress in a male dominated environment. This starts with every manager taking a step towards inclusivity and setting an example.

Business and managers also need to understand the various roles that a woman has, such as mother, wife, and caregiver. Their work environment can be made flexible with an understanding of their boundaries. This will relieve some of the stress that the added responsibilities bring and will result in a more productive individual. In a world where people are accessible 24 hours a day, flexibility and boundaries are important.

A recommendation for senior female executives would be to encourage the development of other females, support them, and offer them an opportunity to be mentored. Senior female executives are rare, and the opportunities for female to female mentorship is also rare.

Another recommendation for female leadership would be to have confidence in themselves and their ability. They should not doubt their skill or knowledge but believe in themselves.

7.4 Limitations of research

The first limitation of the study is that the study focused on senior female executives in the Gauteng area. It would be interesting to note if a similar outcome would be applicable in other provinces. Different provinces within SA have different norms and traditions and as such, the assumption would be that the lived experience in other provinces are different to those in Gauteng. It would be worthwhile to investigate if this would translate into the lived experience of females in these areas.

The nature of the study is another limitation. Being qualitative in nature, it is subject to biases from the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The other limitation is that a qualitative study has a smaller sample set. A quantitative study would give a broader perspective and a correlation between the determining factors could be drawn. This would also allow for further reach into the different provinces.

The last identified limitation is that this study is based on the individual lived experience, and as such, is subjective. It is for this reason that it may not be a true source of scientific knowledge or a true reflection of the societal reality (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014).

7.5 Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, there are a few recommendations for future research that could add value to the current literature. It would be interesting to test if the lived experience of females in Gauteng is the same for other females in the country. A recommendation would be to have a longitudinal study to see if the experiences are the same. It would be interesting to explore if barriers and personality traits differ in the various provinces. It would be interesting to see if the responses change over time.

Another suggestion would be to run a parallel study with women that are at a level just below senior executive level and women that are entering the workplace. Insight into their experiences may shed light from a different perspective.

This study also focused on the private sector, and it would be interesting to note if the public sector experience is the same for senior executive women. A comparative study between the private and public sector, as well as the various industries, will add value to the insights already gained.

In order to understand the dynamics that play out in a work environment, it would be interesting to also include male participants in the study. This could add a different perspective and could provide a comparative index that could be developed based on both genders' experience of each other. This would be important to understand if the barriers that women face are intentional or unintentional, and the cultural or legacy patterns that determine it. This could then provide a basis on which to make suggestions for positive change.

7.6 Conclusion

The literature shows that women in senior executive positions are underrepresented. They have faced barriers that hinder their progress and continue to hinder their progress. The aim of this study was to understand what influences the career

progression of women. The way in which this was achieved was through understanding the lived experience of 12 senior executive participants. The semi-structured interviews shed light on their experiences and helped the researcher understand their narratives. Some narratives were positive, and others started with less than ideal circumstances, but they persevered and achieved success.

This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into the lived experience of women, and understanding how their self-efficacy and social identity contributes to their success and career progression. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for managers and businesses to ensure they create a work environment that is inclusive, productive and diverse.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Background

1. Age, position, qualifications,
2. Tell me about your career as it is now...
 - a. Current organisation, experience of working here
 - b. Your role and responsibilities
 - c. Environment, colleagues, relationships
 - d. Current challenges and opportunities – feelings and facts
3. Tell me how you got to where you are now...
 - a. Early influences, childhood
 - b. Education
 - c. Motivation, role models
 - d. Progression, opportunities - what role has your gender played?
 - e. Social expectations of you as a woman
 - f. Relationships at work – dynamics?
4. Observations about corporate sector in general...
 - a. How is the profession viewed by society?
 - b. Demands of the profession
 - c. Under-representation of women – awareness and reasons
 - d. What do you need to be successful in this career?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?
6. Is there anything relevant that I perhaps left out and you would like to highlight?

Thank you for your time and the information provided.

Appendix 2: Ethical Clearance Letter



11 July 2019

Seshnee Pillay

Dear Seshnee

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 3: Consent Form

Social identity and Self-efficacy: exploring narratives of female executives in corporate South Africa

Researcher: Seshnee Pillay (MBA student, Gordon Institute of Business Science)

I am conducting research on how social identity theory and self-efficacy theory impact women executives in corporate South Africa. I have based my study on the lived experience of the individual. I would like to understand your experience as an executive in the corporate sector and the factors that have influenced you to get to where you are, including what influenced or motivated you to achieve the qualification and position that you have.

Your participation is voluntary and you can opt out at any point. I would like your permission to record the interview so that I have an accurate record. You can, however, choose not to record. The interview should take approximately one hour. I will ensure that your credentials and personal details will be changed so that the data you provide is anonymous. Any verbatim quotes that will be used in the final report, will then be under a pseudonym. If you have any concerns or queries, you may contact myself or my supervisor. Our contact details are below;

Dr Kerrin Myres

(Lecturer at Gordon Institute of Business Science)

Tel: 011 771 4000

Email: myresk@gibs.co.za

Seshnee Pillay

Researcher

Tel: 071 199 2111

Email: 18378383@mygibs.co.za

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Researchers Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 4: Sample list of codes generated during data analysis

Codes	○	learn and be relevant
Access to networks and people	○	learn and do the best you can
accurate and fast	○	learn from females
Adapt for success	○	Learn from people
advantage and disadvantage female progression	○	Leaving a legacy
advantage if female	○	less competitive, more collaboration
Age, 29- 65 years	○	less females in exec positions
Agile, flexible, sensible	○	lesson from role model
apartheid	○	Lessons not learnt
Apartheid- dad compromised	○	Life not wanted
ask right questions	○	like-minded people
Assertive, bossy character	○	like to have fun
Attitude, never give up	○	love what you do
authentic self	○	Maturity professionally and personally
Bad space and needed change	○	make a difference/ possibility to achieve
balancing act	○	make yourself relevant
BBBEE	○	making decisions and being accountable
be able to provide for future generations	○	male blockers
be best that I can be	○	Male dominated
Be different, competitive	○	male makes better decisions
be initiator, implementer and manager	○	male presence
being in control of environment and destiny	○	males respected
Bias between male and female	○	Marital Status- Divorced
Bias between male and female (2)	○	marital status- married
bossy vs leader	○	Marital status-single
boxed in a category	○	Maternal role impacts career progress
Boys club	○	Medical field was male dominated
break preconceived ideas of industry	○	men adversarial, women accommodating
broad enough background to change	○	men direct, dismissive
Brothers success influenced hers	○	Men make assumptions
by the book, ethical	○	Mentors assisted success
Career not by design	○	mentorship program
challenge norm	○	method of communication
challenge, human behaviour	○	mind-set on male dominance
challenges motivate	○	mind-set overcomes challenges
change is unsettling	○	money is not a motivator
Character depends on phase of life	○	Motivated by salary
Character trait double standard	○	motivated by social connections
character traits	○	Motivated to be best and grow
Chauvinistic and Racist	○	Motivation for learning
childhood influence- mum	○	motivator- add value

Appendix 5: Transcriber Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA)

NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT- Qual Quarter

THIS AGREEMENT (the "**Agreement**") is entered into on this __01__ day of __August 2019__ by and between __Seshnee Pillay__, located at __GIBS__ (the "**Disclosing Party**"), and __Qual Quarter__ with an address at __Johannesburg__ (the "**Receiving Party**").

The Receiving Party hereto desires to participate in discussions regarding __Research__ (the "**Transaction**"). During these discussions, Disclosing Party may share certain proprietary information with the Receiving Party. Therefore, in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants contained in this Agreement, and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. Definition of Confidential Information.

(a) For purposes of this Agreement, "**Confidential Information**" means any data or information that is proprietary to the Disclosing Party and not generally known to the public, whether in tangible or intangible form, in whatever medium provided, whether unmodified or modified by Receiving Party or its Representatives (as defined herein), whenever and however disclosed, including, but not limited to: (i) any marketing strategies, plans, financial information, or projections, operations, sales estimates, business plans and performance results relating to the past, present or future business activities of such party, its affiliates, subsidiaries and affiliated companies; (ii) plans for products or services, and customer or supplier lists; (iii) any scientific or technical information, invention, design, process, procedure, formula, improvement, technology or method; (iv) any concepts, reports, data, know-how, works-in-progress, designs, development tools, specifications, computer software, source code, object code, flow charts, databases, inventions, information and trade secrets; (v) any other information that should reasonably be recognized as confidential information of the Disclosing Party; and (vi) any information generated by the Receiving Party or by its Representatives that contains, reflects, or is derived from any of the foregoing. Confidential Information need not be novel, unique, patentable, copyrightable or constitute a trade secret in order to be designated Confidential Information. The Receiving Party acknowledges that the Confidential Information is proprietary to the Disclosing Party, has been developed and obtained through great efforts by the Disclosing Party and that Disclosing Party regards all of its Confidential Information as trade secrets.

(b) Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing to the contrary, Confidential Information shall not include information which: a) was lawfully possessed, as evidenced by the Receiving Party's records, by the Receiving Party prior to receiving the Confidential Information from the Disclosing Party; (b) becomes rightfully known by the Receiving Party from a third-party source not under an obligation to Disclosing Party to maintain confidentiality; (c) is generally known by the public through no fault of or failure to act by the Receiving Party inconsistent with its obligations under this Agreement; (d) is required to be disclosed in a judicial or administrative proceeding, or is otherwise requested or required to be disclosed by law or regulation, although the requirements of paragraph 4 hereof shall apply prior to any disclosure being made; and (e) is or has been independently developed by employees, consultants or agents of the Receiving Party without violation of the terms of this Agreement, as evidenced by the Receiving Party's records, and without reference or access to any Confidential Information.

2. Disclosure of Confidential Information.

From time to time, the Disclosing Party may disclose Confidential Information to the Receiving Party. The Receiving Party will: (a) limit disclosure of any Confidential

Information to its directors, officers, employees, agents or representatives (collectively “**Representatives**”) who have a need to know such Confidential Information in connection with the current or contemplated business relationship between the parties to which this Agreement relates, and only for that purpose; (b) advise its Representatives of the proprietary nature of the Confidential Information and of the obligations set forth in this Agreement, require such Representatives to be bound by written confidentiality restrictions no less stringent than those contained herein, and assume full liability for acts or omissions by its Representatives that are inconsistent with its obligations under this Agreement; (c) keep all Confidential Information strictly confidential by using a reasonable degree of care, but not less than the degree of care used by it in safeguarding its own confidential information; and (d) not disclose any Confidential Information received by it to any third parties (except as otherwise provided for herein).

3. **Use of Confidential Information.**

The Receiving Party agrees to use the Confidential Information solely in connection with the current or contemplated business relationship between the parties and not for any purpose other than as authorized by this Agreement without the prior written consent of an authorized representative of the Disclosing Party. No other right or license, whether expressed or implied, in the Confidential Information is granted to the Receiving Party hereunder. Title to the Confidential Information will remain solely in the Disclosing Party. All use of Confidential Information by the Receiving Party shall be for the benefit of the Disclosing Party and any modifications and improvements thereof by the Receiving Party shall be the sole property of the Disclosing Party.

4. **Compelled Disclosure of Confidential Information.**

Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing to the contrary, the Receiving Party may disclose Confidential Information pursuant to any governmental, judicial, or administrative order, subpoena, discovery request, regulatory request or similar method, provided that the Receiving Party promptly notifies, to the extent practicable, the Disclosing Party in writing of such demand for disclosure so that the Disclosing Party, at its sole expense, may seek to make such disclosure subject to a protective order or other appropriate remedy to preserve the confidentiality of the Confidential Information; provided that the Receiving Party will disclose only that portion of the requested Confidential Information that, in the written opinion of its legal counsel, it is required to disclose. The Receiving Party agrees that it shall not oppose and shall cooperate with efforts by, to the extent practicable, the Disclosing Party with respect to any such request for a protective order or other relief. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the Disclosing Party is unable to obtain or does not seek a protective order and the Receiving Party is legally requested or required to disclose such Confidential Information, disclosure of such Confidential Information may be made without liability.

5. **Term.**

This Agreement shall remain in effect for a two-year term (subject to a one-year extension if the parties are still discussing and considering the Transaction at the end of the second year). Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Receiving Party’s duty to hold in confidence Confidential Information that was disclosed during term shall remain in effect indefinitely.

6. **Remedies.**

Both parties acknowledge that the Confidential Information to be disclosed hereunder is of a unique and valuable character, and that the unauthorized dissemination of the Confidential Information would destroy or diminish the value of such information. The damages to Disclosing Party that would result from the unauthorized dissemination of the Confidential Information would be impossible to calculate. Therefore, both parties hereby agree that the Disclosing Party shall be entitled to injunctive relief preventing the dissemination of any

Confidential Information in violation of the terms hereof. Such injunctive relief shall be in addition to any other remedies available hereunder, whether at law or in equity. Disclosing Party shall be entitled to recover its costs and fees, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred in obtaining any such relief. Further, in the event of litigation relating to this Agreement, the prevailing party shall be entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and expenses.

7. **Return of Confidential Information.**

Receiving Party shall immediately return and redeliver to Disclosing Party all tangible material embodying any Confidential Information provided hereunder and all notes, summaries, memoranda, drawings, manuals, records, excerpts or derivative information deriving therefrom, and all other documents or materials ("Notes") (and all copies of any of the foregoing, including "copies" that have been converted to computerized media in the form of image, data, word processing, or other types of files either manually or by image capture) based on or including any Confidential Information, in whatever form of storage or retrieval, upon the earlier of (i) the completion or termination of the dealings between the parties contemplated hereunder; (ii) the termination of this Agreement; or (iii) at such time as the Disclosing Party may so request; provided however that the Receiving Party may retain such of its documents as is necessary to enable it to comply with its reasonable document retention policies. Alternatively, the Receiving Party, with the written consent of the Disclosing Party may (or in the case of Notes, at the Receiving Party's option) immediately destroy any of the foregoing embodying Confidential Information (or the reasonably nonrecoverable data erasure of computerized data) and, upon request, certify in writing such destruction by an authorized officer of the Receiving Party supervising the destruction).

8. **Notice of Breach.**

Receiving Party shall notify the Disclosing Party immediately upon discovery of, or suspicion of, (1) any unauthorized use or disclosure of Confidential Information by Receiving Party or its Representatives; or (2) any actions by Receiving Party or its Representatives inconsistent with their respective obligations under this Agreement, Receiving Party shall cooperate with any and all efforts of the Disclosing Party to help the Disclosing Party regain possession of Confidential Information and prevent its further unauthorized use.

9. **No Binding Agreement for Transaction.**

The parties agree that neither party will be under any legal obligation of any kind whatsoever with respect to a Transaction by virtue of this Agreement, except for the matters specifically agreed to herein. The parties further acknowledge and agree that they each reserve the right, in their sole and absolute discretion, to reject any and all proposals and to terminate discussions and negotiations with respect to a Transaction at any time. This Agreement does not create a joint venture or partnership between the parties. If a Transaction goes forward, the non-disclosure provisions of any applicable transaction documents entered into between the parties (or their respective affiliates) for the Transaction shall supersede this Agreement. In the event such provision is not provided for in said transaction documents, this Agreement shall control.

10. **Warranty.**

NO WARRANTIES ARE MADE BY EITHER PARTY UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WHATSOEVER. The parties acknowledge that although they shall each endeavor to include in the Confidential Information all information that they each believe relevant for the purpose of the evaluation of a Transaction, the parties understand that no representation or warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of the Confidential Information is being made by the Disclosing Party. Further, neither party is under any obligation under this Agreement to disclose any Confidential Information it chooses not to disclose.

11. Miscellaneous.

(a) This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding between the parties and supersedes any and all prior or contemporaneous understandings and agreements, whether oral or written, between the parties, with respect to the subject matter hereof. This Agreement can only be modified by a written amendment signed by the party against whom enforcement of such modification is sought.

(b) The validity, construction and performance of this Agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of South Africa applicable to contracts made and to be wholly performed within such state, without giving effect to any conflict of laws provisions thereof. The courts located in Johannesburg shall have sole and exclusive jurisdiction over any disputes arising under, or in any way connected with or related to, the terms of this Agreement and Receiving Party: (i) consents to personal jurisdiction therein; and (ii) waives the right to raise *forum non conveniens* or any similar objection.

(c) Any failure by either party to enforce the other party's strict performance of any provision of this Agreement will not constitute a waiver of its right to subsequently enforce such provision or any other provision of this Agreement.

(d) Although the restrictions contained in this Agreement are considered by the parties to be reasonable for the purpose of protecting the Confidential Information, if any such restriction is found by a court of competent jurisdiction to be unenforceable, such provision will be modified, rewritten or interpreted to include as much of its nature and scope as will render it enforceable. If it cannot be so modified, rewritten or interpreted to be enforceable in any respect, it will not be given effect, and the remainder of the Agreement will be enforced as if such provision was not included.


(e) Any notices or communications required or permitted to be given hereunder may be delivered by hand, deposited with a nationally recognized overnight carrier, electronic-mail, or mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested, postage prepaid, in each case, to the address of the other party first indicated above (or such other addressee as may be furnished by a party in accordance with this paragraph). All such notices or communications shall be deemed to have been given and received (a) in the case of personal delivery or electronic-mail, on the date of such delivery, (b) in the case of delivery by a nationally recognized overnight carrier, on the third business day following dispatch and (c) in the case of mailing, on the seventh business day following such mailing.

(f) This Agreement is personal in nature, and receiving party may transfer to trusted contractors assigned by the company itself - only they are allowed to assist. They are also under obligation of the NDA.

(g) The receipt of Confidential Information pursuant to this Agreement will not prevent or in any way limit either party from: (i) developing, making or marketing products or services that are or may be competitive with the products or services of the other; or (ii) providing products or services to others who compete with the other.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the date first above written.

Disclosing Party

By Seshnee Pillay
Name: Seshnee Pillay
Title: Student
Signed: 

Receiving Party

By Julie Rathbone
Company: QualQuarter
Title: Owner
Signed:



NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT- Tayema Virtual Assistants

THIS AGREEMENT (the "Agreement") is entered into on this __01__ day of __August__ 2019 _____ by and between __Seshnee Pillay_____, located at _____ GIBS _____ (the "Disclosing Party"), and _____ Tayema Virtual Assistants with an address at _____ Johannesburg _____ (the "Receiving Party").

The Receiving Party hereto desires to participate in discussions regarding _____ Research _____ (the "Transaction"). During these discussions, Disclosing Party may share certain proprietary information with the Receiving Party. Therefore, in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants contained in this Agreement, and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. Definition of Confidential Information.

(a) For purposes of this Agreement, "Confidential Information" means any data or information that is proprietary to the Disclosing Party and not generally known to the public, whether in tangible or intangible form, in whatever medium provided, whether unmodified or modified by Receiving Party or its Representatives (as defined herein), whenever and however disclosed, including, but not limited to: (i) any marketing strategies, plans, financial information, or projections, operations, sales estimates, business plans and performance results relating to the past, present or future business activities of such party, its affiliates, subsidiaries and affiliated companies; (ii) plans for products or services, and customer or supplier lists; (iii) any scientific or technical information, invention, design, process, procedure, formula, improvement, technology or method; (iv) any concepts, reports, data, know-how, works-in-progress, designs, development tools, specifications, computer software, source code, object code, flow charts, databases, inventions, information and trade secrets; (v) any other information that should reasonably be recognized as confidential information of the Disclosing Party; and (vi) any information generated by the Receiving Party or by its Representatives that contains, reflects, or is derived from any of the foregoing. Confidential Information need not be novel, unique, patentable, copyrightable or constitute a trade secret in order to be designated Confidential Information. The Receiving Party acknowledges that the Confidential Information is proprietary to the Disclosing Party, has been developed and obtained through great efforts by the Disclosing Party and that Disclosing Party regards all of its Confidential Information as trade secrets.

(b) Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing to the contrary, Confidential Information shall not include information which: a) was lawfully possessed, as evidenced by the Receiving Party's records, by the Receiving Party prior to receiving the Confidential Information from the Disclosing Party; (b) becomes rightfully known by the Receiving Party from a third-party source not under an obligation to Disclosing Party to maintain confidentiality; (c) is generally known by the public through no fault of or failure to act by the Receiving Party inconsistent with its obligations under this Agreement; (d) is required to be disclosed in a judicial or administrative proceeding, or is otherwise requested or required to be disclosed by law or regulation, although the requirements of paragraph 4 hereof shall apply prior to any disclosure being made; and (e) is or has been independently developed by employees, consultants or agents of the Receiving Party without violation of the terms of this Agreement, as evidenced by the Receiving Party's records, and without reference or access to any Confidential Information.

2. Disclosure of Confidential Information.

From time to time, the Disclosing Party may disclose Confidential Information to the Receiving Party. The Receiving Party will: (a) limit disclosure of any Confidential Information to its

directors, officers, employees, agents or representatives (collectively “Representatives”) who have a need to know such Confidential Information in connection with the current or contemplated business relationship between the parties to which this Agreement relates, and only for that purpose; (b) advise its Representatives of the proprietary nature of the Confidential Information and of the obligations set forth in this Agreement, require such Representatives to be bound by written confidentiality restrictions no less stringent than those contained herein, and assume full liability for acts or omissions by its Representatives that are inconsistent with its obligations under this Agreement; (c) keep all Confidential Information strictly confidential by using a reasonable degree of care, but not less than the degree of care used by it in safeguarding its own confidential information; and (d) not disclose any Confidential Information received by it to any third parties (except as otherwise provided for herein).

3. Use of Confidential Information.

The Receiving Party agrees to use the Confidential Information solely in connection with the current or contemplated business relationship between the parties and not for any purpose other than as authorized by this Agreement without the prior written consent of an authorized representative of the Disclosing Party. No other right or license, whether expressed or implied, in the Confidential Information is granted to the Receiving Party hereunder. Title to the Confidential Information will remain solely in the Disclosing Party. All use of Confidential Information by the Receiving Party shall be for the benefit of the Disclosing Party and any modifications and improvements thereof by the Receiving Party shall be the sole property of the Disclosing Party.

4. Compelled Disclosure of Confidential Information.

Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing to the contrary, the Receiving Party may disclose Confidential Information pursuant to any governmental, judicial, or administrative order, subpoena, discovery request, regulatory request or similar method, provided that the Receiving Party promptly notifies, to the extent practicable, the Disclosing Party in writing of such demand for disclosure so that the Disclosing Party, at its sole expense, may seek to make such disclosure subject to a protective order or other appropriate remedy to preserve the confidentiality of the Confidential Information; provided that the Receiving Party will disclose only that portion of the requested Confidential Information that, in the written opinion of its legal counsel, it is required to disclose. The Receiving Party agrees that it shall not oppose and shall cooperate with efforts by, to the extent practicable, the Disclosing Party with respect to any such request for a protective order or other relief. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the Disclosing Party is unable to obtain or does not seek a protective order and the Receiving Party is legally requested or required to disclose such Confidential Information, disclosure of such Confidential Information may be made without liability.

5. Term.

This Agreement shall remain in effect for a two-year term (subject to a one-year extension if the parties are still discussing and considering the Transaction at the end of the second year). Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Receiving Party’s duty to hold in confidence Confidential Information that was disclosed during term shall remain in effect indefinitely.

6. Remedies.

Both parties acknowledge that the Confidential Information to be disclosed hereunder is of a unique and valuable character, and that the unauthorized dissemination of the Confidential Information would destroy or diminish the value of such information. The damages to Disclosing Party that would result from the unauthorized dissemination of the Confidential Information

would be impossible to calculate. Therefore, both parties hereby agree that the Disclosing Party shall be entitled to injunctive relief preventing the dissemination of any Confidential Information in violation of the terms hereof. Such injunctive relief shall be in addition to any other remedies available hereunder, whether at law or in equity. Disclosing Party shall be entitled to recover its costs and fees, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred in obtaining any such relief. Further, in the event of litigation relating to this Agreement, the prevailing party shall be entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and expenses.

7. Return of Confidential Information.

Receiving Party shall immediately return and redeliver to Disclosing Party all tangible material embodying any Confidential Information provided hereunder and all notes, summaries, memoranda, drawings, manuals, records, excerpts or derivative information deriving therefrom, and all other documents or materials ("Notes") (and all copies of any of the foregoing, including "copies" that have been converted to computerized media in the form of image, data, word processing, or other types of files either manually or by image capture) based on or including any Confidential Information, in whatever form of storage or retrieval, upon the earlier of (i) the completion or termination of the dealings between the parties contemplated hereunder; (ii) the termination of this Agreement; or (iii) at such time as the Disclosing Party may so request; provided however that the Receiving Party may retain such of its documents as is necessary to enable it to comply with its reasonable document retention policies. Alternatively, the Receiving Party, with the written consent of the Disclosing Party may (or in the case of Notes, at the Receiving Party's option) immediately destroy any of the foregoing embodying Confidential Information (or the reasonably nonrecoverable data erasure of computerized data) and, upon request, certify in writing such destruction by an authorized officer of the Receiving Party supervising the destruction).

8. Notice of Breach.

Receiving Party shall notify the Disclosing Party immediately upon discovery of, or suspicion of, (1) any unauthorized use or disclosure of Confidential Information by Receiving Party or its Representatives; or (2) any actions by Receiving Party or its Representatives inconsistent with their respective obligations under this Agreement, Receiving Party shall cooperate with any and all efforts of the Disclosing Party to help the Disclosing Party regain possession of Confidential Information and prevent its further unauthorized use.

9. No Binding Agreement for Transaction.

The parties agree that neither party will be under any legal obligation of any kind whatsoever with respect to a Transaction by virtue of this Agreement, except for the matters specifically agreed to herein. The parties further acknowledge and agree that they each reserve the right, in their sole and absolute discretion, to reject any and all proposals and to terminate discussions and negotiations with respect to a Transaction at any time. This Agreement does not create a joint venture or partnership between the parties. If a Transaction goes forward, the non-disclosure provisions of any applicable transaction documents entered into between the parties (or their respective affiliates) for the Transaction shall supersede this Agreement. In the event such provision is not provided for in said transaction documents, this Agreement shall control.

10. Warranty.

NO WARRANTIES ARE MADE BY EITHER PARTY UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WHATSOEVER. The parties acknowledge that although they shall each endeavor to include in the Confidential Information all information that they each believe relevant for the purpose of the evaluation of a Transaction, the parties understand that no representation or warranty as to the

accuracy or completeness of the Confidential Information is being made by the Disclosing Party. Further, neither party is under any obligation under this Agreement to disclose any Confidential Information it chooses not to disclose.

11. Miscellaneous.

(a) This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding between the parties and supersedes any and all prior or contemporaneous understandings and agreements, whether oral or written, between the parties, with respect to the subject matter hereof. This Agreement can only be modified by a written amendment signed by the party against whom enforcement of such modification is sought.

(b) The validity, construction and performance of this Agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of ___South Africa_____ applicable to contracts made and to be wholly performed within such state, without giving effect to any conflict of laws provisions thereof. The courts located in ___Johannesburg_____ shall have sole and exclusive jurisdiction over any disputes arising under, or in any way connected with or related to, the terms of this Agreement and Receiving Party: (i) consents to personal jurisdiction therein; and (ii) waives the right to raise forum non conveniens or any similar objection.

(c) Any failure by either party to enforce the other party's strict performance of any provision of this Agreement will not constitute a waiver of its right to subsequently enforce such provision or any other provision of this Agreement.

(d) Although the restrictions contained in this Agreement are considered by the parties to be reasonable for the purpose of protecting the Confidential Information, if any such restriction is found by a court of competent jurisdiction to be unenforceable, such provision will be modified, rewritten or interpreted to include as much of its nature and scope as will render it enforceable. If it cannot be so modified, rewritten or interpreted to be enforceable in any respect, it will not be given effect, and the remainder of the Agreement will be enforced as if such provision was not included.

(e) Any notices or communications required or permitted to be given hereunder may be delivered by hand, deposited with a nationally recognized overnight carrier, electronic-mail, or mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested, postage prepaid, in each case, to the address of the other party first indicated above (or such other addressee as may be furnished by a party in accordance with this paragraph). All such notices or communications shall be deemed to have been given and received (a) in the case of personal delivery or electronic-mail, on the date of such delivery, (b) in the case of delivery by a nationally recognized overnight carrier, on the third business day following dispatch and (c) in the case of mailing, on the seventh business day following such mailing.

(f) This Agreement is personal in nature, and receiving party may transfer to trusted contractors assigned by the company itself - only they are allowed to assist. They are also under obligation of the NDA.

(g) The receipt of Confidential Information pursuant to this Agreement will not prevent or in any way limit either party from: (i) developing, making or marketing products or services that are or may be competitive with the products or services of the other; or (ii) providing products or services to others who compete with the other.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the date first above written.

Disclosing Party

By Seshnee Pillay
Name: Seshnee Pillay

Title: Student

Signed: 

Receiving Party

By Lulama Sihluku
Company: Tayema Virtual
Assistants

Title: Owner

Signed: L. Sihluku