

**Career advancement experiences of African academic women
working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa Campus**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that “Career advancement experiences of African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature

(Mrs Matshidiso Mercy Molotsi)

Date

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I would also like to thank my husband, Godfrey, for his support and encouragement during this study. I would also like to thank my children, Tlotso, Motheo and Letlotlo, for their understanding throughout this process.

Above all, I would like to thank God for carrying me through this journey.

DEDICATION

The study is dedicated to my husband and my children.

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ABSTRACT

African women in academia face various career advancement challenges. Employers' support interventions need to be reinforced to promote an increase of African women in leadership positions.

This study on the career advancement experiences of African women in leadership positions within an academic institution is exploratory in nature and based on the qualitative research method. The purpose of the study is to document the challenges, supporting factors, and strategies used by African women in academia in order to guide universities and the African women employed there who aspire to advance their careers. The data collection methods involved were in-depth interviews and a focus group. Purposive and snowball sampling methods in the form of convenience sampling were used to identify potential research participants. The sample for the study consisted of African women who were academics in leadership positions working at the Medunsa campus of the University of Limpopo. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

The results of the study suggest that African women who are academics experience career advancement challenges. Such challenges include family demands and lack of leadership training. Family support and their dedication contribute towards their advancement. Leadership training programmes and supporting structures should be established to reinforce their advancement.

Key terms: African academic women; academia; career advancement; leadership positions; case study; and qualitative research

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CHAPTER 1

RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Research studies that focus on women and career advancement are essential. This statement is based on the fact that women are faced with a complex career advancement path (Crozier, 1999; Hackett & Lonborg, 1994; Sterrett, 1999, as cited in Coogan & Chen, 2007, p. 191). This complex career advancement path of women involves women being late starters with regard to career development because their careers are interrupted by child-bearing and homemaking responsibilities. In addition, women, especially African women, have to deal with racism, sexism, classism and ageism, which are interwoven together (Pittman, 2010 as cited in Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2013, p. 489). It is the researcher's view that there could be a possibility of women being marginalized because of the colour of their skin and their gender. As a result, they are classified as being inferior to white people, and they are late-starters in terms of career advancement.

Coogan and Chen (2007) and Parlea-Buzata (2010) have revealed that women experience both external and internal barriers towards their career advancement. They also have to conquer external barriers preventing them from advancement in the workplace. Coogan and Chen (2007, pp. 193-195) identified early gender roles, employment inequalities and family responsibilities as external barriers affecting women. Parlea-Buzata (2010, p. 333) indicated that "Women are constantly forced to crossover and break down barriers to achieve success in the workplace". Such barriers include discrimination based on societal prejudices and biases with regard to African people. In addition, institutional policies and practices contribute to the unequal treatment of African people (Phelps & Constantine, 2001, p. 163).

According to previous research findings, the employment condition is regarded as another external barrier that has an impact on women's career advancement (Lewis-Enright, Crafford & Crous, 2009, p. 2). There are no flexible working conditions that allow women to fulfil their homemaking responsibilities and still advance in their

careers without interruption. Even though organizations could allow women to work on a part-time basis, they are unable to access developmental opportunities or an advanced career path.

Elements of the external barriers to the career advancement of African academic women are clearly outlined by Phelps and Constantine (2001, p. 165) and include perceptions of incompetence, lack of authority, limited networking opportunities and isolation. Women are still experiencing the effect of the so-called “glass ceiling”, making it difficult for them to be promoted to leadership positions. Inequalities faced by women are also evident in the issue of their promotion to higher positions. In the workplace, the glass ceiling, which limits women’s advancement, needs to be eradicated (Burke & Mattis, 2005, p. 1; Phakedi, 2015, p. 2). This glass ceiling is evident when women face difficulties and challenges for promotion to leadership positions as it delays women’s advancement to such positions. According to the article “Merit of Medunsa’s women on the move” (Robbins, 2012, p. 27), Professor Noffke indicated that it was more difficult for her to attain a senior position than for her male counterparts to do so; this is evidence of the glass ceiling. She also relates the fact that during her interview she was asked the following question by a senior male professor: “How on earth will you be able to manage a department?” This is a gender-stereotypical approach that relegates women to inferior positions.

The other working condition that women in general are facing in the workplace is that they are seen as support staff members. Dreher (2003) and Jansen et al. (2001 as cited in Sanders et al., 2009, p. 302) state that women have to fight the stereotype that they are the support system within the workplace. Some women are afraid to set boundaries for the extra work given to them for fear it might be perceived as a lack of commitment to the department. This affects their self-esteem towards career advancement; in addition, it compromises their career prospects.

Another external barrier is that women generally are faced with work and family demands which hamper their career advancement. They are expected to perform various tasks and responsibilities such as homemaking and childrearing (Sanders, Willemsen & Millar, 2009, p. 302). In certain cases, the traditional duties clash with

their career advancement goals. Linehan and Scullion (2008, p. 30) indicate that women experience stress and pressure due to work–family conflict, where the roles of a woman at work and in her family are unable to coexist. When a woman takes part in a work role, it is difficult for her to participate in the other role. African academic women, like any other women, are also affected by the conflicting roles of work and family. In “Merit of Medunsa’s women on the move” (Robbins, 2012, p. 26), Professor Nchabeleng commented that building her academic career had taken its toll on her family life, and led her to battle with guilt. She also notes that her son was prone to asthma while she was completing postgraduate studies. Professor Nchabeleng had to deal with career advancement challenges relating to family demands, which left her feeling guilty when attending to her postgraduate studies. In addition, pursuing her studies made it difficult for the family. It is evident that for most women, it is challenging to have work and life roles co-existing harmoniously.

Another important aspect which may have an impact on the career advancement of women is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined by Betz (2004, p. 340) as one’s belief in his or her ability to successfully perform tasks at hand. According to Bolat, Bolat, & Kihc (2011, p. 60) high career self-efficacy helps women to reach their career goals, while low self-efficacy blocks them from attaining these goals. Some women may believe that they do not have the ability and capability to advance on their chosen careers. They may believe that they have neither the necessary skills nor the knowledge to work beyond what they have already achieved. According to Bolat, Bolat and Kihc (2011, p. 57), low self-efficacy makes people avoid difficult tasks due to personal threats and lack of confidence. In this context, some women fail to pursue leadership roles. Low self-efficacy might be as a result of role stereotyping which has been built within them through their upbringing. Women may believe that they have to play a supporting role, rather than a leadership role. These factors have an impact on their career choice and advancement within it (Coogan & Chen, 2007, p. 192; Parlea-Buzata, 2010, p. 334).

The study sought to explore the experiences of African women in academia who have conquered the internal and external barriers and advanced in their careers. The focus is on exploring the experiences of these women in relation to the realities they

encounter when advancing their careers. The description of their experiences will assist in understanding what women have had to endure in order to advance in their careers. Moreover, it is important to discover from those who have advanced how the process has unfolded. Hence the focus is on the challenges they faced as well as the factors that facilitated success towards career advancement. Because only a limited number of African women in academia are managers and have advanced in their careers, it is possible that they have had certain experiences that women of other races have not had. Examining the experiences of these women will provide insight into how they faced and overcame internal and external barriers as they strove for career advancement.

It is evident that there are more men, irrespective of race, who have advanced in their careers than women of all races at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. According to the Medunsa campus employee statistics, by 08 June 2012 there were 50 male professors and associate professors in the university's employ, as compared to only 23 female professors and associate professors. This enormous discrepancy in figures is of great concern. In addition, academic women are occupying 246 junior lecturer and lecturer posts as compared to the 115 men occupying such positions; these statistics for men and women are for all races. The statistics show that there are fewer men than women in lecturing positions, and more in professorship and leadership positions. These statistics clearly show that academic women need to be supported in their career advancement. The gap could be due to women's lack of skills and abilities or to external factors such as discrimination, gender stereotyping or political factors.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The career advancement path of women, despite their race, who are working in academic settings, differs from that of men (Lewis-Enright, Crafford & Crous, 2009, p. 1). In most cases, men plan and start their careers early, and are able to continue without interruption, unlike women who plan their careers in conjunction with child-bearing, which interrupts their career advancement path. Women, irrespective of race, tend to focus on balancing their career role with their family role without

focusing specifically on advancing their careers (Kim, 2004, as cited by Lewis-Enright et al., 2009, p. 1). The male model of career progression continues to have an influence on how men, as opposed to women, enter leadership positions (Lewis-Enright et al., 2009, p. 2). This model emphasises the notion that one is compelled to work for long hours in order to prove oneself worthy of promotion; a concept that is not favourable to women who have other family responsibilities.

As a result, the career advancement of African women in academia gives rise to a complex situation because of their gender and race. According to Netshitenzhe (2015 as cited by Phakedi, 2015, p.1), African academic women are disadvantaged and marginalised in class for two reasons: as Africans in a society that privileges the white minority; and as women in a male-controlled African culture. When they are in leadership positions, they are mostly regarded as “ambitious rivals” (Phakedi, 2015, p. 2) or as aggressive and they feel isolated because they do not have role models and feel separated from other African women (Davidson, 2002, as cited in Burke & Nelson, 2002, p. 57). Therefore, this clearly indicates that African academic women in leadership positions have career advancement experiences that need to be explored. It is important to explore the challenges and the factors contributing towards their career advancement in addition to the strategies that they use to advance their careers.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are as follows:

- What are the challenges that African academic women face when advancing in their careers?
- What are the support factors that have enhanced the career advancement of African academic women?
- What are the strategies that African academic women have used to advance in their careers?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the nature of experiences with regard to career advancement by African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus.

1.4.1 Research objectives

The objectives of the study were to

- obtain narratives of the journeys by African academic women who have already advanced in their careers;
- observe and document reflections on challenges African academic women encountered during the process of career advancement;
- explore factors that influenced career advancement of African academic women;
- gain insight into the strategies that have been employed towards career advancement by women within an academic setting.

1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The study intended to contribute to the body of scientific knowledge regarding women's empowerment, especially African women working in institutions of higher learning. It has documented the challenges, the support factors and the strategies used by African academic women when advancing in their careers.

The study further intended to contribute to career development theories in the field of career development. Such theories should consider women's career advancement. In addition, they were developed with no regard to gender, and much inclined to men as workers. In other words, the theories were centred on men, without considering the complexity of women being homemakers and simultaneously being career oriented. The contribution to career development theories includes an input on the advancement of African women who face barriers that differ from those of men and of white women. The findings of the study lay a foundation for other studies in the same field to take place.

The study results are intended to benefit the participants with information that could encourage career advancement initiatives. The study also provided a platform for academic women to reflect on their career experiences and further provided insight into what constitutes an environment that reinforces the career advancement of women. The study results could be used to inform policymakers of what should be reinforced to promote an environment that enhances the career advancement of women. Moreover, the results give guidelines on the career advancement of African academic women. Finally, the study reinforces reviews of organizational cultures and policies concerning the career advancement of women.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. In 2015 it became the newly-established Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). The university is based in the Gauteng Province of the Republic of South Africa. The research includes African academic women who are in managerial positions, irrespective of their level of qualification. These women are in particular disciplines or involved in academic matters within disciplines, and are in managerial positions. This research excludes African academic women who are not in leadership positions, even though they have obtained their doctoral degrees or been promoted to professorial positions.

During the data collection period, the researcher experienced challenges with regard to finding a suitable date for all participants to participate in the focus group. In addition, due to student protests at that period, it was difficult to conduct the focus group. The concern of the researcher was to protect the participants from staff intimidation activities. Therefore, the focus group was conducted after the protest which lasted for two weeks. The focus group took place during the recovery period when all academic departments were investing most of their time in the completion of the academic curricula; therefore the focus group interview had an insufficient number of participants. In total there were four participants, and two had to leave in the middle of the focus group discussion because of academic and leadership commitments. In addition, participant 8 who took part during the focus group was unavailable for individual interviews due to academic commitments.

1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.7.1 Career

Career is defined by Super (1980, p.282) as the “combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime.” Again Super (1969, p. 3) defines it as “the sequence of occupations, jobs and positions occupied during the course of a person’s working life.” On the other hand, Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989, as cited in Arthur, Khapova & Widerom, 2005, p. 178) define career as the “unfolding sequence of a person’s work experiences over time.” Career in this study is seen as the sequence of occupations, jobs and positions during a person’s work experience over a period of time.

1.7.2 Career advancement

Career advancement is a lifelong process which involves career growth (Zunker, 2002, p. 34). It is when individuals move from one level or position to a higher level in the workplace.

1.7.3 Academic advancement

Academic advancement refers to the process whereby individuals move from the lowest formal educational qualification to higher ones.

1.7.4 Experiences

Experiences are referred to as events and activities that affect individuals in some way. The definition is adapted from Sally, Colin and Joanna (2005, p. 513).

1.7.5 African academic women

African academic women in this research refers to African women who are involved in academic matters, such as teaching, supervising students’ research projects, leading an academic department or unit or school.

1.7.6 Personal attributes

Personal attributes are characteristics (McDonagh, Bobrowski, Hoss, Paris & Schulte, 2014, p. 24) that an individual possesses.

1.7.7 Personal strategies

Personal strategies are similar to career strategies as defined by Callanan (2006, pp. 146–47) as “any behaviour, activity, or experience designed to help a person meet career goals”. In this instance it also refers to “any behaviour, activity, or experience designed to help a person” to move from one level of a position to a higher one in the workplace.

1.7.8 Leadership position

Leadership position refers to a senior position in the workplace, which also indicates a leadership role that an individual has taken.

1.8 CONCLUSION

Women, especially African women, face various challenges in their career advancement. Some of the challenges are internal while others are external. It is crucial that those challenges be unpacked and strategies be developed in overcoming them. As much as women face challenges, there are opportunities within their environment which need to be explored in order for women to take advantage of them. Exploration of the challenges, support factors and strategies in women’s career advancement would assist African academic women in leadership positions in an institution of higher learning. They would learn how to perform their roles and strive in the midst of demands and expectations. This study does not benefit only those African academic women who have already advanced in a career, but it is also a learning opportunity for African women who are still at the entry level in academia.

1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

- Chapter 1 Rationale and overview of the research
- Chapter 2 Literature review
- Chapter 3 Theoretical framework
- Chapter 4 Research design, strategy and method
- Chapter 5 Findings, summary and interpretation
- Chapter 6 Conclusion, limitation and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to provide a literature review on the career advancement of African academic women. It will give direction on how the study fits into the area of interest and what has already been done (Hofstee, 2006, p. 91). The aim is to ground the study in the previous literature. Most studies on women and careers document the challenges women face as they advance in their careers (Buddhapriya, 2009; Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Sanders, Willemsen & Millar, 2009). This study aims to highlight the challenges that women face and to focus on supporting factors and strategies that facilitate the career advancement of women in academia.

This review of literature will also channel discussion on challenges and opportunities of African academic women working in institutions of higher learning, in order to understand their experiences when striving to occupy higher positions. The focus will also be on reviewing the experiences of African women in various countries when advancing their careers.

Women, in general, experience internal and external barriers to their career advancement, identified in a Canadian study (Conference Board of Canada, 1977, as cited in Burke & Mattis, 2005, p. 16) as stereotyping by males; preconceptions of women's roles and responsibilities; lack of managerial experience; not being long in the pipeline. In the study, women indicated other barriers, such as commitment to family responsibilities and having children. These factors result in women, irrespective of their race, no longer focusing on their career advancement, as compared to men. Stroth et al. (2004 as cited in Burke & Mattis, 2005, p. 16) indicated that men are competent and more at ease when negotiating than women

are. It is clear that men have a better advantage in advancing their careers as compared to women.

The stereotype about women not being capable makes it difficult for them to enter managerial positions. Davidson (2002 as cited in Burke & Nelson, 2002, p. 57) indicated that women generally experience sex role stereotyping in management, where they are not perceived as people who are capable of handling managerial responsibilities. Men are perceived as individuals who are better able to handle managerial responsibilities because they are perceived as more independent, task-oriented and objective.

Promotion is linked with salary increase, authority, training opportunities and increased job satisfaction (Yap & Konrad, 2009, p. 594). Promotion to a higher post influences outside recognition by other employment institutions. This makes other institutions aware of the employee's productivity. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1993 as cited in Yap & Konrad, 2009, p. 594) point out that women in general, tend to be regarded as people with no abilities, and therefore are likely to be ignored for promotion. In some cases, women's qualifications are valued less than men's qualifications when there is a possibility of promotion. This reduces their possibilities of being promoted (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2008, as cited in Yap & Konrad, 2009, p. 594).

It is demanded of women, irrespective of race, that they perform certain duties at work and at home. Duxbury and Higgins (2005 as cited in Burke & Mattis, 2005, p. 187) mentioned that women are facing a work-life conflict, where work demands force them to be occupied with their work roles to the neglect of family demands. In certain cases, the work-life conflicts happen when extreme family demands prevent women from advancing in their careers. The demands that women in general experience make it very challenging for them to concentrate and advance in their careers and still give attention to the family and responsibilities there. This situation makes it difficult for women and therefore compromises their well-being.

Women, irrespective of race, find themselves constantly in haste, running from task to task due to their roles and responsibilities. In research conducted by Duxbury and Higgins (2003) as outlined in Duxbury and Higgins (2005 cited in Burke & Mattis, 2005, p. 187) a Canadian professional woman indicated that managing work, family and career is very difficult, because the roles she occupied were overloaded. The research notes that she experienced fatigue and transferred the job stress to her home. When she was working, she felt guilty that she had neglected the family, and when she was with the family was thinking of the additional work that she was supposed to be doing. This is a conflict that does not affect time management alone, but also has an impact on one's energy. Traditionally, women across race and culture have to juggle family responsibilities and the pursuit of promotion at work.

It has been noted from previous research findings that women across race in academia are invisible in higher positions as compared to men. Barrett and Barrett (2011, p. 152) indicate that the career progression of women in higher education is a "stubborn, complex, inequality issue". More women are found in lower positions than in higher positions associated with power and status (D' Amico, Vermigli & Canetto 2011, p.175). Although it is clear that institutions of higher learning have opened their employment doors for women to enter, there is still under-representation of women in higher positions.

It is noted that career advancement to higher positions in academia is associated with scientific production through research (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p. 144; Obers, 2014. p. 1116). It is indicated by D' Amico et al. (2011, p. 175) and Prozesky (2008, p. 47 as cited in Obers, 2014, p. 1109) that women in academia, irrespective of race, are not as scientifically productive as men. For example, their publication rate is lower than that of men. Prozesky (2006 as cited in Obers, 2015, p. 112) indicates that the low level of research output by women could be as a result of the fact that women, at the start of their academic life, are unaware of exactly what is rewarded in higher education and what is recognised for promotion, namely, research output. If women are unable to meet the promotional requirements relating to research output, they will not be able to be promoted to higher positions. They will then be continually trapped in lower positions.

The invisibility of women in higher positions, across all races, but especially African women, can also be accounted for by the apartheid laws in South Africa. The legacy of apartheid of promoting inequality was manifested in government policies and programmes and had an impact on African women (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, p. 9). During the era of apartheid, African women experienced institutional racism and gender discrimination, hence they were marginalised. Being African meant that one was not valued (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, p. 2). Past laws favoured men, particularly white men (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, p. 6). On 27 April 1994, a new South African democratic government was introduced which aimed to be non-racist and non-sexist. The government advocated equality for all, whereby it reinforced redress of the effects of apartheid through affirmative action, which favoured women, especially African women. In addition, the government took into consideration the fact that African women are marginalised within their culture which is more patriarchal than other cultures and one in which men are more dominant and more highly regarded than women are.

2.2 CHALLENGES TOWARDS CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Women in general face barriers that have an impact on their career choice and advancement (Coogan & Chent, 2007, p. 192). Executive women have been facing external barriers or gender bias in the workplace for a considerable period of time (Parlea-Buzatu, 2010, p. 332). It is clear that women across all races experience barriers in the workplace and they have had to overcome them to advance in their respective careers.

Moreover, African women are constantly forced to cross over and break barriers to career advancement. Parlea-Buzatu (2010, p. 333) indicates that women of colour face many barriers, which include the stereotypical images that hinder their professional growth. In addition, the caring and nurturing image of women may create an assumption that they are supposed to be involved only in support positions

rather than in leadership positions (Parlea-Buzatu, 2010, p. 333). As a result, African women have had to work harder than others to progress in their careers.

Some African women in the workplace are afraid to set boundaries regarding their extra responsibilities (Parlea-Buzatu, 2010, p. 334). Laff (2009, p. 35) indicates that women managers are afraid to reject additional assignments because they feel the need to prove their competence by accepting an ever greater workload. African women have to work double to prove themselves as competent, and deserving of the post or the promotion. Some of the challenges facing women are discussed in the following sections.

2.2.1 Work-life balance for career women

Role balance is explained in terms of balance of attention, satisfaction and effort across all the roles (Jones, Burke & Westman, 2006, p. 2). Work-life balance includes family, leisure, community, and religious roles (Frone, 2003 as cited in Jones et al., 2006, p. 2). Slower career advancement amongst women is due to work-life issues. Women's roles affect their advancement as compared to those of men as a result of societal pressures. In addition, men are likely to have non-working spouses, which contributes positively to their career advancement (Terosky, O'Meara & Campbell, 2014, pp. 60–61). Cutler and Jackson (2002 as cited in Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010, p. 562) in their study also found that all women under study had full-time working partners as compared to men who mostly had partners who were not working full-time. Therefore, it makes it more challenging for women to balance their work, family and career advancement activities as compared to men who have non-working partners.

Women are faced with work and family demands which hamper their career advancement. Their loyalties are divided between the home and work (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p. 146). They have to perform various tasks and have numerous responsibilities, such as homemaking and childrearing (Buddhapriya, 2009, p. 31; Sanders, Willemsen & Millar, 2009, p. 302). Inability to manage work-life conflicts due to competing demands between work and family can lead to a lack of productivity in the workplace (Buddhapriya, 2009, p. 32) and feelings of guilt for

neglecting the family. This situation can result in a person being overwhelmed and feeling inadequate.

Work-life balance is important for women in order to manage their career advancement process. Balance does not refer to completion of employment tasks and household chores. It means to have the capacity to be meaningfully involved in multiple roles, for instance, being involved in friendships, religious activities, voluntary work, sport, academic and other activities (Lee, Reissing & Dobson, 2009, p. 75). Balance means to work through various activities without neglecting others. According to the researcher, it is therefore important for women to understand the complexity of their role balance when advancing in their careers. This will assist them to prioritise what needs to be done and what support they need to source out, to relieve themselves of some of the demands of life.

The work-life balance of women is facilitated by employment policies and support from partners, families, friends and an individual's choices and attitude (Lee et al., 2009, p. 75). Healthy workplaces that facilitate a work-life balance have the potential to be productive and to encourage their employees' well-being (APA, 2004 as cited in Lee et al., 2009, p. 75). Employment policies and a culture that rewards scholarly work, while allowing employees to fulfil themselves in their personal lives, attract and retain academics. For women to manage their career advancement, they need to rely on family support and the employment policies that support a work-life balance. If they are not supported at home and the workplace policies do not support a work-life balance, they will ultimately be overloaded and overwhelmed.

Organisations can improve employees' work-life balance especially for African academic women. They should allow a high level of discretion and control of employees over working conditions. This will happen when organisations allow employees to have control over timing and place of work. This will minimize the stress experienced by employees (Jones, Burke & Westman, 2006, p. 5). This process allows employees to have flexibility in how they work. According to the researcher, when employment working conditions are flexible, women can plan their work, home and career advancement activities well; in this way they will not be

overwhelmed or experience feelings of guilt over neglecting other important activities.

Apart from employment policies that should consider the work-life balance of employees, it is important for women themselves to clarify their goals and priorities in terms of the multiple roles they have to fulfil. Women need to ask themselves as to whether it would be realistic to seek to excel in their academic pursuits and also excel in their household responsibilities. When they clarify their goals, it will be easy to make clear what kind of flexibility and support they seek. Clarifying goals and priorities may assist women to develop thinking patterns that recognize that it may be unrealistic for them to excel in all roles.

On the other hand, South African women have the challenge of being breadwinners as many husbands are losing their jobs (Mathur-Helm, 2006 as cited in Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 365). Therefore, they often reject challenging and demanding careers associated with high salaries, and settle for lower-paying jobs, so that they are able to keep both family and the work world going. Rejecting such positions would allow them to have full care for their families offering the necessary support needed because occupying higher positions might be too demanding and require many sacrifices (Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 367). In other cases, there are those women who reduce family obligations by delaying being involved in romantic relationships and having children, so that they may progress in their careers. These decisions drive women to the dilemma that compels them to make complex personal choices (Mathur-Helm, 2006 as cited in Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 367). Part of the intended outcomes of the Gender Policy Framework is that those women's roles, such as being mothers and nurturers, should be acknowledged as important, not as a barrier to their advancement in the workplace (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, p. 8). Acknowledging the roles of women in the workplace will reinforce policies that support women in their career advancement.

On a different note, Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 144) in their research found that women and men had similar patterns in terms of marriage and having children, and

the same pattern regarding the number of children. They found that the university environment enables academics in general to advance in their careers while they maintain stable relationships and family relations. The researcher's view is that it is very important for universities to consider the supporting environment which enables their employees to advance in their careers.

2.2.2 Prejudice

In South Africa attempts have been made to eradicate prejudice in the workplace on the basis of gender, race and disability. Affirmative action was introduced to provide equal opportunities for groups which were marginalized under the apartheid laws. Affirmative action is defined by the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service as cited in Department of Public Service and Administration (1998) as "the laws, programmes or activities designed to redress past imbalances and to ameliorate the conditions of individuals and groups who have been disadvantaged on the grounds of race, gender, and disability". In addition, part of the intended outcomes of the Gender Policy Framework is that of affirmative action strategies which promote representation of women across all races and improve the status of women in all sectors (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, p8). Affirmative action aims at redressing the injustices of the past and the legacy of discrimination and subordination of women (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, p22). According to South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (p. 22), key indicators for affirmative action are to ensure there are training programmes targeting women in both the public and private sectors on all levels and to ensure recruitment and placement of women on all levels in both these sectors.

The South African government has put in place legislation and policies to ensure that women are provided with equal opportunities in the workplace. This is in support of providing opportunities for women, especially African women, for them to occupy leadership positions which they were not able to occupy formerly as a result of their race and gender. One challenge to these official interventions is that not all public and private sectors adhere to the government's call. Another challenge is the

monitoring of compliance by employers on providing opportunities for women to occupy higher positions. The change in organisational processes on human resource will be reinforced if there is monitoring of compliance.

There is a myth that African women are hired by companies to fulfil affirmative action quotas (Bell, 2004, p. 151). Because of affirmative action, there are also existing views that African male and female academics are targeted by institutions, and therefore viewed as incompetent by students, colleagues and managers in the institution. Therefore, these women have to continually prove that they do not hold their posts merely as a result of affirmative action (Wallace, Moore, & Curtis, 2014, p. 47). The realities are that even though African women have a dual status with open doors for employment, that fact alone does not guarantee career advancement.

Many companies are still reluctant to promote or employ African women in higher positions (Bell, 2004, p. 151). The reason behind this may be that companies are not convinced that African women have the requisite abilities and skills needed in positions of leadership. This may be a reflection of under-representation of African academic women in leadership positions in higher education, where the academic management is reluctant to promote them.

2.2.3 Perceptions regarding career advancement

The advancement of African academic women is also dependent on their own initiatives, career choices, career goals and actions taken. It will also be dependent on how they perceive themselves in the competitive world. Sanders, Willemsen and Millar (2009, p. 303) indicate that they are generally “individuals who are task- and power-oriented and consider themselves ambitious, generally preferring competitive environments, while those who are more people-oriented generally prefer a supportive and less competitive environment.” Those who are task and power-oriented will, in all likelihood, aim for higher positions and may obtain such.

The researcher’s input is that African women might be limited in certain cases by their own perceptions, choices and actions. It is not only factors outside them that may influence their advancement. Their own choices may limit or enhance their

career advancement. When they are not goal oriented and are not determined to reach their goals, they may remain in their current conditions without progressing to higher employment levels.

2.2.4 Leadership style of women across races

Generally women's style of leadership in universities is different from that of men (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p. 141). These researchers found that the leadership style of women across races is softer than that of men. On the same note, Rosener (1995 as cited in Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 365) found that women across all races have a more relational, cooperative and compassionate approach towards those they lead; on the other hand, men are more controlling and commanding towards their subordinates. Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 146) also found that women's leadership style is more participative and transformational in its approach, as compared to that of men. On the same note, a number of researchers (Lizzio, Wilson, Gilchrist & Gallois, 2003; Van Vianen & Fischer, 2002; Veale & Gold, 1998 as cited in Baumgartner & Schneider 2010, p. 562) indicate that women have interpersonal skills, which are viewed as caring, and therefore suitable for group work, collaboration, and team building. On the other hand, men are perceived as being competitive, prone to risk-taking, and independent (Lizzio, Wilson, Gilchrist & Gallois, 2003; Van Vianen & Fischer, 2002; Veale & Gold, 1998 as cited in Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010, p. 562). It is clear that women's leadership style is more involving; they are caring and believe in group work. On the other hand, men are perceived to be more independent and controlling.

Generally women's leadership styles influence the belief that they lack leadership potential, which could be damaging to themselves and their organisations (Mathur-Helm, 2004 as cited in Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 365). Few women across all races have held senior management positions; those that have done so have possibly succeeded because they had to resemble the existing men's leadership style of being controlling and commanding. Those who were unsuccessful in holding leadership positions failed to resemble men's leadership style (Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 367).

The researcher's view is that the diversity of leadership styles between men and women in the South African context could bring a balance to universities and should be seen as contributing to each other rather than competing. The abilities of women as leaders should not be measured based on their styles of leadership, but rather be measured on the results and the output of their leadership.

2.2.5 Perceptions towards African academic women in leadership positions

When African academic women are in leadership positions, they are “constructed as ambitious rivals” (Phakedi, 2015, p. 2). In addition, they are perceived as individuals who are arrogant, hard, controlling and self-centred (Bell, 2004, p. 152). African women, unlike white women, have been raised in harsh conditions, where they did not have the privilege of protection (Bell, 2004, p. 152). In the past, most African men were absent from their families due to industrialisation, and therefore African women had to raise and provide for their families alone. These conditions made the African women pass on the knowledge to young girls that they need to be self-reliant. The perceptions of African women in leadership do not consider that African women are raised differently from white women. African women are not raised to be fragile, but rather raised to be self-reliant and strong. They are raised with the expectation that when they grow up they will financially provide for their families and themselves. Consequently, African professional women have inner confidence and a voice against all odds. The African woman's strength is mostly distorted by whites (Bell, 2004, p. 152). According to Bell (2004, p. 152), “Black women's behaviours showing strength and competence are interpreted as being controlling, manipulating, or aggressive”.

From the point of view of the researcher, it is absolutely crucial to understand the factors that may influence the career behaviours of African women in leadership. In addition to their harsh upbringing, most of them have had to fight and learn to be strong and work hard.

2.2.6 Entrance to career advancement of African women

In certain instances African women may need gatekeepers to climb the career ladder in any job. Gatekeepers, in this context, are those of the minorities who were able to advance in their careers and have started their careers as tokens. The gatekeeper who is an African woman has proven herself beyond doubt to the white majority in power, that she is trustworthy, reliable and does not pose any threat (Bell, 2004, p. 152). African women gatekeepers pass on information to those who are about to enter higher positions.

It is clear that in certain organisations African women need gatekeepers, and therefore it is not easy for them to occupy leadership positions. Someone has to ensure that those in leadership are aware of the capabilities and abilities of African women who should occupy senior positions. This situation is also applicable to the academic environment where African academic women need gatekeepers in the form of referrals.

2.2.7 Organizational norms and cultures

All employees who enter organizations, whether male or female, have to adapt to existing norms that have been traditionally framed by white male leadership (Gold, 2008, p. 8). These norms do not consider the complexity of race and gender. Masculine values are embedded with organisational demands and practices that determine career advancement (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 143). For instance, women may have to work late in line with masculine values.

Institutional cultures which do not support women's career advancement are enhanced by the point that women do not have a voice due to lack of representation in higher structures within universities where decisions about policies are made (Terosky, O'Meara & Campbell, 2014, p. 61). In addition, in universities women of all races are assigned academic functions such as teaching, mentoring, advising and low-level administration which are misaligned with promotional requirements. These functions are not highly recognised and valued as compared to research output; therefore it makes it difficult for women of all races to be promoted as they spend more of their working time on these academic activities in comparison with men who

spend their time on research activities. These institutional structures decelerate women's career advancement (Terosky, O'Meara & Campbell, 2014, pp. 50–60). From the researcher's point of view, institutional cultures that do not support the career advancement of women, regardless of race, should be addressed as a matter of urgency. African academic women need to objectively consider their job activities and ensure that they are aligned well with promotional requirements. Even if they need to spend more time on those activities, they should be worthwhile for their promotion and career advancement.

2.2.8 Impact of the glass ceiling on career advancement of women

Research has shown that women of all races are faced with various challenges to advance their careers and to enter into managerial positions (Parlea-Buzata, 2010, p. 333); this makes it difficult for them to break through the “glass ceiling”. The “glass ceiling” refers to “a subtle and almost invisible but strong barrier that prevents women from moving up to senior management” (Burke, 2005 as cited in Burke & Mattis, 2005, p. 13). It is described as “an invisible wall that impedes women from attaining top company positions, regardless of their professional accomplishments and qualifications” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995a; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990 as cited in Phelps & Constantine, 2001, p. 161). It is also referred to as a “perceived transparent barrier between women and the executive suite that prevents them from achieving the uppermost position of power” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995a; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990 as cited in Phelps & Constantine, 2001, p. 162). Furthermore, it is defined as an “invisible barrier built into the social structure of organizations that women face in gaining entry into top management positions regardless of their accomplishments or merits” (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001; Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; US Department of Labor, 1991 as cited in Diehl, 2014, p. 54). From the definitions above, it is clear that the glass ceiling as an invisible, transparent and strong barrier prevents women from occupying higher positions irrespective of their qualifications, professional accomplishments and their merits.

The glass-ceiling effect is when disadvantages experienced by women are stronger at the top hierarchy than at the lower one, and it can be maintained by the specific

organization. This is maintained when women continue to experience difficulties in advancing their careers. According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995a) and Morrison and Von Glinow (1990 as cited in Phelps & Constantine, 2001, p. 164), many women perceive the glass ceiling as resembling a concrete or brick wall that isolates them in learning about their organization because of their lack of exposure. It is clear that women face difficulties when advancing to higher positions as a result of the effects of the glass ceiling.

Various authors have documented difficulties for African women to be promoted to higher positions in organizations as compared to white women (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 1999 as cited in Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli & Bilimoria, 2008, p. 350). This is the result of the existence of the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling, as experienced by African women, is also influenced by both sexism and racism, where African women are sidelined on the basis of their gender as well as the colour of their skin.

There are other factors that prevent women from breaking through the glass ceiling, such as the level of their educational qualifications (Leeming & Baruch, 1998; Marthur-Helm, 2006 as cited in Mathur-Helm, 2011, p. 367). Women stand a better chance of entering leadership positions if they have acquired the appropriate qualification at the expected level.

There are fewer women than men in professorial positions in universities (Ozkanli & White, 2008, p. 59; Sanders, Willemsen & Millar, 2009, p. 301). This is evident in 30 European countries where only 15% of professorships are held by women (the study was conducted by the European Commission in 2006). In the United States of America only 24% women hold full professorships in all universities (West & Curtis, 2006, pp. 10–11 as cited in Sanders, Willemsen & Millar, 2009, p. 301). In South Africa, women with full professorships were fewer than 3% and those who were associate professors comprised about 8% (study conducted by Mabokela in 2000 as cited in Mabokela, 2004, p. 59). This situation is also observed in other countries where the higher the position, the fewer women are to be found. Sanders et al. (2009) found in their study that women indicated that it was easy to be a professor when the environment was friendly towards women. A women-friendly environment

was associated with the number of women professors in that environment (university, school or department); the greater the number of women professors, the more friendly the environment would be for them to hold a professorship.

In summary, this trend clearly indicates that the glass ceiling effects can be conquered when the working environment is friendly towards women. Academic women in institutions of higher learning would then be able to be promoted to professorships and occupy senior leadership positions.

The glass-ceiling effects are caused by a number of factors: gender discrimination; bias in employment recruitment and selection; lack of support from family members, colleagues and supervisors; traditional family roles and responsibilities; low self-esteem; and individual career choices of women (Sanders, Willemsen & Millar, 2009, p. 302). Few women who are appointed to higher positions have broken through these barriers. Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 141) suggest that if recruitment and selection processes are fair and transparent, both women and men would experience the same opportunities for promotion. On the other hand, Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p.145) found that the women who had participated in their study had not experienced any gender discrimination when they applied for leadership positions.

The researcher's opinion is that the glass-ceiling effects are complex; they may arise from within, for example, in the form of self-esteem or outside of the women, such as in the workplace or home environment. It is important for women to identify what prevents them from occupying leadership positions and therefore plan to minimise or eradicate the effects of the glass ceiling by addressing these barriers in words and actions. Academic management should work to ensure the representation of African academic women in leadership positions.

2.2.9 Racism and sexism

Racism and sexism have also been identified as factors that prevent women from entering leadership positions. Wallace, Moore and Curtis (2014, p. 45) indicate that "Black women faculty are subjected to gendered racism" where there is a belief that

they belong to race-centred environments or institutions rather than to predominantly white institutions. Racism and sexism in the US have caused African American women to leave their academic employment prematurely, because they find themselves unable to adjust well to the environment (Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 51). African women have to work harder to prove their abilities; they have to put more time and energy into meeting the expectations of others because their gender, race and class are always present as multiple levels of oppression (Wallace, Moore & Curtis, 2014, p. 46). This could also apply to African women in academia in South Africa who experience racism and sexism in the workplace.

2.2.10 Challenges with research publications as a criteria for promotion

Research publications are one of the criteria used to determine whether academic women are promoted or not. Obers (2014, p. 1116) indicates that research productivity affects the promotion process determining whether an academic is recognised and rewarded or not, and how academics value themselves within academia. When research output is weak the chances of being promoted are very slim. Women are affected by this criterion in contrast to their male counterparts. For example, women are assigned non-research activities (Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 51) and spend most of their working hours on those activities, as opposed to men who spend a greater proportion of working time on research activities (Terosky, O'Meara & Campbell, 2014, p. 60). Non-research-orientated activities include teaching more classes, advising a greater number of students, participating in departmental or institutional committees, mentoring (Barrett & Barrett, 2008 as cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 147) and pastoral care (Probert, 2005 as cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 147). These activities require more time, but do not lead to career advancement in most institutions of higher learning. They fulfil requirements for the teaching and service components and count positively towards job evaluation, but when more time is spent on them the research component is weakened. It is the quantity and quality of the research component that influences the promotion of an individual.

At the University of Limpopo, the promotion criteria drafted in 2008 cover all components of academic work, including teaching, service rendering, administrative

experience, community engagement and research output. Women who seek to be promoted to senior and leadership positions need to create a balance in their activities in order to meet the promotion criteria. Women who find it difficult to decline extra activities that are not in line with the promotion criteria are finally overburdened and unable to produce the required research output. The other contributing factor to poor research output is that most African academic women are appointed to lower positions hence they are requested to teach more classes than men do and sit on various institutional committees. Consequently, they are unable to publish. It is difficult for these women to refuse these duties since they are in lower positions than men in the academic structure.

African academic women need research mentors who will guide them on research issues to increase their publication output. Mentors should share their experiences in obtaining funding for research so as to assist the protégé with skills to acquire resources (Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 53). It is important that research mentors assist African academic women to protect their time for writing and other research activities (Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 54). It is suggested by Anderson (2005 as cited in Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 54) that academics spend at least one day a week on research activities. Mentors should guide the protégé to decide which service activities they should accept, and which ones to decline. They should also advise on appropriate ways to decline the service request. At some stage mentors would have to advocate for their protégé when overloading occurs.

Another critical issue relates to research time which is fragmented. In most cases research is done at home. Given the importance of research output for promotional purposes it is important to know how that time is allocated (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 145), and therefore women need to prioritize research time in the same way that they prioritize other work-related duties such as teaching and community service. Workload planning in most cases excludes allocation of time for research activities (Vardi, 2008 as cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 143). It is therefore important for African academic women to plan and allocate time at work for their research activities.

The researcher's view is that the University of Limpopo is one of the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) with a history of focusing on teaching rather than on research. The culture of research is now being promoted, but academics need to be prepared and empowered on research matters and systems should be put in place to support this culture. Time for research should be set aside and be part of the daily workload.

2.2.11 Work contracts and poor job allocation

The process of entry by women into positions at institutions of higher learning is through a fixed or part-time contract, which excludes women from the process of recognition and rewards, resulting in vertical segregation (Le Feuvre, 2009 as cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 143). In general, women who accept these contracts are not promoted to higher positions due to the nature of their contracts; in most cases they tend to perform a teaching role.

Ozkanli and White (2008, p. 57) also noted that women experience an unequal teaching allocation, which is a barrier to their career advancement. In addition, due to them being unable to construct more balanced curriculum vitae, they tend to be overlooked when coming to promotions (McDonald et al., 2007 as cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 147). According to Garnett and Mahomed (2012, pp. 87–88), academic women, irrespective of race, experience a lack of time, a high workload and administrative demands which prevent them from engaging in research and publishing as they would like to. It is therefore important for universities to create an enabling environment for women to research and publish, and it is recommended that administrative tasks be given to administrators to free academics so they can engage in research activities (Garnett & Mahomed, 2012, p. 88).

Because of the increase of students in higher institutions of learning, a greater focus is on teaching, and therefore work allocation is focused on this rather than on allocating time for research (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 147). The work of teaching occupies working hours thereby leaving research for the evenings and weekends. This practice does not favour those who are unable to work on research at those times. It establishes an unbalanced work portfolio (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 151)

and hampers women from progressing in their careers (Fletcher et al., 2007 as cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 147). The solution to this problem is the development of workload policies as suggested by Strike and Taylor (2009 cited in Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 151) and would guide managers on the allocation of time for teaching, research, community engagement, administrative duties and other pastoral activities. This task could be facilitated by the human resource department at an institution. The policy should facilitate an equitable and transparent process of work allocation (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 152). If the allocation is transparent, women would tend to know when a work allocation is unfavourable, especially if they are allocated an excessive workload which does not contribute toward promotion. They could then raise an objection against an inappropriate and unfair work allocation and request one that contributes towards a promotion.

The massification of higher education globally results in an overload of work for academics (Council of Higher Education, 2014, p. 4) where the work allocated is excessive and cannot be completed during working hours. This practice forces academics to continue with their academic work at home, together with family responsibilities, which leaves them limited time for research. In addition, family demands may lower the work performance of academic women, with some deciding not to compete for leadership positions because of these demands. As a result, for women to advance in their careers, they are required to work harder than men because they experience greater role conflict than men do (Ozkanli & White, 2008, pp. 57–8).

It is therefore important that the assessment of work allocation be done through the process of transparency, which would allow all academics to have the same fair opportunity to progress in their careers (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 151). Awareness of this practice of work overload would assist women to plan their careers and to challenge any inequalities experienced. It would assist women to help those who are in fixed or part-time contracts to continue research in their areas of interest.

In terms of women coping with family responsibilities, Ozkanli and White (2008, p. 59) recommend that women hire household and childcare helpers to assist them, in

order for them to continue with their career activities. In addition, they suggest that the cultural value system that relegates family responsibilities to women should be challenged. This would help women who experience family responsibilities as a barrier to their career advancement. It should be borne in mind, however, that the services of a helper come with financial implications that not everyone is able to meet. In addition, cooking is traditionally believed to be the responsibility of the wife for safety reasons and other factors related to health, religion and tradition.

From the researcher's point of view it is important for African academic women to plan their career advancement pathways. They need to consider their workload when accepting academic work which does not contribute to their career advancement. They should negotiate the workload carefully with their line managers in line with their career goals and strive for a balance in all components of their work, such as teaching, service rendering, administrative tasks, community engagement and research. These steps would help them to establish a portfolio that includes all aspects contributing to a promotion to a senior and leadership position.

2.3 SUPPORT FACTORS TOWARDS CAREER ADVANCEMENT

The government and employers should play a major role in supporting the career advancement of African academic women. The government's intervention is through developing and monitoring the implementation of legislation that supports the career advancement of these women. On the other hand, universities should promote gender balance in leadership positions, and provide an environment conducive to the career advancement of African academic women.

2.3.1 Government's intervention

Governments play a major role in ensuring that there are equal opportunities for both male and female personnel in the workplace. The South African government has developed legislation that ensures equality in the workplace which influences employment of women, especially African women, in leadership positions. The government should ensure that the legislation is adhered to by all concerned. This legislation includes the Employment Equity Amendment Act of 2013 and the South

Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. They should ensure that change and equality are embraced.

In South Africa, the Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities was announced and established in 2009 with the aim of ensuring that the rights of women, children and people with disabilities are developed and protected. Equity, equality and empowerment for women, children and people with disabilities are the main focus of the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2009).

Empowerment is described by Bennett (2002 as cited in Bhatnagar, 2011, p. 3) as "the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them". Empowerment is a process of transformation of a person's state of being from the lowest point to the highest point. It is also explained as the "ability to make choices" (Bhatnagar, 2011, p. 4). Bhatnagar (2011, p. 4) discusses the features characterizing empowerment, which are described in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1.1 Bottom-up process

Empowerment employs a bottom-up approach, where women identify their needs and therefore structures, such as government or a department, function as factors of change by providing external support and intervention. In this sense women identify their needs and interests, and the government develops programmes that support the participation of women in the acquisition of skills, decision-making skills and control over resources.

2.3.1.2 Process of change

Empowerment is a process rather than an end-result. It is measured over time, and not at a specific point. It involves a process whereby women identify their needs and interests, and then plan and work on them.

It is therefore important for the Department of Higher Education in South Africa to develop empowerment initiatives that assist women in their career advancement. Such programmes may include training and funding. The government is aware of the status quo of women, especially African academic women in positions of leadership in institutions of higher learning. Generally, there are relatively few women in leadership positions in institutions of higher learning (Council on Higher Education 2015, p. 45).

2.3.2 Employers' intervention: Gender balance in leadership positions

In Australia, universities have a second action plan for women, whereby universities are required to employ and retain increasing numbers of women in professorial and managerial positions (Ozkanli & White, 2008, p. 54). Universities are encouraged to integrate equity and performance in their institutional plans. On the other hand, Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 153) have developed a five-level framework of intervention for gender balance in leadership positions in universities. The levels can be implemented sequentially or simultaneously. The framework levels are described below.

2.3.2.1 First level: Transparent and fair promotion process

The procedure for employment should be clear and fair for both women and men. Women should not be discriminated against because of their gender. Lack of transparency in selection and promotion was found as a barrier experienced by women in Australian universities (White & Bagilhole, 2006 as cited in Ozkanli & White, 2008, p. 56).

2.3.2.2 Second level: Support parents and carers

This level requires that HR policies should create an environment which is supportive of employees who are parents, for instance having adequate maternity and paternity leave, subsidising nursery fees, and providing career breaks. These policies would enable women to advance their careers without sacrificing family life.

2.3.2.3 *Third level: Tackle indirect discrimination*

Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 153) indicate that promotion should be on the basis of research output in relation to opportunity. This means women should not be treated as men in terms of research output, as their output may not be consistent with that of men; they have to interrupt their employment for child-caring. For instance, when a woman applies for a promotion post, policies should consider any interruptions that may have occurred in the woman's life, which might have hampered her research output, for example, pregnancy. On the same note, Ozkanli and White (2008, p. 59) recommend that promotion processes recognize that women interrupt their careers due to family responsibilities and those family demands may affect their employment patterns.

2.3.2.4 *Fourth level: Target positive action at women*

Action to be taken at this level is to run workshops for women on awareness of different approaches towards career advancement by women and men. The differences may be experienced in issues like focus, networking, planning of career and mentoring. Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 153) indicate that when this is done it may result in women having to review their situation and plan their career choices based on informed decisions. On the same note, Ozkanli and White (2008, p. 59) propose that women receive training that would enable them to occupy leadership roles, for instance training on negotiation skills when they engage with recruitment consultants.

2.3.2.5 *Fifth level: Validate and promote an enabling leadership style*

Women tend to follow a participative and transformational leadership style, which is not preferred by some universities. Ozkanli and White (2008, p. 57) share this view by saying that universities prefer a transactional leadership style as compared to the transformational leadership style preferred by women. HR could initiate a debate on leadership styles. Having that platform for debate may change a shift of leadership style to one that is transformative by nature.

Doherty and Manfredi's framework is in line with the model of Lewis (1990, p. 217 as cited in Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010, p. 299) indicating that employers should support

women's career advancement by planning the conditions of employment according to women's needs; for example, introduce developmental programmes and practise non-discriminatory principles. Networking programmes should be established to counteract discrimination and be monitored. One example is that of the mentor-mentee programmes (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010, p. 299).

Training centres should be established to empower women in leadership, by providing support that will combat the isolation experienced by women in higher positions (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010, p. 299). These training centres should be biased toward women in order to create balanced representation of both women and men. The researcher's view is that women, especially African women who were marginalized in the past, should be given priority in higher positions and be provided with enough support.

An employment equity plan should be intensively practised in order to redress the imbalances of the past and emancipate women (Backer, 1998 as cited in Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010, p.299). It can be evident in the form of transparent promotional procedures; fair evaluation of their achievements and merit, with consideration given to career interruptions due to child rearing and care; leadership training; mentorship and other initiatives and actions that support women.

In addition, the researcher's view is that the African woman's role as primary caregiver in the family should be considered when planning working time. Flexi-time should be introduced to cater for a woman's needs. Emphasis in the workplace should not be based on the hours spent there, but rather on one's productivity and effectiveness.

Human resource practices at universities should have transparent selection processes where women, more especially African women, are provided with the same opportunities as men when applying for leadership positions. In addition, a family-friendly work environment is needed for both men and women to progress in their careers (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p. 144). This would lead to career

progression for both men and women without sacrificing the well-being of their families.

2.3.2.6 Sabbaticals

The word 'sabbatical' is derived from the Hebrew "Shenath shabbathon" which means a year of rest (Benshoff & Spruill, 2006, p. 705). Sabbaticals are given to academics to allow them to take a break from work, in order to pursue personal or/and professional development. It is a form of incentive for academics who work at a higher learning institution. Sabbaticals are very important for academics as they are expected to develop as scholars and researchers throughout their careers. Academics need to apply for the leave before it is granted and there are certain conditions to be met. An academic who is on sabbatical leave is relieved from day-to-day work responsibilities to focus on her or his professional goal. After sabbatical leave, an individual has to provide the results of the research. It is important for African academic women to be given the opportunity to focus on research and their career advancement activities.

2.4 STRATEGIES TOWARDS CAREER ADVANCEMENT

African academic women need to employ strategies that will enhance their career advancement. The strategies can be in the form of mentoring programmes; continuing professional development activities; leadership development training; and networking. Various authors discussed in the following paragraphs comment on a number of career advancement activities in which women should be involved, which include the following: having a clear career advancement pathway; being self-motivated; and managing their career efficiently.

2.4.1 Mentoring programmes

Mentoring programmes are needed to facilitate the career advancement of African academic women. Mentoring and supportive environments are essential for the representation of women in universities (HESA, 2011 as cited in Obers, 2014, 1108). In Ramey's study, as cited in Phelps and Constantine (2001, p. 165) it is indicated that more women than men in higher education explain that organizational intervention, which includes leadership programmes and mentoring relationships, is

a contributing factor toward their career advancement. Leadership programmes include skill-building programmes which facilitate employment development.

Mentoring is described by Grant (2006, p. 87) as the “positive interactions that occur between an experienced and trusted advisor (mentor) and a less experienced individual (variously termed mentee, protégé) or group of individuals that facilitate the professional and sometimes personal development of the junior person(s)”. On the other hand, mentoring is defined by Harden and Johnson (2000 as cited in Evans & Cokley, 2008, pp. 52–53) as a “personal relationship in which a more experienced faculty member acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced graduate student or junior professional and provides the individual with knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and support in his or her pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession”. Furthermore, Grant (2006, pp. 87–8) indicates that mentoring helps the mentee to understand the hidden rules, the ins and outs of employment. Furthermore, mentors provide career guidance, encouragement, assistance, skill empowerment and feedback (Phelps & Constantine, 2001, p. 168). From these descriptions and definitions of mentoring, it appears that the purpose of mentoring is to empower and to enhance the abilities of the mentee or an inexperienced person. The mentoring relationship evolves over time. It usually involves two people, where the one is highly experienced and the other is not.

Mentoring is one of the vehicles that assist mentees in their career. Mentorship and provision of support have been found to be key elements for the career progression of both women and men (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p. 145). Mentors guide the upward mobility of their protégés. Mentoring assists them in their career progression by providing them with access to knowledge of resources and information (Headlam-Wells, Craig & Gosland, 2006, p. 485). Mentoring was found by Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 146) as a sound way of assisting protégés in writing books, in involving them in editorial boards, in obtaining qualifications or research grants. They further indicate that women need more instrumental support than men do; it involves assistance with sponsorship and networking (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p.146).

From what mentorship is, and how it has contributed to the career advancement of others, it is clear that African academic women need mentors in order to advance in their careers, as they need access to knowledge of resources and information. It is therefore important for African academic women to identify those that could take on the role of mentor in their professional lives. In addition, organisations should provide more support to African women through mentorship and professional development (Parlea-Buzatu, 2010, p. 333). African women need both psychosocial and career mentoring. According to Johnson (2000 as cited in Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 53), psychosocial mentoring involves helping individuals to cope with their environment and circumstances and also for personal adjustments that enhance their advancement, whereas career mentoring, according to Kram (1985 as cited in Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 54), refers to “sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and provision of challenging assignments”.

From the researcher’s point of view, mentorship is able to increase the pace of the career advancement journey, as women who are mentored will be receiving assistance without having to experience unnecessary failures. Mentoring can be seen as being helpful to African academic women as they advance in their careers. Mentors can provide information and guidance on how to overcome career barriers and could address the glass ceiling. Therefore, mentorship is essential for the career advancement of African academic women. The mentorship relationship could be informal and not necessarily involve the organization. It could also be formal, and reinforced by organizational policies and structures.

There are only a few African women in leadership positions in organizations. According to Ndlovu (2013, p.13), there are missing persons in South African boardrooms, and those are African women. Patton (2009, p. 515) states that mentors for African women are few in number as a result of the limited number of African women in educational disciplines. This implies that “there are few African women in leadership positions who understand the politics facing Black females in the workplace, and are able to mentor their younger counterparts” (Ndlovu, 2013, p. 13). Ndlovu (2013, p. 13) also indicates that every person needs a mentor to open doors for her; a mentor helps a mentee to work around the more complicated politics

of organizations and industries. A mentoring relationship provides a safe space to have politically incorrect conversations that one would not have with a manager.

Even though a mentor is needed, there are also political issues in the professional environment that only another African woman would understand. The scarcity of African women in leadership positions in corporations contributes to fewer African women mentors. This scarcity of African women mentors makes it difficult for African women to deal with the prejudice they encounter in the workplace. Chiloane-Tsoka (2010, p. 2992) found that the scarcity of role models or mentors makes women afraid of occupying leadership positions. In the study on African women, titled *Catalyst* (1999 as cited in Hopkins O'Neil, Passarelli & Bilimoria, 2008, p. 350) it was found that women in the study had less access to mentors and sponsors than men did, and that those who intended to leave the organization indicated that it was because it had ineffective diversity strategies.

The scarcity of similar mentors was also mentioned in the survey on experiences of African-American, Asian and Latino women in *Accounting by Gold* (2008, p. 8). A participant in Patton's study (2009, p. 122) indicated that it is very difficult to have an African woman mentor because their numbers are so limited. Patton (2009, p. 123) states that the participants in her study indicated that it was good to have an African American woman mentor with whom they could identify and who looked like them. On the other hand, Laff (2009, p. 34) indicates that most women do not believe that it is essential to match a woman with another woman for a mentoring relationship. These respondents expressed the view that women in leadership positions are scarce and there is a shortage of women mentors.

African academic women need to seek a mentoring relationship with those of other races and gender, since there is a crisis of African women mentors. There are men who are willing to mentor women. Executive positions are occupied by men, and women find themselves in the minority. Patton (2009, p. 527) found that white mentors can act as gatekeepers for African women, providing the information and benefits that are necessary for success. The researcher's view is that African academic women indeed need mentors with whom they can identify, and who

understand the complexity of being an African woman in a profession. However, as a result of the scarcity of African women mentors, it is important for women to identify for themselves mentors who are willing to assist and who are in the same field as they are.

Men approach and respond to mentorship differently to women. Men tend to seek as well as offer advice in ways that do not appear to be mentoring (Laff, 2009, p.34). Mentoring moments for men can take place outside the office, on the golf course or at social events (Laff, 2009, p. 34). On the other hand, women tend to look forward to formal mentoring sessions. Yet mentoring can occur at any time or place. During mentoring sessions most women think that they have to discuss a crucial issue with their mentors (Laff, 2009, p. 34), but men will discuss any aspect, regardless of its size, with their mentors. When women discuss something they regard as of minimal importance, they think they are wasting the mentor's time, rather than viewing the event as a productive career discussion.

Mentoring programmes for women should aim at empowering them. Empowering women involves helping them to "discover and use the resources within and around them, and to seize some control over their lives and the decisions that are critical to their lives" (Fong & Foruto, 2001, p. 230 as cited in Green & King, 2001, p. 157). Mentoring empowers African women with strategies to survive in an academic environment. It provides them with a broad knowledge base, skills and competencies that will allow them to succeed at all levels of academia (Green & King, 2001, p. 159). From the researcher's point of view, it is therefore important for African women to understand the use and benefit of mentoring and engage their mentors at that level. They need to be curious, ask questions, ask for advice and career directions, inquire about where they can find resources and seek guidance on promotional procedures and how to meet the requirements.

Mentors play a greater role in the career lives of those they mentor than they imagine. Patton (2009, pp. 521–22) concluded that protégés define the role of mentors as individuals who serve as role models, and who assist them to network. The protégé participants in her study indicated that mentors provide psychosocial

support and motivate them to work. They regard their mentors as experienced individuals who provide sound advice that is reliable; they speak from their own experiences and help them to find ways of navigating the system. The participants of the study also indicated that mentors open doors for opportunities, such as collaboration in conference presentations and participation in research.

The researcher's input is that African academic women who are mentored should involve their mentors in academic activities, such as research. This means the choice of mentor is important; they should be in the same discipline or similar discipline for collaboration and mutual benefit in the relationship. Consequently, it is important for African women to choose mentors who are experienced, who have walked the journey they want to take and who are willing to share their experiences. In addition, they need to choose mentors who are eager to assist them in their career advancement journey.

2.4.2 Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the skills and knowledge that professionals obtain through attending training, workshops, seminars and conferences, and that takes place beyond their initial training. CPD is important to enable African academic women to increase their existing skills with updated and current knowledge and skills. It involves one being currently skilled and intellectually updated in the chosen discipline (Faerber & Johnson, 2006, p. 22). There should be programmes that allow women to continue with their professional development. Faerber and Johnson (2006, p. 30) suggest that the best strategy to be current and skilled is to learn which area will be relevant in future, and to start planning to obtain the relevant skills. African academic women must take ownership of their professional development by engaging in meetings, workshops, training and conferences that would assist them in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills in their respective discipline.

CPD also involves activities such as attending conferences, workshops, seminars, short courses, colloquiums and studying for specialized degrees and diplomas (Faerber & Johnson, 2006, p. 30). One of the challenges faced by women of colour

as discussed by Gold (2008, p. 8) is that there are inadequate professional development opportunities. The researcher considers that the search for opportunities for professional development should not be limited to the local environment; much effort should be made to take advantage of globalisation and consider online platforms, such as connecting with like-minded professionals by joining and participating in interest groups using the LinkedIn platform.

2.4.3 Leadership development training

African women who aspire to be in leadership positions and those who already occupy such positions should consider attending leadership development training. Leadership development is defined by Day (2001, p. 582 as cited in Hopkins et al., 2008, p. 351) as “expanding the collective capacity of organisational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes”. Women have different leadership needs, and therefore they need a leadership training that will meet their needs (Hopkins et al., 2008, p. 351). When women take up leadership positions and have not attended any training, they might lead their section by modelling the previous leaders they were exposed to, or lead by using their own intuition. When they are trained, they will understand better how to lead others to achieve a common goal. It is therefore necessary for organisations to consider leadership development training for those who are in leadership.

2.4.4 Networking

Networking may be used in overcoming the barriers facing women’s career advancement. It can accelerate the career advancement of women. A network is defined as a group of people who share information, ideas and favours (Rankin & Nielsen, 2006, p. 110), who have the same interests, provide information, support, awareness of career opportunities and contacts for professional growth (Phelps & Constantine, 2001, p. 168).

In similar vein, Colakoglu (2006, p. 536) defines networking as “a set of behaviours used to develop and maintain relationships that can potentially provide information, influence, guidance and support to individuals in their careers”. Networking is a career advancement strategy that assists women to connect with others in order to

learn and share information and ideas on issues that could contribute to their career advancement.

Networking behaviours involve being active in professional activities, accepting and doing challenging tasks (Greenhaus & Callanan; 2006, p. 536) and that allow one to make contacts with other people in the field. These behaviours allow one to develop social capital, which refers to access to resources that enable the attainment of career goals. Forming networks with individuals in higher positions can influence one's upward mobility. Networking and collaborating with others can support women in their career advancement processes. Networking enables them to start and increase their research publications, which contributes to the chances of their promotion (Settlers et al. as cited in Evans & Cokley, 2008, p. 52).

Gold (2008, p. 8) in her discussion on the views of women of colour on their experiences in the workplace is that they found it difficult to connect with others, especially men. This makes women reduce the opportunities of growth available through networking. However, the researcher's view is that even though African academic women may find it difficult to connect with others, they must learn to break through and involve themselves in existing networks or create networks for themselves.

2.4.5 Women's self-initiative strategies

African academic women should take initiatives towards their career advancement. They should be proactive, even before promotional opportunities are available. According to Lewis (1990, p. 217 as cited in Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010, p. 2990), strategies to overcome the barriers by women are that women should network more, study their career opportunities and understand themselves and their situations. Women should stand out and work for their own career advancement. If they do not act, they might remain where they are.

African academic women should establish their own identity in universities. They should not be seen as those that support the system, but rather those that build the system. "Mammy images are looked at as support systems in the workplace. Black

women who are viewed as Mammy may be limited to minority, diversity, or other support-typed positions. It has been proposed that “career counsellors need to advise Black women to become more proactive in their careers” (Parlea-Buzatu, 2010, p. 333). African women need to work harder for their own career advancement to overcome the perceptions that they are support systems in the workplace. The researcher’s input is that women should learn to prioritise career advancement activities, and learn ways of declining support-related services that are not in line with promotional requirements.

2.4.6 Clear career advancement pathway

A career plan helps one to have a clear direction on a career advancement pathway. Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p. 146) found that men plan their careers, are focused and have a calculated approach when moving from one job to the other. By contrast, women had no plans about the next job, and they drop into jobs without calculating their career path, and had limited career aspirations. Men plan to progress into leadership positions and obtain their professorial status. Therefore, it is crucial for women to have a clear career advancement vision. They should seek reasons why they want to “climb the career ladder”. Advancement has its own disadvantages and benefits. Advancement brings added responsibilities and less flexibility (Busch-Vishniac, 2006, pp. 62–63). For instance one’s time is required by those reporting to one and those to whom one reports. It is important for women to understand the culture of the organization and what it values, and then focus more closely on what the organization values.

The researcher’s view is that African academic women must articulate clearly their career advancement pathway. They need to identify exactly what they intend to become or do, what resources and support they will need to pursue their advancement journeys, and reasonable time frames. Career advancement usually does not happen by chance, but one prepares for the journey ahead. It is intentional, and it requires determination.

2.4.7 Self-motivation

Motivation plays a major role in enabling individuals to perform various tasks. Quigley and Tymon Jr (2006, p. 511) define motivation as “a force or energy that exists within a person and influences effort, directs behaviours, and ultimately affects performance and other individual outcomes”. When women are self-motivated they are able to work towards achieving their goals in the midst of challenges. A career can be perceived as a calling, where one sees a career as a purpose for living. Individuals who perceive their career as a calling tend to manage setbacks in the midst of challenges (Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 513). In this way an individual is intrinsically motivated to achieve the goal. Individuals who see a career as a calling tend to have a strong focus which leads them to achieve their purpose, and therefore experience success (Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 513). Motivation can also derive from outside through rewards and favourable working conditions. If such are absent, individuals may lose their motivation. Therefore, it is important for institutions of higher learning to create favourable working conditions that attract women to pursue and occupy leadership positions.

2.4.8 Career self-management

The career of an individual can be viewed as “a series of mini-stages of exploration, trial, mastery, and exit across functions and organizations” (Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 512). This indicates that the individual, rather than the organization, is the driver of her career. Individuals should take responsibility for their careers. In this perspective on career development, career is not measured by chronological age and stages, but by continuous learning and identity changes in individuals (Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 512). This perspective is called the “protean career”. Career development, according to the “protean career”, is self-directed and involves continuous learning. Individuals are motivated to achieve the goal of psychological success. Psychological success involves feelings of satisfaction, pride, and accomplishment as a result of achieved personal goals. To realize the potential of the “protean career” a person must develop new competencies that will help her to manage self and career. A person needs to learn to adapt to the changes that are happening in the workplace and the environment. In addition, she needs to continually grow and evolve as the world around her changes (Quigley & Tymon Jr,

2006, p. 512). More emphasis is on to “learn how” to manage self and one’s career, which indicates being able to adapt and being able to identify one’s own self-identity. Emphasis is not on to “know how”, which relates to the skills and the knowledge that the person has to learn.

Career management involves the process of exploration, developing career goals and career strategies (Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 514). Career exploration involves the process of identifying one’s weaknesses, abilities and interests. When setting career goals, individuals become focussed. The process helps them to put and maintain effort and ensure that strategies are formulated and used to attain goals. Career management also involves a person’s willingness to adjust her total desires, which includes work, family, leisure and spiritual engagement, and other aspects of life with which the individual is involved.

King (2004 as cited in Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 515) indicates that career self-management involves three behaviours that occur concurrently, namely positioning, influence, and boundary management. Positioning is when an individual works towards making necessary contacts, developing relevant skills and experiences to achieve her desired career goals. Influence is when an individual works towards ensuring that decisions taken by her seniors are working towards her achieving her goals. Boundary management involves effort to balance one’s personal activities and career activities. These are considered basic elements of career management (Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006, p. 516).

The researcher’s view is that women need to take responsibility in managing their own careers. They should not rely on an organisation to provide career advancement opportunities. They should position themselves and look for learning opportunities outside their own organisation. In addition, they need to prioritise their activities and ensure that they strive for a balance between life and career.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the challenges that women face and the opportunities and support available for them to advance in their careers. African women in leadership

positions face various challenges and obstacles that need to be addressed. These challenges may be addressed at a personal, interpersonal, organizational and governmental level. In certain cases, African women have to take steps in advancing their careers, seek assistance from others, and look for opportunities that exist in the workplace to address the barriers. The government should also play a role in introducing laws and policies that will enhance women's careers.

On the other hand, there are support factors, personal attributes and strategies that act as opportunities to facilitate the career advancement of African academic women. It is therefore necessary to see both the challenges and opportunities to career advancement as one coin with two sides. As a result, it is essential for women to be aware of both sides and take the necessary steps towards their career advancement.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Theories on career development and self-efficacy will be discussed as the theoretical framework for the study. The theories will assist in understanding the psychological factors and career development stages that are involved during the process of career advancement.

This study is based on two theories, which are the self-concept of vocational behaviour theory and self-efficacy theory. The self-concept of vocational behaviour theory explains how an individual views herself and her ideal self. Her views also incorporate elements such as sex-stereotyping and other psychological awareness attributes, which are internal barriers that act as barriers to career advancement. This theory seeks to understand how African academic women view themselves and the ideal self in their career advancement. The self-efficacy theory is about the belief one has in one's ability to perform certain tasks. It explains the belief of academic women in their ability to perform certain tasks, even in difficult times. Their belief to perform certain tasks could be influenced by what is happening to them and may be affected by factors such as sexism, gender stereotypes, discrimination and family roles.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories of career development need to consider the complexity of women's careers (Coogan & Chent, 2007, p. 191). The realities of women's career development are unique and a result of a woman's reproductive nature and child-rearing responsibilities. Most women at some stage are forced to interrupt their careers due to child-rearing responsibilities. This means certain workplace opportunities pass them by during their absence. Therefore it is helpful to study these development theories to gain understanding of the career development of women.

3.2.1 Donald E. Super's career development theory

Osipow (1973, p. 133) indicates that Super made an assumption that any person has the potential for success and satisfaction in a variety of occupational settings. This is because people's interests and abilities are likely to fall within their chosen occupation. Super indicated that the career behaviour of people follows general patterns. Some patterns are stable (direct entry into life-work); conventional (trial leading to stability); unstable or multiple trial career patterns (Super, 1969, p. 4). Super also emphasises that parental socio-economic status is a starting point of career patterns and is its major determinant (Super, 1969, p. 4) and contributes to vocational development (Super, 1969, p. 6).

Super noted that the environment and heredity play a role in career maturation. The environment can be manipulated to bring about vocational maturity. Vocational maturation is defined by Super (1969, p. 4) as "the behaviour of the individual, compared with that of others copying with the same tasks." The vocational maturity of an individual is determined by her or his vocational behaviour and the expected vocational behaviour of an individual at that stage. The closer the correspondence, the greater the individual's vocational maturity (Osipow, 1973, p. 136). In addition, according to Super (1969, p. 5), vocational maturity is also related to the abilities and opportunities an individual has and the manner in which this individual takes advantage of such opportunities.

The researcher's view is that factors, such as employment conditions, the effect of the glass ceiling, societal expectations, and family demands, form part of the environment that could have an impact on the career maturation and career advancement of women. It is also important to notice that the opportunities that individuals have can contribute to career maturity, and thus career advancement of African academic women.

Super regards career development as a process that unfolds over time, concurrently with developmental stages (Super, 1969, p. 3). Super has a notion that a person strives to implement his self-concept (Super, 1969, p. 7) by choosing an occupation that will enable him to enjoy self-expression (Osipow, 1973, p. 132). He further

noted that the behaviour of an individual in implementing his self-concept vocationally is based on that individual's stage of life and on conditions external to that person. Super aligned his work to the work of Charlotte Buehler (1993) on developmental psychology, which indicates that there are developmental stages of life. He believes that life consists of distinct stages in terms of career development.

In addition, there are three perspectives in Super's theory which are as follows: developmental perspective focusing on vocational behaviour in career development; phenomenological perspective focusing on the role of self-concept in career development; contextual perspectives focusing on multiple social roles and their interaction in one's career development (Sverko, 2006, p. 789).

3.2.1.1 Developmental perspectives: Vocational behaviour and career development

Super (1969, p. 3) defines career as "the sequence of occupations, jobs and positions occupied during the course of a person's working life." During people's life cycles there are various vocational tasks that they have to perform. These tasks are performed at various stages which Super developed from the stages of life and work. Super and his colleagues developed five major stages of career development with each having its own appropriate developmental tasks. The first stage is the growth stage starting from birth to age 14 years; the second stage is the exploration stage between 15 and 25 years; then the maintenance stage until 65 years; and the final stage after 65 years, which is called the decline stage (Osipow, 1973, p. 131).

In this discussion, the present researcher's focus is on Super's vocational development tasks of individuals, including the attitudes and behaviours relevant to vocational developmental tasks (Sverko, 2006, p. 790; Osipow 1973, pp. 138-139). The five stages of career development, according to Super and his colleagues are described in the following paragraphs.

(i) Growth (around 4 to 13)

In this stage children become aware of their needs and have a general understanding of the world of work. There are four major career developmental tasks at this stage. The tasks are outlined as "becoming concerned about the future,

increasing personal control over one's own life, convincing oneself to achieve in school and at work, and acquiring competent work habits and attitude" (Sverko, 2006, p. 790).

(ii) Exploration (ages 14–24)

In this stage individuals are trying to understand themselves, and find their place in the world of work. They try to identify their capabilities and interests. They attempt to identify their desired occupational choice and eventually start with their occupation. Career development tasks involve crystallization of career preferences and turning generalised preferences into career choices. The third task is to implement action towards the career choice by completing an appropriate training and beginning with employment (Sverko, 2006, p. 790).

(iii) Establishment stage (ages 25–44)

In this stage individuals have acquired an appropriate qualification and are occupying their first positions, and as they grow they pursue career advancement. Career developmental tasks in this stage are to secure a place in the organisation by meeting the requirements of the job. The second stage is consolidation of one position through developing positive attitudes and habits towards work, and also developing positive relationships with colleagues. An individual is aware that she needs to consolidate and advance; she possesses information on how to consolidate and advance; she plans for consolidation and development; and she acts on consolidating and advancing. According to Zunker (2002, p. 37), this stage is "a period of establishment in a career by development, status and seniority". The third stage is to obtain advancement in the form of obtaining new responsibilities and promotion.

Based on vocational advancement tasks, academic women from age 25 and above have to develop themselves within their vocation, they have to advance in their careers and secure comfortable vocational positions (Osipow, 1973, p. 140). The researcher's view is that this does not apply across race, culture and psychosocial, and economic circumstances. Women's career advancement may be interrupted by marriage and bearing children. Some women, especially African women, may be

affected by their financial situation, where they have to work first in order to finance their studies.

(iv) Maintenance stage (ages 45–65)

This is the period where individuals adjust and hold on to their work roles. They strive to maintain what they have achieved and find innovative ways of performing their duties.

(v) Disengagement stage (over 65)

In this stage the individual's energy and interest towards the occupation decreases. The individual disengages and plans for retirement, leaving employment and therefore facing the challenge of adjusting to a new life.

Originally Super's stages were attached to chronological stages, but later the focus was only on developmental tasks. This is due to individuals changing careers during their mid-year period; they have to go through the exploration and establishment stages again. These changes occur as a result of internal changes and opportunities available at that time. In addition, Super recognized that not all people are able to move from one stage to the other strictly according to the ages proposed; some individuals delay and enter a certain stage at a later age (Sverko, 2006, p. 790).

Super's career development stages, which include developmental tasks, need to consider the complexity of women's life and the context in which they are living. Women are faced with family roles, such as childrearing that forces them not only to be late starters, but also to continually interrupt their careers due to family responsibilities. It is therefore important to note that family role stereotypes, where it is believed that women belong in their homes in order to care for their families, have socialized women into fulfilling their roles as nurturers. This makes it easy for women to interrupt their careers. Hence it would be very interesting to develop career development stages that cater for the complexity of women's life.

3.2.1.2 Phenomenological perspective: Occupational self-concept

Super and fellow researchers (1963, as cited in Zunker, 2002, p. 52) define self-concept as “one’s view of self that has many elements, such as one’s appearance, abilities, personality, gender, and place in society”. Pryor (1985, p. 155) indicates that people’s expectations, hopes, beliefs and views about themselves are incorporated into their self-concept. In addition, elements such as sex-stereotypes, perception of social class, and other attributes of psychological awareness are also incorporated. Gottfredson (1981, as cited in Pryor, 1985, p. 155) indicates that views about self include the ideal self, which is what one wants to become. The researcher’s view is that people act the way they believe about themselves. Self-understanding, which is as a result of self-concept, influences vocational choice and vocational behaviour. This shows that the self-concept is a factor that influences how one’s career is developing. There are other factors that contribute to career development, such as psychosocial and political factors.

This perspective suggests that “people base their career choices on beliefs about their own abilities and other self-attributes” (Sverko, 2006, p. 789). Super sees career choice as a way of implementing the self-concept (Super, 1969, p. 7) and on the other hand, career development as a way of improving the match between the self-concept and the environment. Self-concept is how one perceives oneself, and is formed by one’s self-image which includes personality traits, values, abilities and roles. Individuals tend to look at the world of work to see how they will fit, and that translates their self-concept into an occupational perspective. The outcome of this process is occupational self-concept. Occupational self-concept is defined by Super as a “constellation of self-attributes that are vocationally relevant for the individual” (Sverko, 2006, p. 791). Occupational self-concept leads to vocational preferences. Super proposes that the career development process can be facilitated with ease when individuals are encouraged to develop and accept their occupational self-concept.

The researcher’s view is that women’s self-concept is also influenced by their environment. The environment tends to shape an individual and people are influenced by societal values. When the values of society are focused on women as

nurturers, women may tend to value themselves as nurturers and tend to look around the world of work and choose careers that will match with the role of nurturing. Career preferences will be on those such as teaching and nursing. Super advises that to facilitate career development, people should be encouraged to develop and accept their occupational self-concept. If their occupational self-concept is such that it disadvantages them as it is formed by societal values, they should be encouraged to work on their personal interests and beliefs. They should not be encouraged to align their careers with values influenced by society. In addition, they should be exposed to various career opportunities.

3.2.1.3 Contextual perspective: Social roles and their interaction

The contextual perspective recognizes that individual have various roles to play in their lifespan. These roles happen simultaneously, and one should always consider the roles when trying to explain the career of an individual. Many people have the role of work; Super indicates that satisfactory vocational adjustment is possible when the roles played and the work of the individual are complementing her aptitude, interests, and values (Sverko, 2006, p. 791). Roles interact and impact on one another. The interaction of roles can be supportive, complementary, but, on the other hand, conflict with each other. Super indicates that the constellation of role interaction constitutes the career of the individual. The researcher's view is that women face various roles, and in most cases the roles conflict with each other, and so threaten women's vocational development.

Super's theory is relevant as it outline necessary lifespan activities needed for career maturation, and thus career advancement. The study highlights career advancement activities of African academic women, which reflect career maturation. In addition, it highlights the environmental factors, such as opportunities and barriers to career advancement of African academic women.

3.2.2 Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory

Self-efficacy is another factor that may influence the process of self-concept implementation (Super as cited in Betz, 1994, p. 32). This means that if one believes

in one's abilities to perform a certain task, this will reinforce the implementation of the ideal self. The self-efficacy theory is built upon Bandura's social learning theory. The social learning theory emphasizes that people learn new behaviour by modelling others behaving in a certain way. The behaviour learnt is later on refined based on the feedback from performance (Bandura, 1977, p. 192). When feedback brings forth undesirable consequences, the behaviour will be altered, and if the consequences are desirable, the behaviour will be reinforced. Good feedback motivates people to anticipate good results. This creates an expectation of certain outcomes, when one is engaged in certain behaviour. Bandura (1977, p. 193) defines outcome expectancy as "a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes". Outcome expectancy alone may not influence one to engage in a certain behaviour which envisaged desired outcomes. A person needs to believe in her or his ability to perform the task that leads to the desired outcomes.

Betz (2004, p. 340) refers to self-efficacy as "one's belief in one's capabilities to successfully engage in a specific area of behaviour". Betz (1994, p. 32) emphasizes that self-efficacy determines how much effort one will put into a task, and how long one will sustain the performance, even in the midst of obstacles and through difficult experiences. Self-efficacy influences the choices, performances and persistence of individuals in career-related domains (Betz, 1994, p. 32). When an individual believes in her ability to perform certain task, she has the strength to start those tasks and put more effort into accomplishing them. When her self-efficacy is low, she will have problems in initiating those tasks, and will not put any effort into such tasks. Self-efficacy involves an "individual's thoughts and images that influence psychological functioning" (Zunker, 2002, p. 99). The researcher's view is that low self-efficacy can be as a result of the socialization experience; it can also be as a result of a belief system originating from perceptions of the society on the expected roles of women.

Self-efficacy plays a major role in the career advancement of individuals. Hackett and Bertz (1981) as cited in Zunker (2002, p. 99) suggest that women who have low self-efficacy will limit their career mobility. They also suggest that women's self-efficacy can be hindered by a working environment that is less responsive to women

than to men, and that does not reward accomplishment equally to both men and women. Women who have low self-efficacy tend to give up and procrastinate. Betz (2004) suggests that self-efficacy is important for individuals who want to advance their careers. This is in line with Bandura's self-efficacy theory which highlights that individuals initiate and perform tasks that they believe they can perform. When one has low self-efficacy, it will mean that they will not initiate tasks or they will give up.

The researcher's input is that it is important that women's self-efficacy be evaluated in terms of their beliefs regarding the required competencies and skills needed for managerial or leadership roles. Women who lack strong self-efficacy fail to realize their potential and abilities.

Self-efficacy is again important when one deals with the challenges and problems facing one. Bandura (1977, pp. 193-194) states that the strength of people's belief in their effectiveness will, in all likelihood, determine whether they will cope in a stressful situation. Believed self-efficacy affects the choice of activities and the settings one will be involved in, and once actions have been initiated it can affect coping efforts. The researcher's view is that this theory is crucial in explaining the self-efficacy of academic women in the midst of the challenges facing them.

Cognition plays a role in self-efficacy. Bandura (1977, p.191) in his theory of "self-efficacy towards a unifying theory of behavioural change" tries to "explain and to predict psychological changes achieved by different modes of treatment" and also to account for changes in behaviour as a result of different modes of treatment. He mentions two divergent trends in the field of behavioural change, which are treatment of dysfunctional inhibitions and defensive behaviour; and performance-based procedures that are effective for psychological changes. Psychological and behavioural changes achieved by different modes are derived from cognitive mechanisms. The cognitive processes facilitate change, because human behaviour is acquired and regulated by cognitive processes. Cognitive processing of efficacy information is influenced by enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive sources. Bandura states that psychological procedures, whatever their form, alter the level and strength of self-efficacy in individuals. Personal efficacy determines the initiation,

the effort and the persistence of an individual in performing a certain task and when the individual is faced with obstacles and adversity. The researcher's input is that if women do not believe that they can cope in leadership roles, they will tend to avoid being in leadership positions. On the other hand, if they believe that they will cope in leadership positions, they will put more effort into their work, and persist when facing challenges.

The expectation of self-efficacy is derived from four sources of information, which are, "performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state" (Bandura, 1977, p.191). The more the source of information and the experience of it are dependable, the more the perceived self-efficacy increases.

3.2.2.1 Cognitive locus of operation

Cognitive locus of operation is a psychological treatment which is based on learning principles. Cognitive processes play a role in the behavioural change and maintenance of a new behaviour. Change or altering of behaviour is as a result of learning from differential outcomes. Learning takes place through reinforcement and from observing a model (Bandura, 1977, p. 192). Bandura indicates that human behaviour is developed through observing others, and later the symbolic construction serves as a guide for action. Behaviour is again altered by reinforcement, and regulated by immediate consequences. Consequences inform individuals on what they have to do to achieve a beneficial outcome, and what not to do to avoid punishment. Behavioural change is derived more from observing the effects of one's action rather than by observing a model.

Desirable outcomes motivate an individual to direct her or his actions. Motivation also influences the activation and persistence of behaviour (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). The ability to represent future consequences in thought can develop current motivational drive. Goal setting and self-evaluation reactions are also a source of motivation. People tend to be motivated to do certain tasks due to the expected outcomes, their goals and their self-evaluation. It is, therefore, worthy of note that when women set goals for themselves and do self-reflection in view of expected outcomes, they will be motivated to work on their career advancement.

Self-motivated individuals tend to set standards of behaviour for themselves with conditions which have to be met. They create self-inducements to persist in their effort until self-standards are met. Perceived negative relations between the performance and the standards create dissatisfaction that motivates for change in behaviour. The accomplishment of preferred behaviour and performance make people dissatisfied over time, and as a result they set higher standards of performance and behaviour (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).

3.2.2.2 *Efficacy expectations as a mechanism of operation*

Bandura's theory is based on the assumption that psychological treatment, whatever its form, serves as a way of strengthening self-efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Self-efficacy expectancies differ from response-outcome expectancies. Bandura (1977, p. 193) defines outcome expectancy 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 the outcomes." The two are differentiated, because an individual can believe that when one performs certain activities they can lead to a certain outcome being achieved; but if the same individual does not believe she has the ability to perform the tasks at hand, she will not be able to perform the task and achieve the outcome. Perceived self-efficacy influences the initiation and striving to achieve a certain outcome in the midst of difficulties. It determines whether the person will cope in a given situation, and how long the individual will persist in the midst of difficulties. In addition, self-efficacy determines the effort people put in to achieve certain results.

Self-efficacy is the major determinant of people's choice of activities, but there are other factors that can motivate individuals to choose certain activities, factors like appropriate skills and sufficient incentives (Bandura, 1977, p. 194). The researcher's input is that for women to strive in a leadership position they need adequate skills and sufficient incentives. It also means that self-efficacy alone is not enough for people to succeed in certain activities; they also need to be capable of doing the task required and some form of external motivation.

3.2.2.3 Sources of efficacy expectations

Sources of efficacy expectations are based on four major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977, p.195).

(i) *Performance accomplishment*

Performance accomplishment is the source of efficacy information which is based on mastery experiences. When individuals become successful on the basis of their performance, they tend to have an increased self-efficacy for higher performance. On the other hand, when individuals fail to accomplish what they intended to do, their self-efficacy becomes low. Occasional failure can be overcome by determined effort which strengthens self-motivated persistence. The researcher's input is that if women experience failure in their lives, when they put effort into what they want to accomplish, they will eventually become successful. The more successful they are in what they do, the more their self-efficacy level increases for higher tasks and positions.

(ii) *Vicarious experience*

People do not depend only on performance accomplishment as the source of information for self-efficacy. The other source of information is derived from vicarious experience; it is when one sees others performing and overcoming threatening activities (Bandura, 1977, p. 197). This can create expectations in others that they can also perform and overcome in those activities. This source of information is not reliable and strong compared to performance accomplishment, because it can change at any time. Modelling, which was observed when there was a positive consequence, develops behavioural improvements. The researcher's view is that when African academic women see other women of the same race leading in various positions, they will then be motivated to enter leadership positions themselves.

(iii) *Verbal persuasion*

Verbal persuasion is used to influence behaviour towards performing certain activities. This is widely used as it is readily available; some people may suggest to others that they can accomplish the task at hand. This source of information is not as

strong as performance accomplishment, which is derived from mastery of activities that were threatening. When individuals have experienced much failure in the past, whatever suggestions they receive could be extinguished by the past experiences of failure. Although social persuasion is not particularly effective in developing self-efficacy, it can contribute towards achievement of the desired activity through corrective performance (Bandura, 1977, p. 198). Verbal persuasion should be supplemented by creating conditions that will facilitate success. If conditions are not created, persuasion in itself may not yield results. The researcher's input is that women who are persuaded to enter leadership positions would probably apply and occupy those positions. In a way, verbal persuasion can play a role as an external force towards the career advancement of women, even though they might have had low self-efficacy with regard to such positions. In addition, there must be employment conditions that are favourable and influence women to take up leadership positions.

(iv) Emotional arousal

Stressful situations can elicit emotional arousal that will inform personal competency, and therefore this can affect personal efficacy in coping with threatening situations. Individuals who are fearful tend to fear the task at hand. Anxiety arousal is diminished by modelling. When one observes others performing in a threatening situation, one's self-efficacy is also increased in those activities, and therefore dysfunctional fear is removed (Bandura, 1977, p. 199). The researcher's stance is that fear of occupying leadership positions can be increased by the challenges that one foresees. However, if one sees other women performing their tasks in stressful and threatening situations, one's self-efficacy will increase.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Career development theories provide information on how careers evolve over a period of time and what factors are important in career development. Furthermore, the theories also provide an opportunity for evaluation of their relevance in the career advancement of women, and guide in facilitating the personal reflection of women towards their career advancement. In addition, positive self-concept and high self-efficacy, together with a favourable working environment, can influence one's career advancement.

The two theories assisted in the development of the research questions on the career advancement experiences of African academic women. Donald E. Super's career development theory highlights that a career is a journey of moving from one position to the next one, and it involves stages according to a person's age. It acknowledges that individuals enter into various stages at different ages and that there are factors that influence entry into the various stages; similar to the environment that individuals find themselves in, which has an influence on career maturity. Therefore, it is important to explore the challenges African academic women face and the opportunities available for them, which are closely related to the environment they find themselves in. This environment, according to Super, has an impact on career maturity (Osipow, 1973, p. 136). In addition, one needs to understand issues that drive African academic women to advance in their careers, which is related to the strategies they use to advance. Albert Bandura's theory assisted in the development of a research question on strategies, as it highlights factors that influence behavioural action towards achievement of the desired outcomes. Therefore, the two theories are important in exploring the career advancement experiences of African academic women.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN, STRATEGY AND METHOD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research conducted is based on a case study on the career advancement experiences of African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. This case study is exploratory by nature seeking to answer two questions relating to the challenges that African academic women face and the supporting factors available and career strategies that they have used to advance in their careers. Unstructured individual interviews and the focus group were used to obtain data from the participants. Purposive and snowball samplings were used to invite the participants for the study. Data was analysed using the thematic analysis as proposed by Saldana (2013, p. 177).

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for this study is based on a case study. A case study is described by Yin (2014, p. 16) as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident”. The case study investigated the career advancement experiences of African academic women in leadership positions at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. It was used to understand the experiences of African academic women within their environment. The case study looked into details with intense study of the career advancement of African academic women. It is relevant for this study as it promoted multiple perspectives of participants, who constructed their own words and their own interpretations (Simons, 2009, p. 4).

The case study provided an opportunity to study the context of African women in academia on aspects that contributed towards their career advancement. The case study provided an in-depth understanding on the matter, with the aim of understanding the context and the process (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 31). The focus of the

case study is also on investigating the workplace environment of African academic women, as indicated by Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 301) that case studies focus on studying aspects in “relation to environment”. In addition, other aspects that have an impact or effect in their career advancement are studied. It provides a description of external realities and internal experiences of African academic women in leadership positions. The study clarifies the reasons why few African academic women are in leadership positions.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher’s view is that this case study is relevant as it focuses on a group of African academic women working at one institution. The case in this study is a group of African academic women who are occupying managerial positions at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. Lindeger (2006, p. 460) states that “Case studies are intensive investigations of particular individuals”. The study looked intensively at the experiences of African academic women who had advanced in their career.

The study is based on an exploratory study design that seeks to search for insights on career advancement of African academic women. It brought an understanding of the journey of African academic women who have progressed in the midst of the challenges facing them. An exploratory study intends to gain insight of the phenomena; it is understood that the study lacks basic information about the phenomenon and it seeks to answer the “what” questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011, p. 95). This is also seen by Durrheim (2006, p. 44) that exploratory research is an investigation of unknown areas of research. It is flexible, open and uses an inductive approach to research, which looks for new insight. In this case, insight on women’s career advancement experiences is explored. Thomas (2011, p. 104) also indicates that the exploratory case study design is used when one is faced with a problem or an issue that poses questions on what and the why. He indicates that one may have a preliminary knowledge of what is happening, but that may be one-dimensional as one understands the problem from one’s own perspective, not from the perspective of others. One also needs to acknowledge that there are multiple realities. According to Thomas (2011, p. 105) the researcher using the exploratory design should be listening closely to issues discussed rather than presenting the issues to the

interviewees. The researcher's input is that this is an exploratory study which seeks to understand factors that have facilitated the career advancement of African academic women in the midst of the challenges they encounter. It was necessary for the researcher to allow the women under study to narrate their career advancement stories.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM (BLACK FEMINISM)

The research paradigm for this study is the Black feminism paradigm rather than just Feminism. Feminism does adequately account for the experiences of black women. With black feminism account is taken in relation to the lives of black women which represent the interconnection of class, gender and race (Carby, 2000, p. 390). According to Collins (2000, p. 404), Black feminism's idea is that a distinction should be made between white women and black women due to both the gender and racial oppression experienced by black women. The experiences of white women only account for gender oppression. Black women have to strive for equality as women and as blacks (Collins, 2000, p. 404), which is not the case for white women. Black feminism's idea is to challenge inequalities brought about by race, gender, and class by empowering black women (Collins, 2000, p. 412).

Feminism gives a voice to women and advocates for their representation in a society that was male-oriented, but it does not adequately give voice to black women. This is due to the fact that it is not able to adequately account for their experiences in relation to representation in society. Feminism is concerned with the underrepresentation of women, with focusing on their experiences of being discriminated against, with men given considerable advantage over them (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011, p. 9). However, it does not consider that black women are also underrepresented and disadvantaged in relation to white women. This is supported by Carby (2000, p. 395) that "white women hold positions of power by virtue of their 'race'."

Furthermore, the feminism paradigm also seeks to analyse societal structures that disadvantage women, and favour men. The general aim is generate knowledge that liberates women and helps in their emancipation (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel,

2011, p. 10). However, it fails to consider the interconnection of race, gender and class as central to societal structures (Carby, 2000, p. 390; Christian, 2000, p. 462). Consideration of the interconnection of racism, sexism and classism affecting black women will assist in their liberation and empowerment.

The study has focused on the career advancement experiences of African academic women working at an institution of higher learning and its main concern is the underrepresentation of African academic women in leadership positions. The underrepresentation of African women in leadership positions needs to be studied under the lens of the black feminism paradigm. The interconnection of race, class and gender needs to be considered for the empowerment of African women. This research study aims to empower African academic women who want to advance in their careers with strategies that will direct their behaviours and actions towards their advancement.

4.4 RESEARCH METHOD

The study used a qualitative research method. This method assisted in gathering extensive data on the experiences of African academic women with regard to their career advancement. It helped in exploring the challenging and contributing factors towards this advancement. The method also helped in understanding feelings African academic women had during the process of career advancement. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Fouché & Delport, p. 64). This is also indicated by Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006, p. 272) who note that the qualitative research method is suitable when one tries to describe or interpret the experiences and the feelings of people. This stance is also supported by Kelly (2006, p. 287) who indicated that qualitative researchers want to understand the feelings, experiences and the situations of people. The qualitative research method is relevant for this study as it aims at identifying the factors that act as barriers towards the career advancement of African academic women and the factors that facilitate their career advancement. In addition, the qualitative study is relevant when seeking to obtain narratives of the journeys by African academic women who have already advanced

in their careers; it seeks to gain insight on the strategies that are employed towards career advancement by women within an academic setting.

4.5 RESEARCH TOOLS

4.5.1 Unstructured in-depth individual interview

The unstructured in-depth interview is a useful technique for the study, given that it aims to explore experiences, as indicated by Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005, p. 198) that unstructured interviews are best in understanding an individual's experiences. The interviews gathered information on individuals' experiences, feelings, beliefs and conviction on the themes.

Unstructured in-depth individual interviews were used as one of the data collection methods for the study. Seven unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted in participants' offices. The interviews were connected to the purpose of the research and the research questions (Beitin, 2012, p. 244). The interviews were used to explore the academic advancement experiences of academic African women at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. They were constructed in such a way that there was only one question which was followed up by probes based on the participants' responses. The interview question was based on how the participants had advanced in their careers with a focus on how the journey appeared to them. The interview question was as follows: "Tell me more about your advancement, how you advanced career wise. You are an (name of the position occupied by the participant as indicated in the biographical information form), academically you have reached a certain level, so how was the journey for you?" The interview question relates to the exploratory study design as it is inductive by nature, open, and attempts to look for insight into the phenomena (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006, p. 44).

The researcher's approach to interviews is important. Thomas (2011, p. 163) indicates that the researcher who uses the unstructured interview should conduct it with an open mind. The role of the interviewer is to listen and facilitate the discussion. The interviewees should be the ones who determine the direction and the agenda of the interviews. Even though the researcher had studied the literature

related to the topic, she did her best to conduct the interview in such a way that the interviewee was the one who discussed her experiences of career advancement. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005, p. 198) indicate that with the unstructured in-depth interview method, the interviewer suggests themes and asks further questions as they spontaneously arise during the interaction between the interviewer and the research participants. In this research only one question was asked of the participants with follow-up prompts from their responses. There were no themes as suggested by Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005, p. 198), but the question was followed up with further questions relating to what the participants had discussed.

Beitin (2012, p. 244) indicates that the researcher should interview individuals who are knowledgeable about the focus area and able to provide a viewpoint on it. The African academic women under study are in leadership positions and therefore they were able to engage with the study in relation to the research questions, the aims and the objectives of the study. The researcher also acknowledges that every individual has a multiple-self, where roles are boundary-less and are not separated from one another (Beitin, 2012, p. 249). For instance, an academic woman may discuss her experiences as an employee or a leader in a unit, department or a school.

4.5.2 Focus group

One focus group was used for this study as a way of triangulating information obtained from individual interviews. According to Beitin (2012, p. 248), triangulation in qualitative research is used to strengthen the findings. In addition, Yin (2014, p. 17) indicates that data collected in a case study should converge in the form of triangulation.

The focus group was used as a means of gathering information on the experiences of African academic women on their career advancement. The focus group members were African academic women who had advanced in their careers. There was agreement on how the focus group would operate. The participants were requested to keep what was discussed during the focus group confidential. The focus group agenda was more closely focused on exploring aspects that acted or still act as

barriers towards their career; factors that helped them to advance in their career, and the actions or strategies that they employed to assist in their career advancement¹.

Individual and focus interviews were recorded by tape recorder to preserve precise and accurate data for analysis. The content of the interviews was transcribed directly into the word processor, as recommended by Kelly (2006, p. 302). The focus group interview was recorded to assist the researcher to focus closely on the interview rather than on note-taking. The researcher obtained consent from the participants to record the interview².

4.6 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Based on the nature of the study, which is exploratory by nature, the purposive method in the form of convenience sampling was used to seek potential research participants. African academic women who were available and willing to be interviewed were part of this study. Purposive sampling was based on African academic women who had advanced in their careers. These women should be employed at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus and be involved in academic activities such as teaching and supervising students and be in leadership positions.

Purposive sampling is relevant for this study. According to Beitin (2012, p. 248), purposive sampling is used in qualitative research to obtain rich knowledge on the focus area. Participants were selected carefully and represent the area of interest to ensure that the research question is answered. Additional participants obtained through snowball sampling, were participants suggested by other female colleagues who are appointed in leadership positions.

The population where the sample was drawn is based at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus, because there are fewer African academic women than white women who are in leadership positions. The sample size was on the basis of theoretical saturation. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006, p. 60) as cited in Beitin

¹ Refer to Annexure D for the focus Group Agenda

² Refer to Annexure B- Consent form

(2012, p. 244) indicate that saturation is the gold standard for determining the purposive sample size. For this study, the sample size and the limited geographical area may limit generalisation of the study for African women in leadership positions working in other institutions of higher learning.

4.7 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The research included African academic women who are in leadership positions, irrespective of their level of qualification. These women were in particular disciplines and head departments or schools. This research excluded African academic women who are not in leadership positions, even though they had obtained their doctoral degrees or been promoted to professorial positions.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analysed using the qualitative data analysis method. It is in the form of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is more relevant for interviews than other methods as it allows categories to develop from the data, and also allows for “comparable reflection on participant meaning and outcome” (Saldana, 2013, pp. 176-177). The steps that were taken for thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 77-101), were “becoming familiar with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and lastly producing the report.” Information is analysed into themes until the point of theoretical saturation is reached, where information that is received is redundant and only repeats what has already been mentioned. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This assisted in identifying and analysing the experiences of academic women, according to how they outlined their career advancement experiences. Themes were developed to organize the principles that underlie the phenomenon studied according to the language of the participants, as explained in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006, p. 323). Data was analysed in chronological order starting with listening to the tape, transcribing, and data reduction, then organising data into themes. Themes were developed inductively from the interviews, and developed deductively from literature and theory (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p. 142) on career development and self-concept.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical issue that might have arisen in this research is the negative attitudes towards the research participants involved in a study which focuses only on women. This might put the participants in a position where they may not be acceptable in the institution due to what they have discussed. To prevent this, the researcher made sure that the names of the participants and the positions they hold were kept confidential. Confidentiality was also emphasized to participants during the focus group.

The research protocol of this study was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa for approval. The approval process was done first before the research was conducted. In addition, approval to conduct the research was obtained from the Medunsa Research Ethics Committee (MREC). It is crucial to follow the ethical standards of the two universities. The researcher did not experience any ethical dilemma during the research process.

The participants were notified in writing regarding the information of the proposed study. Information about the proposed study included the purpose of the study; the research design; the benefits and the risk of participating in the study as suggested by Wassenaar (2006, p. 72). The researcher obtained written informed consent from all participants. The consent form³ included information on the proposed study and voluntary participation, which can be terminated before the study begins or during the study. The consent form also included the statement in which research participants were notified that in the case that they did not want to continue as research participants they were free to stop participating. In case of emotional discomfort, the researcher made a pause in the interview until the participants were ready to continue.

Human dignity was upheld by the researcher. The researcher ensured that the participants were accorded respect and allowed their freedom of expression. All the

³ Refer to Annexure B for the consent form

principles guiding ethical research were considered, which included the “autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons”, “nonmaleficence”, and “justice”, as discussed by Wassenaar (2006, pp. 67-68). Respect for the dignity of persons was preserved by ensuring confidentiality.

The research participants were notified that the interview would be recorded for the purpose of data analysis. Confidentiality was respected. Confidentiality was upheld by not naming people and their positions when reporting the research results. The research participants will be notified in writing when their information will be shared.

When disseminating the results of the study, necessary precautions were taken to ensure that what was communicated would not cause harm to the participants or the institution of study. The findings of the study are communicated in such a way that it provides relevant and appropriate information that suggests recommendations to the institution and to policymakers.

4.10 RIGOUR

The researcher attended research workshops organised by the College of Graduate Studies, in the School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies. The workshops addressed case study research, qualitative interviewing and qualitative data analysis. The researcher also studied various texts on research methodology to ensure that appropriate action was taken in all aspects of the research.

For accuracy and transparency during the data analysis stage, the researcher made checks by sending the transcription and the analysis of interviews to individual participants. Some of the participants provided feedback on the analysis, indicating that the study was interesting and it had given them an opportunity to reflect on their career advancement journey.

4.11 CONCLUSION

The research focused on the in-depth study of a single case of African academic women who are in leadership positions at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. The purpose was to explore the career advancement experiences of

African academic women, which outlined their challenges, supporting factors and strategies as they advanced in their careers. The exploratory design was used to obtain multiple realities in terms of their experiences in relation to their environment. Purposive and snowball samplings were used to invite participants for the study. Unstructured interviews were held for individuals and one focus group. The individual interviews and the focus group interview were recorded for the purpose of data analysis. Thematic data analysis was used for the study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The data analysis process started with transcribing the recordings verbatim, verifying the transcriptions, seeking for codes, developing categories, and thereafter determining the common themes. The interviews and the focus group were analysed using inductive and deductive codes. The codes were formed inductively by using the participants' words and statements and deductively by using the theory and the literature. The researcher analysed the data for qualitative content using thematic, descriptive and in vivo coding, according to Saldana (2009, pp. 70-77; Saldana, 2014, pp. 88-94 and pp. 175-178) in order to theme the data.

The discussions are based on the themes obtained through individual interviews and the focus group interview in order to answer the research questions. Seven individual unstructured in-depth interviews and one focus group were conducted. All individual interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants. The focus group interview took place at a conference room on the Medunsa campus.

The interview question for the individual unstructured in-depth interview was based on how the participants had advanced in their careers, with a focus on their experiences. On the other hand, the focus group agenda was more on exploring the aspects that acted or still act as barriers towards their career advancement; factors that helped them to advance in their career; and the actions or strategies that they had employed to assist in their career advancement⁴.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The participants were provided with the biographical information form⁵ designed to obtain biographical information: place of birth; age; marital status; number of

⁴ Refer to Annexure D for the focus group agenda

⁵ Refer to Annexure C: Biographical information form

children; current position; number of years in current position; number of years with current institution of employment; and highest qualifications. The aim of the biographical information is get an understanding of the context of the participants. The information is discussed in the following tables and graphs.

All the participants in this study are African women who were born in the Republic of South Africa.

5.2.1 Marital status and number of children

All women who were interviewed had children, with the majority having 3 to 4 children. Most participants in this study are married. The table below shows the marital status and the number of children.

Table 1: Marital Status and number of children

		Number of children		Total
		1 to 2	3 to 4	
Marital status	Married	1	5	6
	Separated/Divorced	1	0	1
	Single	1	0	1
Total		3	5	8

Table 1 illustrates that all participants had family responsibilities relating to child rearing. It also indicates that most of them had other responsibilities relating to their spouses.

5.2.2 Ages of participants with current position and highest qualification

Table 2 illustrates the ages of the participants with their current position and highest qualifications. The participants of the study were above the age of 36 years.

Table 2: Analysis of the ages of the participants with their current position and highest qualifications

			Highest qualification		Total
			Doctoral degree	Masters degree	
Age 36 to 45 years	Current position	Deputy Director	1	0	1
		Head of Department	0	2	2
		Head of Research Unit	1	0	1
	Total		2	2	4
46 and above	Current position	Director	1	0	1
		Head of Department	1	2	3
	Total		2	2	4
Total	Current position	Deputy Director	1	0	1
		Director	1	0	1
		Head of Department	1	4	5
		Head of Research Unit	1	0	1
	Total		4	4	8

Table 2 indicates that of the African academic women aged between 36 and 45, two had doctoral degrees and the other two had master's degrees. One of them occupied a deputy director's position, the other two were heading departments and one was heading a research unit. The findings are in line with the establishment stage (ages 25–44) of career development theory by Donald Super on developmental perspectives which focused on vocational behaviour and career development. In this stage the women under study have acquired appropriate qualifications that enable them to occupy their positions, they met the requirements of the job they occupied, and have advanced in their careers through occupying promotional positions.

In the same way, Table 2 indicates the African academic women who are 46 years old and of whom two have doctoral degrees and another two hold a master's degree. One of the women occupied a directorship position and the other three were heads of departments. In this instance, the findings are in line with Super's theory of career development. The African academic women are in the maintenance stage (ages 45–65), which indicates that they hold on to their work roles, and based on the previous stage they have acquired the appropriate qualifications for the job, and are in promotional positions.

5.2.3 Current positions of participants, number of years with institution of employment and number of years in current position

Table 3 illustrates the current number of years the African academic women had spent in the current institution and the number of years in their current positions. Most of the African academic women had spent more than four years in their current positions, and six years or more in the institution of employment. This means that what they had experienced in the institution and in their positions has occurred over three years and one can conclude that their experiences are linked to their positions and the current institution.

Current number of years the African women had spent in the current institution and number of years in their current positions

				Years in the current position			Total
				1 to 3 years	4 to 6 years	More than 6 years	
Deputy Director	Years with institution of More than 10 years`			1		1	
Total				1		1	
Director	Years with institution of 1 to 5 years		1			1	
Total			1			1	
Head of Department	Years with institution of 6 to 10 years	1		0		1	
	More than 10 years`	1		0		1	
	More than 10 years`	0		3		3	
Total		2		3		5	
Head of Research Unit	Years with institution of 6 to 10 years			1		1	
Total				1		1	
Total	Years with institution of 1 to 5 years	1	0	0		1	
	6 to 10 years	0	1	0		1	
	More than 10 years`	1	0	1		2	
	More than 10 years`	0	0	4		4	
Total		2	1	5		8	

5.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The findings from both individual interviews and focus group discussions indicate that there are various challenges that African academic women face and supporting factors that enabled them to advance in their careers. They also employed various personal strategies to advance in their careers. The challenge, supporting factors, and strategies are discussed in the following sections.

5.3.1 Challenges towards career advancement

There are various challenges that African academic women face which hinder their career advancement. These challenges are associated with factors that hinder access and progress in higher education, difficulties in accessing leadership positions and barriers related to succeeding in leadership positions.

5.3.1.1 Access and progress in higher education

The challenges that African academic women face are as a result of access to higher education. In the academic environment one needs to have access to higher education and succeed in acquiring postgraduate qualifications. Academic qualifications are in most instances the first determinant for promotion from a lower level of employment to a higher one. The following six sub-themes are based on the theme "Access to higher education".

(i) Race factor

Most African academic women raised challenges regarding the race issue with regard to accessing and succeeding in higher education. Participant 3 indicated that during her studies there were no opportunities for academic advancement for African academic women in her profession. She indicated that they were affected by the negative treatment during their undergraduate studies due to their race. This is what she had to say:

It was not easy and besides the profession was mainly white...There was this thing that Head of Department, should you make a mistake they said you Africans and she also used to go on about us not paying tax, it is white man's tax and us not making money.

Race plays a major role in negatively affecting the career advancement of African academic women. Participant 3 experienced unfair labour practices as a result of being an African, where African people were marginalised and paid lower salaries without benefits as compared to the white people. This demoralised her, in a way that she could not consider advancing her career. There was also a mention of challenges regarding Afrikaans as the language of instruction. The use of Afrikaans

as the medium of instruction is a symbol of marginalising the African people and denying them access to higher education. As participant 7 states:

I was to start my honours degree, everything was in Afrikaans... My worst nightmare is that I wrote my first test in anatomy and the lecturer said to me I am going to translate it for you in English...but never did it.

Other challenges identified in relation to academic advancement are indicated as supervisors' challenges, in one instance a white supervisor who did not provide guidance, which resulted in one developing the proposal for many years, another instance is when the supervisor left the university. These challenges delayed the African women in advancing academically.

In addition, issues of race play a negative covert role towards the career advancement of African academic women. To the outside eye it is not clear and transparent, but does affect African academic women. In this case, the few African people appointed in leadership positions results in fewer African role models or even a lack of African role models in some cases. Role models are important when one needs direction on career advancement. When there are no role models to emulate, in most cases one tends to do nothing about the state in which one finds oneself. Race also played a covert role in affecting the career advancement of participant 2; she did not see a role model of her colour who was a specialist, which then made her not pursue her career of becoming a specialist.

According to participant 2, there were no role models to look up to who were Africans during study for her medical degree, therefore she had no thoughts of specialising, and stated:

During those days we didn't have any role models of specializing so we just didn't have intentions of specializing....I always tell them you are so lucky that you are taught by Africans, you can see that I want to be there and I was taught by whites and Indians only.

Race is also a negative factor in the form of professional composition, where African academic women are fewer than white academics in a profession. Participant 4

indicated that in her profession, African people as clients do not understand what they as the profession are doing; therefore they do not take them seriously, and they prefer white women to them. She stated:

For me specifically in a professional way, there's more work... people, than less. It was too difficult to go through that, even when you look into the structure, the organization. More white people, it was too difficult for African people to understand what you were supposed to be doing....Then you look at it African women and white women, and there is a preference there.

African academic women in the study faced various challenges in relation to improving their qualifications. The challenges experienced were the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and the oppression by the white people during their studies. These factors were experienced during the apartheid era in South Africa, when African people were regarded as inferior to white people. The findings are in line with the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998, p. 12) which states that “systematic educational discrimination against African people in the past and the blocking of opportunities for economic advancement have denied many the formal educational qualifications and necessary experience for entry into and advancement within certain types of occupations, especially technical occupations and managerial level posts.” This clearly means that some of the women in the study were affected by the education system which discriminated against African people, and therefore denied the opportunities to advance by acquiring formal educational qualifications. The system itself was a barrier that prevented African academic women to advance their qualifications when compared to their White counterparts.

(ii) Challenges regarding supervision

During postgraduate studies, few African academic women indicated that they had challenges with regard to the supervision of their research. Participant 3 indicated that she felt that her white female supervisor was not prepared to assist her to advance. This is what participant 3 had to say:

... for you to venture into a PhD immediately thereafter, there were no African supervisors...I did not want a white woman

supervising me....and I did not feel like the supervisor was giving me sufficient attention and I don't know ...?

The account of participant 3 illustrates the black feminism idea which indicates that race and gender are interconnected and should be considered. Participant 3 had a bad experience of being supervised by a white woman. It shows that gender as a factor cannot be sufficient to explain the experiences of African women, and that white women still had an advantage over African women in relation to career advancement.

On the other hand, participant 6 had a challenge when her supervisor left the university. The supervisor had other responsibilities that led her to take a long time to mark her work. This delayed participant 6 in the completion of her PhD within the desired time frame, as follows:

Like I said with my supervisor at the end she moved. So she had other responsibilities somewhere, so sometimes she would take longer to finish marking but at the end it happened.

(iii) Socio-economic factors

Lack of financial resources is one of the barriers that some African academic women faced as they work towards improving their qualifications. Some African academic women had financial constraints that acted as barriers in their readiness in obtaining qualifications.

Participant 4 did not have a personal computer with the Internet to do her studies as is reflected in her story below:

The other challenges were that ...that time computers were there, but Internet was a challenge. I remember there was only one computer, computer for the principal [REDACTED], was the one with the Internet, so I would wait for her to finish for the day, then I would do my assignment online and that would mean working until late so I would work late doing my research, I had to do everything after hours.

Due to her socio-economic background, participant 2 did not have access to a computer during her postgraduate degree; hence she struggled at first with her research work. The situation was not as it is currently where there is advancement in technology, and most people have access to computers. This was noted in her narrative, as follows:

When I started as a registrar it was 1994, I had not seen a computer except in that rural hospital... I didn't even know what they were doing with those computers. So I had never even touched a computer when I went to start as a registrar.

In addition, lack of funds to further studies was still a challenge for participant 2 who was turned down for funding opportunities as a result of age:

There was a time where I was really motivated to apply for NRF funding... Then few weeks went by and I discovered later that my application didn't go through, because I had not submitted a letter to motivate why I was above 40. That day for some reason, I lost it, I really lost it.

Lack of resources during some of the African academics' postgraduate studies was very challenging, for example, computers and access to the Internet. Resources are very important for one to succeed in what one intends to do. In addition, another resource is funding. Participant 2 was turned down on possible funding because of her age.

Socioeconomic background is important to set the stage for career advancement. Super also emphasises that parental socio-economic status is the major factor of career determinants (Super, 1969, p. 4) and contributes to vocational development (Super, 1969, p. 6). If the socioeconomic status is low, that may mean that one will have immense difficulties while pursuing one's career advancement.

(iv) Workload demands

The administrative demands of leadership positions make it difficult for African academic women to advance their qualifications. These administrative demands take their time, and contribute to their loss of motivation to focus on their studies.

Participant 3 felt despondent when focussing on writing her thesis. In certain cases there were signs of a lack of motivation which is also fuelled by the greater demands associated with the HOD position. This is what her narrative contains:

The administrative demands of the position I mean you know when you are a leader ...the tension builds up and you can't work when you are tense, because you are not going to get focused that is the time when you write one sentence. Or you read just one page or paragraph.

Participant 4 added:

I think the challenge I can see is now being acting HOD, there is a lot of work to be done, and there is not enough time to have time off to work on my research, so that is my main challenge.

Administrative demands also relate to professional activities. Participant 3, a member of the professional board within her discipline and a member of the Health Professions Council of South Africa, found the workload absolutely overwhelming:

Participant 3

Currently I am the [REDACTED] of our professional board and I am also a member of the Health Professions Council of South Africa. That also takes up a lot of time because as a [REDACTED] you also have administrative duties.

Leadership positions are accompanied by administrative responsibilities that require time and energy. Some African academic women had to deal with an increase in administrative tasks that hindered them from focussing and working on their research for academic advancement. They found themselves overwhelmed and unable to use any of their working time on research. This situation was very frustrating for participant 4 as she was overwhelmed with work, and does not have a monetary allowance for acting. On the other hand, participant 3, after being overwhelmed is unable to focus and concentrate on her research work. According to Geber (2009) and Prozesky (2008 as cited in Obers, 2014, p. 113), the conditions that promote research productivity include a workload that allows time for research.

Therefore, the findings are in line with the literature that if the workload is structured in such a way that it does not allow time for research, then African academic women will not be able to succeed in their research activities.

(v) *Family responsibilities*

The responsibilities that African academic women have with regard to their families have an impact on their career advancement. One participant indicated that her career journey was lengthy when she was younger; she experienced numerous challenges that needed her attention, including the demand of caring for her children. She was determined to advance career wise, but on the other hand, she did not want to disadvantage her children. Other participants had to consider first their children before they decided on furthering their studies.

Caring for children when they are still young seems to be the highest priority for African academic women when compared to career advancement. They first consider their children before making decisions on career advancement. Participant 1 stated:

The journey was a long one...The reason being when I was younger I had a lot of challenges, I had a lot of things that wanted my attention, the children for instance...bringing up the children, you want to advance career wise, but on the other hand there is the demand of children.

The same sentiment was shared by participant 2 who maintained the following:

We are taken to be more carers than the men and that makes us delay in a way, because I must first go through this and take care of my kids... A man will come home, having registered, and tell you exactly, I have registered, but for us as women, you have to consider first and look at what is going to happen to my kids when you do this.

Participant 5 supported this approach, as follows:

I felt that when my kids were still too small, it was too difficult to concentrate on myself, with as much time as I could have wanted to take for myself, without feeling guilty that I was neglecting my kids, and I was neglecting my husband and I was neglecting the family structure.

A woman's career can also be affected by pregnancy or the process of childbearing as reflected in participant 5's statement who said:

I got disturbed by the pregnancy...I had let go of starting my PhD at that point in time. So I put it on a back burner and then up until I am settled.

Cultural stereotypes still exist that women have to take more responsibilities than men do with regard to childrearing. These stereotypes are also internalised in women in such a way that they know that those are their responsibilities. The family responsibilities take more of a woman's time, leaving her with little energy to invest in career advancement. The societal expectations of women's roles at home are a barrier to their career advancement. Even though women have the same positions as their partners at work, they are still expected to work harder at home than men.

Women perform family responsibilities lovingly, and when they think about their career advancement, they are regarded as old. Therefore women are late starters in terms of their career advancement because they put family interests first. This was supported by participant 1:

Even at home the support is less and I think is more of...you know... is more of our culture, how we do things, that women bear more responsibility in the home, is not like somebody says you must cook, you know...

According to participant 5, culture influences the way in which academic African women face family responsibilities:

...being an African woman you have much more responsibility than a man, so you have to take care of the family...while the men are progressing, you will still make sure that the kids, when you get home there's food on the table, the kids are bathed, the homework is done...

This was supported by participant 8 who stated that:

I think the society is expecting more from women than men. You know, the way we were raised, our culture, they would say the woman belong in the kitchen than a man, so even though

we are living in a modern society, you know you are expected to do a lot, especially in the family, raise children, cook for your husband, take care of them, and all those things, and those are the barriers that prevent the women from moving forward.

According to participant 7, inconsistency when it comes to looking after children is also another challenge:

There were days I didn't have a nanny, I will wake up in the morning, I have a child on my hip, the nanny didn't turn up, what do you do? And there is a class that starts at 8 o' clock.

African academic women experience challenges as they advance with their careers in relation to balancing their own lives. They find it difficult to balance responsibilities to the family and their studies. They face challenges that delay their career advancement. Family responsibilities and demands are the main challenges that delay their careers, as women have to consider family first before they can decide on academic advancement which has an impact on career advancement. Some of the women delayed registering for their PhD studies in order to accommodate their children. Acquiring a higher qualification provides an advantage to occupy leadership positions. The findings aligned well with the findings of the study by Buddhapriya (2009, p. 31) indicating that responsibilities relating to children in families hinders the career advancement of women, and prevent them from utilising their full potential. In addition, Obers (2014, p. 1113) indicates that family responsibilities cause women to interrupt research periods and thereby opt for teaching, which then limits their career advancement.

(vi) Personal life challenges

There are various personal challenges faced by African academic women. These include dealing with medical conditions. Participant 5 was diagnosed with a brain tumour when she was studying towards her master's degree which prevented her from sitting for the final examination. This is what she had to say:

The one challenge that I experienced when I was doing my masters then I was diagnosed with a brain tumour when I was supposed to be doing my 3rd year or my final year, I was

diagnosed with a brain tumour so I didn't write my final exams that year and I had a deferred exam.

On the other hand, participant 7 experienced various personal challenges which took place at almost the same time:

I registered for my PhD, it was not easy in my personal life as well as in my academic; it was a whole lot of complications...I got through, marriage...pregnancy, just when I thought I was surviving marriage, I went through a divorce. All of them were a year after another. I think in 2 years after I got married, I got divorced, and that was not easy.

Participant 7 faced personal challenges that acted as barriers towards her academic advancement. Those challenges were unavoidable, but participant 7 found ways to overcome them and continued with her studies and her work. This shows resilience on her part. On the other hand, participant 5 was diagnosed with a brain tumour when she was studying towards her master's degree, yet this did not stop her from continuing and completing her studies.

The six sub-themes discussed above contributed negatively to African academic women acquiring their qualifications. When African academic women are unable to improve their qualifications, they are excluded from promotional opportunities, and therefore remain in lower positions at universities.

5.3.1.2 Difficulties accessing leadership positions

Various workplace challenges are experienced by African academic women and they face numerous challenges when accessing leadership positions. The African academic women under study expressed a range of emotions as they entered leadership positions.

(i) Emotional reaction

When African academic women occupy leadership positions, some are scared, some nervous and some feel that they are taking on a huge task. Participants in the

study felt that people around them doubted them and some even doubted themselves. Feeling nervous is what participant 5 remembered as she assumed a new leadership role. Her experience is as follows:

I think I was nervous and didn't know what to do...they were nervous and didn't know what to do with me.

Being introduced to a new senior position has also been associated with self-doubt as indicated by participant 2's narrative:

I ...you are basically sad where...you know, you doubt yourself and then the other thing, even people around you they are doubting you.

Furthermore, participant 2 regarded being the head of the department as very stressful. Various reasons were given for this, such as being scared and being discouraged from applying due to the stressful nature of the position. In certain cases family and colleagues motivated them to apply for those leadership posts. Participant 2 stated:

I became the head of the department and that was the end of my happiness...I am telling you, the end of my happiness. I found it just to be a stressful job.

(ii) Issues related to promotion

African academic women face various challenges with regard to promotion, such as delayed promotion, promotional posts earmarked for others and negative emotions associated with their role as head of department. To some African academic women the process of applying for a senior position was met with serious setbacks. Participant 6 shared an experience whereby her application for a senior position was unsuccessful due to the nature of her current employment.

On the other hand, participant 1 applied several times for a promotion but her documents were lost at HR, which resulted in her having to resubmit the application forms. This is how she related her experience:

I applied for a senior position in my very department and for four years my papers got lost from HR to the Dean's office ... my subordinate who was a man applied, but his never got lost, and they were processed and he got the promotion.

Participant 5 shared her experience explaining that she wanted to apply for a more senior position but was told that it was not for her, and she was not going to get it.

So when I wanted to apply for that post, she clearly told me no... that was not your post, this post is designed for so and so, is not for you, don't even go for it, and don't even apply for it. You are not going to get it.

The findings of the study indicate that African academic women experience challenges when applying for promotional positions. They are in line with Phakedi (2015, p.1) who indicates that there are few African academic women in management positions. This is because academic management are slow to appoint African academic women.

(ii) Challenges regarding acting positions

The challenge experienced with the university is that one can be requested to act as an HOD, but not be appointed officially, that is to say one does not have a letter of appointment stating that one is acting HOD. Consequently, one does not receive an acting allowance, does not have authority, and is not able to take certain decisions. This type of arrangement makes subordinates refuse to be appointed in acting capacity. There is also a negative attitude towards the one who acts. This is what participant 4 had to say:

From my point of view any person, if you are acting, whether you are acting as an HOD or you are not an HOD there should be something that people will know, we recognize you ... it is about acknowledging a person because if you have a letter it gives you a sort of authority to say you are now an acting HOD.

5.3.1.3 Success barriers on leadership positions

The barriers discussed in the following paragraphs are those that hamper African academic women who are appointed to leadership positions from performing their

duties successfully. These barriers also hamper the process of their career advancement.

(i) Lack of institutional support

Lack of support in the workplace is experienced by women in a number of ways, such as unavailability of support programmes in relation to helping women in their HOD positions and no full sabbatical leave. According to participant 1, there is no training or orientation in her workplace; she was given office keys, without any guidance on the new role. This is her response:

When you take over, you are just given the office keys. There is no introduction by anyone that is one of the disadvantages about our institution...I find that you are just alone...alone; you must find your way in this new position that you are taking.

In addition, participant 1 experienced lack of support when she needed time to write. Although she was granted sabbatical leave, she was expected to continue with her responsibilities, as she notes:

I had data that I had collected. I needed to go and write...you can take sabbatical leave, but you are also expected to carry on with your responsibilities, so it basically means you need to come...

This is the same story shared by participant 2 who received neither assistance nor support when establishing a research unit:

When I was establishing a research unit...you realize that you are basically on your own, basically you are on your own, and sometimes it is not like they don't want to, you find that is just the system...you talk with them, but there is nothing that can come out of that.

Most African academic women experienced lack of support in relation to leadership positions. There is no orientation when one enters into a senior position. No one in the management ever inquired if they experienced challenges or visited the department to offer support.

(ii) *Difficult line managers*

Various challenges were experienced with line managers. Participant 1 was accused of something she had done, and the line manager shouted at her; when she followed it up, she was completely ignored. Participant 1's story is as follows:

I had challenges with the people I report to, because I am a woman...one person that I...I report to... I mean he shouted at me as if I am his little girl...he simply disregarded me, and he didn't even respond to my letter.

On the other hand, participant 7 laid a grievance against her manager on how he treated her, and the negative treatment was aggravated because of that. She felt that no matter how hard she worked, she did not receive support from her line manager.

I have a boss who does not understand the role of a woman in my position, who has made it very difficult for me to manage and that is how it is. I accepted it as a challenge with him not with me.

A feeling of inadequacy during career advancement was experienced by participant 4, where she felt that what she was doing was not good enough for the line manager. In addition she was told that she could not do research. This is how she relates her experience:

I felt that nothing that I was doing was good enough. You know it was like everything you do, why are you doing that, you know somebody was just screaming at you. Everything you submit is not good, whether you are writing a letter or something, everything would be corrected and you feel...

Some African academic women in the study experienced poor treatment from their line managers. The types of treatment were related to unfounded accusations: being shouted at, an unpleasant communication style and laying charges against one without first discussing the matter. Such treatment created an environment which was not conducive for women to work in.

(iii) *Staff management challenges*

Most African academic women in the study had to deal with negative work ethics that were displayed by the staff members reporting to them. Participant 4 had to follow-up with staff members to submit work on time; she realised that there are people who need to be compelled to perform tasks:

My challenge was trying to understand some staff members and their behaviours. It was difficult for me to accept that there are still people who need to be told do this. I realized that there are people who need to be pushed and there are those who know what to do, so you don't need to push them.

On the other hand, participant 2 had to deal with negative work ethics without adequate support structures, where human resource matters take a lengthy time to be resolved:

You find yourself...you really find yourself alone, you find yourself alone. There is also a cultural....What? it is culture, let me just say the culture of the institution, that where even the work ethics that you have to deal with...

Other challenges with regard to managing the staff that African academic women experienced include the following: staff not sharing the vision with the HODs; no policies on performance that HODs can use to influence performance; managing staff members who are older and have extensive experience; men not willing to be led by women; staff members purposefully doing the opposite of what is required; and lazy staff members who lack commitment and do not perform as required. This is evident from participant 3's narrative:

Purely because you are leading human beings or you are managing human beings there are times where you feel people are not sharing the same vision with you...it is difficult to even talk to people who are not following the vision and advancing the department.

Another challenge relates to certain subordinates who do not cooperate, because they have been in the system for a long time. Participant 7 shared her experience, as follows:

Men you deal with them once and you talk to them and say listen this is how things are, men move on...You know what the challenge is, the people who have been here for 30 years are the most problematic ones that is the truth.

According to participant 8, some men undermine female authority as they are defiant all the time when they are supposed to carry out instructions:

The only barrier that I am experiencing is I am working with men and women, so as a lady, I mean getting... men don't like to be told what to do. It is difficult for them to accept orders from a woman.

The frustration shared by participant 4 below illustrates how most African academic women in higher positions face difficulties in commanding respect from their subordinates. It is another form of sabotage.

I think to me, it is like somebody pulling you down. They are not supporting you; they are really trying to discredit you in any form.

Participant 5 added:

There is a man who also suffers from this kind of behaviour, I will give them tasks, and ask them for things, and he is the one who submits after the D-date, and when I ask him now, I am still waiting for this and that and that, oh Doc, I am with you now.

Negative work ethics were identified as a challenge facing African academic women. These were evident in different forms, namely where staff members are not disciplined in terms of honouring time frames and deadlines. In certain cases, staff members deliberately do not follow instructions. In addition, due to age, participant 5 felt that older staff members who had extensive experience were difficult to work with.

Participant 8 found that it is very difficult to work with men as they are not willing to take instructions from her as a woman, which makes it more challenging to work with men as compared to women. In this case, societal representation of gender plays a role, where men are represented as those with authority as compared to women.

Unfortunately some of the women experience lack of support from the university in dealing with these HR matters. There are also no policies on performance management, so there is no tool that makes the staff members committed to their work.

(iv) *Challenges related to lack of training*

Some African academic women who are in a leadership position identified a lack of training on leadership and management as a challenge, and felt that the university does not support them in that regard. The narrative of participant 5 below is evidence that she did not receive any form of the training she had expected:

I asked them, I said should a person get this job, are there systems in place to support and to train...they just laughed, so as I was thinking, as they were laughing, they knew from experience that there is no such thing.

As participant 4 maintains:

Because I mean they will prefer people that are not trained in much, you know it is not a good thing, because if you want...you want to promote whether it is research or other things, but you need people who are skilled in things, even in leadership, management and all those things.

Lack of leadership training is seen as a challenge by African academic women in performing their duties as HODs. According to participant 5, it is a problem which has been in existence for a long period of time. The university does not have a programme of equipping HODs with leadership skills. African academic women have to find ways of survival in their roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, participant 4 felt that this is a deliberate action on the part of the university, as it is afraid of the challenge if HODs know their work. She perceives this as a way of controlling what HODs do without a threat from challenges that would be brought forth by innovations.

In concluding this section, it is evident that African academic women face various workplace challenges that have an impact on their career advancement. The challenges experienced are in evidence when they are occupying leadership positions. Some of the women in the study applied for the promotional positions on the closing date because of being afraid of the challenge. For some women it was a threatening situation as they thought they were taking on massive responsibilities. They did not believe in themselves that they could manage other employees, and

they also thought that other people did not believe in them. This means African women should be able to speak up against unfair labour practices.

The challenges discussed answer the research question which seeks to explore the challenges that African academic women face when advancing in their careers. It further meets the objective of the study which intended to observe and document reflections on challenges African academic women experience during the process of career advancement.

5.3.2 Support factors that have enhanced career advancement

There are two factors that have contributed to the career advancement of African academic women, namely the support they receive at work and at home, and being mentored. These factors have enabled African academic women to advance academically and in turn advance in their careers and those that have enabled them to occupy leadership positions. The supporting factors also include those that have contributed in assisting African academic women to endure the challenges and remain in their leadership positions. The supporting factors are presented in the following sections.

5.3.2.1 Social support factors

African academic women have strong social support structures, namely, family, peers, subordinates and line managers' support. They were able to advance in their careers through the support structures in their lives.

(i) Family support

Some of the African academic women in the study were supported by their husbands who took care of the family, and made sacrifices for the career advancement of their spouses. African academic women obtain various types of support from family members, especially spouses. This is confirmed by the participant 2's statement:

I had support, support from the family support from the department also...From the family when I started my master's I was still pregnant...when my son was born my mother decided to take him so for me it allows me to study.

The spousal support has been significant as reflected by the narrative of participant 4:

I was pregnant when I did my master's, so my baby was a few months...my husband was there for me, taking care of the kids, ...look after the kids, cook and make sure everything is fine... so that support came in very handy.

To some participants, getting support from the family was based on mutual respect and understanding as stated by participant 1:

... because I had my family, and I also had to fit my family in the whole plan. It wasn't just only me going overseas, I had to fit my family, had to negotiate with my husband, and eventually we all left...I wasn't going to go without my children.

In addition, participant 2 mentioned how understanding and supporting the spouse was:

I can also say with the support of my husband because there are some husbands who will always not want the helper to do this and that and so I can say really I must be thankful for that support because he is not fussy at all.

Participant 5 appreciates the encouragement she received from husband when applying for a senior position:

I was so scared...I applied the day before the advert ended, the closing date, I didn't even think I was going to apply, is just my husband said no you are crazy, bring those forms and then we went and submitted them.

The family system has been a source of emotional support; this is what participant 7 had to say:

When I do feel like I need to talk about issues...for example I do talk to my family about my line manager, when he becomes personal with me I take it to them and we pray about it.

In addition to family support, participant 2 had to rely also on the assistance of her helper, so that she could focus on her own career. The availability of the helper helped her not to worry about the home environment as it was taken care of. She only had to concentrate on the work environment. According to her, the helper made her life easy. This how participant 2 relates her experience:

I always say this helper makes my life manageable...She is there for me...so I think she helps in terms of making my life much easier, because I know there is somebody at home, any time looking after my child, very reliable and who really loves him.

Participant 2 added:

Of course studying during that period I depended more on my helper, the support of my husband and the support of friends.

(ii) *Support from subordinates*

Most of the African academic women had support from their subordinates and that made it easier for them to manage their work. Various kinds of support were presented, such as being motivated to apply for senior position; working as a team; staff members taking responsibility for issues that concern the department; and embracing the vision and being available to take responsibility in their absence.

Below is how participant 2 relates the role played by a colleague:

But, then there was a colleague of mine, we were in the department together. She really encouraged me...I found her to be very supportive as well...I always tell her she is a godsend.

It has been highlighted by participant 4 that teamwork makes support at work very easy and useful:

...but we work as a team. There are other people who I make decisions with, so those people are supportive.

Support from the entire organization has been deemed useful as participant 5 added:

...my staff members they support me back and forth and other staff members that are not in the department as well are very supportive like the [REDACTED] assistants."

According to participant 7, sharing the same vision is what enhances social support in the workplace:

You can talk to people; they understand where you are going... The vision is not mine and we all have different visions but we need to have a vision that talks to the vision of the institution and I think people are evolving, changing and understanding.

(iii) *Peer support*

African academic women were also supported by peers who occupy similar positions. Their peers who provided support were also men. The support they receive is mainly during the time when they face challenges, and therefore seek for comfort or for assistance on how to resolve matters or execute tasks. Peer support was mainly used by African academic women who were above 46 years of age.

Support, according to participant 3, has been extended to people from different professions and place of work:

...profession, outside the institution, yes, I would ask and communicate with them regarding maybe curriculum matters. If we want to make any changes...

This was supported by participant 7's narrative:

You know I talked to my [REDACTED] from other schools, most of the things we need to write, like reports come out wrong, all of us, we are forever frustrated because our line manager never listens, so our reports come back and forth all the time, so we sort of talk and laugh about it.

Some support has been in the form of coaching as participant 6 maintains:

Other people around me were coaching me, more especially the seniors in the department...but I think they were good for me and they helped me a lot.

(iv) *Support from line managers*

African academic women obtained more support from their line managers. The support they received included availability of their line managers to provide assistance, assistance on their academic advancement and support on occupying HOD positions. The support from senior management is acknowledged by participant 4:

And the director is also very supportive and she is always available should I need help...should I call, she is always there, she will say come now and we talk and I think that for me is the support I got.

Participant 5 added:

My head of department was a white male but he was very supportive. I went to him and he gave me his book almost like the one that you have.

Support from senior management has assisted participant 5 to venture into a senior position:

There was one advert that came out for an HOD...and I wanted to apply for that one and I said Mr Director this is the advert that came out and I want to try it out and he said there's another advert that is coming out in two weeks' time. I think you will be more suited in that department than in the department that you want to go to.

The sentiment above is shared by participant 7 as follows:

My HOD decided that they have kept me for a tutoring post for a while. I met her when I was 8 or 9 months pregnant. She said you know what, you have been a tutor it is time to become a lecturer, we know you and we are not going to interview you.

African academic women received various kinds of support to enable them to advance from one level to the next one. These support systems have also contributed to their progression in terms of qualifications.

The support received by African academic women was family support and support in the workplace. To some, their husband played a major role in supporting their decisions for career advancement by taking care of the children when they were away from home and in motivating them to apply for leadership positions. Those that were not married obtained support from their parents. Their mothers took care of the children when they were away from home pursuing their careers.

In one instance a domestic worker was also mentioned as a source of support. The domestic worker cared for the children while she advanced her career. This is in line with what Ozkanli and White (2008, p. 59) recommend, namely that women should hire household and childcare helpers to assist them, so that they can focus on their career activities.

Family members also played a role in persuading some African academic women to apply for a promotional post. Some of them were doubtful whether they would manage in those positions, but through verbal persuasion they applied. This is in line with Albert Bandura's theory on self-efficacy which states that verbal persuasion can be used to influence behaviour towards performing certain activities (Bandura, 1977, p. 198). Therefore, the findings of the study are in line with Bandura's theory on verbal persuasion as the source of self-efficacy. This is evident when Participant 5 was persuaded by her husband to apply for the promotional position. Participant 5 expressed herself as follows:

I was so scared...I applied the day before the advert ended, the closing date, I didn't even think I was going to apply, is just my husband said no you are crazy, bring those forms and then we went and submitted them.

Verbal persuasion also motivated Participant 2 to apply for the promotional post. Participant 2's sentiments are as follows:

But, then there was a colleague of mine, we were in the department together. She really encouraged me, she was older than me and she said if I don't apply for the post, she will apply.

In addition, most women received support in the workplace. They received support from their subordinates in the form of working as teams; taking responsibilities that needed their attention; and availability during their absence. Another support that is valuable is the support of peers within the institution; this support is mainly based on receiving comfort during challenging times, and assistance when handling challenging tasks. Peer support also took place outside the institution from colleagues from other universities.

Furthermore, some received support from their line managers. According to the findings, those who received support were those who were young. Their line managers were available for assistance and guidance. The assistance was mainly with respect to their duties and responsibilities in leadership positions. On the other hand, some African academic women received financial support to pursue their qualifications.

5.3.2.2 *Mentorship as a support factor*

Some women had mentors and advisors. Participant 5 was mentored by her line manager on academic related matters and on publications; this is reflected in her story:

But fortunately with my new director, I went to him and said you know when my former director was here this is what I mentioned to him...is mentoring me a lot, we are doing lots of papers together and after talking to him I started thinking and thinking, I came up with another topic, let me try this one.

Participant 1 had advisors on work-related matters. This is what she had to say:

I had advisors. People that I would ask advice from, and it wasn't one person, it was two people, They assisted me, yah, yah, but it was also on an ad hoc basis, if I needed something, I will phone this person and say here is a challenge, now what's your advice, how do I go through this etc.

Mentorship plays another role in assisting women to advance in their academic and career advancement. Participant 5 received mentoring from her line manager, who also publishes with her. On the other hand, participant 1 had advisors that she consults when facing particular tasks.

Mentoring is regarded as being helpful in providing information (Headlam-Wells, Craig & Gosland, 2006, p. 485) and as a way of helping mentees to write books and in helping with research activities (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010, p.146; Obers, 2014, p. 1118). The research findings align well with the literature, where the benefit of mentoring is evident in assisting mentees in their research activities. In addition, the findings are in line with the findings of Obers (2014, p. 1118) which indicate that mentoring was found to be useful as an enabling factor to develop areas contributing to research productivity, including self-esteem; professional capabilities; development of professional network structures; and access to information. Therefore, it is important for women to take advantage of the mentoring platform by requesting senior and experienced individuals in their field to mentor them.

In concluding this section, the support factors discussed answer the research question which seeks to explore the support factors that have enhanced the career advancement of African academic women. It further meets the objective of the study

which intended to explore factors that have influenced the career advancement of African academic women.

5.3.3 Personal attributes that influenced career advancement

This theme emerged during the data collection period. African academic women discussed personal attributes that have contributed to their career advancement. They described themselves in different ways, but still conveyed the message that depicts their characteristics. Women had personal attributes that contributed to their career advancement. The attributes mentioned were as follows: endurance; being motivated; high self-efficacy; emotional intelligence, being proactive; being helpful; determination and working hard; having passion; and being disciplined. Common attributes are discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.3.3.1 Endurance

Participant 6 endured the challenges she faced in a leadership position; she did not quit, but continued. This is what she had to say:

But I managed...if somebody else, I could have decided to leave but then I decided to hold on.

In the midst of challenges, women decided not to quit. The issues raised for not quitting were related to no-succession plan and intention not to create a pattern of quitting as a result of challenges. When facing challenges, participant 2 reflects on the way forward:

I will always say I am glad, every time when I came across a challenge like that, I would always find myself saying what is the way forward with this? I had to now make that clear to myself that I am not going to quit and then how then to survive.

Participant 7 added:

My sister asked me why don't I resign and I told her I don't quit, otherwise I will quit in every job that I have. I guess I have always been the bravest of all of them.

Being in a leadership position has been characterised by challenges, within the department and outside the department for most of the women. In the midst of those challenges these women chose to endure and not to quit. Participants 6 and 7

decided to stay in their positions, irrespective of the challenges they faced. Participant 7 emphasised that if she quit, then that meant she would quit every job she had. Moreover, participant 2 decided not to quit studying for a master's degree, and made it clear that she would not do this as she had already withdrawn from another master's programme.

5.3.3.2 Career resilience

Most women had strategies that helped them to advance in their careers, and that made them endure in their positions regardless of challenges. For example, Participant 7's view on challenges is a positive one, which indicates that the challenges are normal, they are not "out of the ordinary". She referred to charges against her as things that motivate and re-energise her:

I take challenges as just challenges, today they are positive, tomorrow they are negative, childbearing, everything, it is never easy and it is never out of the ordinary...There was a point where he will charge me and not discuss an issue with me at all...I thrive on being charged, I call them chargers for myself, sometimes I need these... they charge you.

On the other hand, participant 6 indicated that the challenges gave her experience:

My journey was a bit smooth, except the challenges with individuals but anyway it was not a challenge because it was giving me experience.

Participant 7 had a personal principle that if something cannot talk that means it cannot refuse, therefore whatever she needs to do, she will be able to do it:

I believe if a thing does not have a mouth, it can't say no, and that is my principle. That has always driven me.

Participant 7 faced various challenges within a short period of time. The challenges she faced were a driving force, and she did not allow the situation to overpower her:

Amazingly enough in that year of my divorce and my father's death, and this child that I didn't know what to do with, because you study...the nanny didn't turn up, what do you do and there is a class that starts at 8' o clock...those things were a driving force for me.

In addition, participant 1 was self-motivated to pursue her goal, even in the midst of challenges.

I think I am self-motivated, that is a strong attribute on my side. I am self-motivated and I also want to leave a mark....And I had also decided that no one was going to stop me from achieving what I wanted to, to achieve, and that goes across.

African academic women under study have shown high level of resilience. They persevered during challenges, and obtained the results that they were aiming to attain. In all the challenges they had gone through they are still in their positions. They have a positive view of the challenges they go through. Participant 7 views challenges as things that are not “out of the ordinary” and that if something does not have a mouth to say no, then it is possible to win that thing. On the other hand, participant 6 views challenges as giving her experience. On the same note, participant 1 indicated that no one would stop her from achieving her goals.

5.3.3.3 *High self-efficacy*

High self-efficacy is very important as it determines whether a person will initiate an activity or not, and in this case it refers to African academic women applying for leadership positions.

Participant 7 had high self-efficacy as a result of her experience in previous jobs, her qualifications and her performance during interviews. She believed that she is the best in terms of doing her job and obtained the position fairly. This means that obtaining the position was not as a result of affirmative action:

An opportunity came in this university and I thought this is a better challenge. If I had managed those 16 programmes I would manage the [REDACTED] so I applied and got interviewed and with my qualifications; and my record; and the interview; I got the position... My convictions tell me I am the best I can be in terms of doing my job, I don't have to work 3 times to match what my boss who is a man wants me to be, I have long passed that stage. I believe that I have achieved this position fairly and I can only do my best.

Similarly, participant 4 when entering a senior position felt she could do it as she wanted to contribute in achieving results:

So I felt I can do it, so I am more interested in achieving results or seeing good things happening, so, and I felt for me to see it I need to be part of it, even if it can be for the short period of time, but I wanted to be part of it.

Some African academic women, when entering leadership positions, felt that they could do it. Participant 7's self-efficacy is influenced by her qualifications and experiences. On the other hand, participant 4 felt that she could take over the department, and that was influenced by the drive to see good results in her department.

The source of self-efficacy for participant 7 is behaviour accomplishment (Bandura, 1977, p. 195); this is in line with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, where the self-efficacy level increases as one completes a task successfully. Participant 7 was successful in managing 16 programmes, and therefore she felt that she was in a strong position to occupy a higher post.

For participant 4, the activation to lead the department was influenced by the cognitive locus of operation where she was influenced by the ability to represent future consequences (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). The sources of self-efficacy are in line with Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

Therefore, the findings of the study are in line with Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The sources of self-efficacy which are "behaviour accomplishment and "locus of operation" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193-195) are evident.

5.3.3.4 *Emotional intelligence*

Some women indicated that emotional intelligence is important to deal with matters in relation to managing staff. Participant 7 indicated that it is important to know where and when to do things, and how to manage those things:

It is important for me as a woman to have emotional intelligence and know where and when to do things and how to manage issues.

On the same note, participant 5 indicated that it is important to know yourself and how to deal with yourself and that information will assist in how you deal with people:

Quite important is emotional intelligence, you need to be able to know...know yourself and know how you deal with yourself so that you can know how to deal with other people, so that emotional intelligence has to be there.

Emotional intelligence is a necessary attribute when people are in leadership positions. On the other hand, participant 5 indicated that one should know and understand oneself first and thereafter one would be able to know how to deal with other people. Therefore, the way one responds to people and situations assists one in maintaining oneself in a leadership position.

5.3.3.5 *Determination*

Participant 7 was very determined to pursue her studies. She resigned from full-time employment and even though she faced a disappointment that did not stop her; she rather looked at another alternative to advance her academic studies. This is how she narrated her experience:

One without really looking into the funds that talk to it, but young as I was, I thought nothing would stop me. I have always been a driven person anyway...in those days we didn't know anything about court, I would have taken them to court. Because when I had resigned my job but I didn't... because I was driven, instead I jumped into it.

On the same note participant 4 was also determined to pursue her studies, even though she lacked resources. She had to remain at work after hours so that she could use the computer which had Internet access to work on her research:

You know and I was only able to do my studies after work and the other challenge was that I had to do everything after hours...I am very much goal orientated so it was not a problem for me, because I knew I wanted to achieve something.

She further added;

There are always challenges especially if you are dealing with people but like I said before, I don't dwell mostly on those challenges, I look at what is the goal that we need to achieve and besides everything else, there is something that as a department that we want to achieve so we need to look at that.

In terms of academic advancement, participant 2 had to create time to study, and ensure that the study environment was conducive to academic activities. She would send her children to her friend's home in order for her to study:

Really we were away from home so we had to create our own families like having friends and then like Sunday afternoons it will always be my time for studying, and after lunch the kids would be taken to a friend's house...and afternoon I would study, then they would come home around 6 then life continues.

The African academic women under study were determined to succeed irrespective of the barriers that stopped them. When one is determined, one is able to do what seems to be impossible or unachievable. This clearly shows that women have managed to advance in their careers through determination.

5.3.3.6 *Hard work*

Some women have advanced because their hard work and achievements were recognised. The recognition assisted them to be appointed to leadership positions.

Participant 4 states:

I am a hard worker, I do feel that hard work pays off so those are some of the attributes I have and I think those are the most important things.

In addition, participant 5 indicated that before she was appointed as the HOD, she identified what needed to be done, and thereafter decided to do it, without being told to do that:

As I have said I didn't go out to say I want to be an HOD or I want to be whatever, I just saw that we are not doing this, let me do it, we are not doing this, let me do it.

What helped participant 5 to gain recognition in her school is also that she was willing to perform extra tasks. She started to be more visible in her school through extra work on student support:

I am always pushing myself when there is a chance for me to work. For me I will just say hard work, and putting yourself out there and taking whatever opportunity that came. I took any opportunity that came my way without knowing that, that opportunity will lead me into being an HOD.

Participant 5 mentioned that being helpful and going an extra mile for other people also assisted her in her role as an HOD, and therefore in turn she gets support from other people:

I'm thinking it's my personality and the fact that they know that if they come to me...I am always giving them when they need help, because they know any time they can come to me, because I put myself out there... people support me and it is very easy to get support...I do, so I get support everywhere.

Hard work played a major role in facilitating the women's career advancement. Participants 4 and 5 believed in hard work. Through the narration of their career life it is evident that they were recognised and considered for leadership positions based on their hard work. Their involvement and achievement were facilitated by their hard work. Participant 5 was willing to go an extra mile in her work; she identified what needed to be done and did it. When requested to do certain tasks by her school, she did them and even assisted others in their work. This shows hard work on her part, and that contributed to her being noticed and therefore appointed to a senior position. Hard work as an attribute to career advancement is in line with what Phakedi (2015, p.2) advocates, where she indicates its importance, even though in itself it is not sufficient. She further recommends that African academic women who desire to advance their careers should work hard. Phakedi (2015, p. 2) argues that her experience taught her that African academic women had to work harder than men to attain top positions.

It is therefore, important for African academic women to work hard in order to advance in their careers. Hard work requires that they be available to perform extra tasks.

5.3.3.7 *Passion*

Some African academic women indicated that they were very passionate about what they were doing, which helped them to advance in their careers. This is what participant 6 had to say:

I think from my side passion was the driver and it made me to achieve.

Participant 3 alluded to the fact that she showed passion in the profession and participated in matters relating to the profession:

I think showing interest and passion in my profession and also actively participating in professional matters and maybe also being vocal.

This goes with love for the profession as participant 4 states:

I think just even for me the love of the profession, and also to see things done, I think that's what drawn me.

Being passionate about what one does and about the chosen profession is important to contribute towards achieving the intended results. The researcher's view is that it is easier to be committed to something that you love. Participant 6 was very passionate about her studies and she regarded passion as the driver. On the other hand, participants 3 and 4 had passion for their profession, which is evident when participant 3 participated more actively in professional matters. In addition, participant 4 was driven by seeing the results within her department, which she did not want see fall apart.

Having passion in what one does and one's profession will facilitate career advancement. Therefore, it is important for young African academic women to choose careers that they love, because doing something that one loves will help in terms of persevering in the midst of challenges.

In conclusion, the personal attributes discussed met the objective of the study which intended to explore factors that influenced career advancement of African academic women working at University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus.

5.3.4 Strategies towards career advancement

African academic women have employed different strategies that have helped them to advance in their careers. They employed various strategies: “concept of the graph”; goal setting; religion; leadership styles; career self-management; planning strategies; and networking. The strategies are discussed in the next sections.

5.3.4.1 Concept of the graph

Participant 2 developed a graph concept that she uses to measure her performance according to where she started in life. She measures her performance by using her present performance in relation to where she started, and not in relation to other people as she is not sure where they started on the graph. This is what participant 2 had to say:

I had to develop a concept of, I must have my own graph and that concept has carried me through...Let me illustrate it for you, they way I illustrate it, if a graph is like this, this is zero... this is the x axis, this is the y axis, this is positive and this is negative... looking above zero and this other one most probably started at zero, while for me I am going to look at where did I start, for me I started at minus four. What they are seeing above is just so you can see that for me, my graph is much longer, in fact I am the one who is performing much better than this one, because this graph is definitely five compared to one and I am the only one who knows this, so I must congratulate myself...congratulate yourself because you are the only one who knows your graph, no one knows about it, so it was a concept that really helped me.

Participant 2 developed the concept of the graph to motivate her. She emphasises that one needs to measure one’s own performance in the context of one’s environment and where one started in life. She indicates that a performance should not be measured against other people because one is not sure where they started in life, and one has no knowledge of the factors supporting them. She congratulates herself when she achieves certain things, and she does not get discouraged when she sees her counterparts in other universities succeeding. She further indicates that the HODs from other universities may be at an advanced level due to the support they receive, and that makes them start the graph at different levels from hers,

maybe at a higher level. The concept of the graph helps her to appreciate the progress she has made and to be motivated.

What we learn from participant 2 is that one needs to consider the context when evaluating one's performance, and then determine whether one is progressing or not. Therefore, considering our own contextual factors to career advancement is very important, and that will help us to keep on being motivated in the tasks we perform.

5.3.4.2 Goal setting

African women indicated that it is important to set goals and to pursue the goals that one has set. Most women had goals and were motivated by the goals. Participant 1 referred to having a long-term picture of her life. She indicated also that she works towards achieving the goal even though there might be challenges. She considers challenges as delays rather than those things that deny her achievement of her goals:

I know what I want to do in ten years' time, I just keep on working towards that goal...I know what I want, I set what I want and I work towards that. If on the way I meet barriers, and I meet obstacles, I try to work towards them.

Participant 4 indicated that she is goal-oriented and strongly focussed. She follows up the people she works with until she is satisfied that what she intended to do is done:

I think I am very much goal oriented, and also result orientated, I am very focused, like if I want something done, I want it done...So I am very particular and also with time I am very committed, and I respect time very much.

Motivation is very important for one to focus on the work at hand especially when facing challenges. The African women under study used various strategies to motivate themselves to complete their tasks.

Goal setting is one strategy that the women used to advance in their careers. The goals set direct their behaviour and action towards the achievement of the goals. Participant 6 when studying towards her PhD indicated that it needed hard work and

determination, and she had goals, and she indicated that the goals motivated her to complete the study in order to publish:

When you have goals, what...At least when I finish my PhD is that I should have published this and that how many publications. So those goals they are the ones that really motivated me to go to that level... I think it was mainly the goal that at the end of the journey I want to reach there.

It is clear that there are factors that may discourage, act as barriers and that challenge one in achieving the goals set. Some African academic women under study had career goals, and they directed their effort and action towards achieving those goals (Van Blerkom, 2009, p. 32). It is therefore important for one to have career advancement goals and work towards achieving them. If one has goals there might be delays, but when one is focused one will eventually achieve the goals set.

Goals are one form that assists individuals to represent future consequences and develop current motivational drive (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). This means goal setting is a means of motivational drive. Therefore, the findings indicate that some African academic women had motivational strategies they used to keep them focussed in what they intended to do which would contribute to their career advancement. The findings are in line with Quigley and Tymon Jr (2006, p. 514) where they indicate that developing career goals is part of career management. When African women manage their careers well, they will advance easily.

5.3.4.3 Religion

Most African academic women relied very much on their Christian faith when faced with difficulties. They believed that God helps them whenever they experience difficulties.

Participant 4 believes in God:

"I am a believer, so I believe in God, and I pray a lot, that's why most of the things...there might be challenges but I don't take them to heart, then I pray about them, all the challenges that I had, pray about that, and God is faithful, so whatever challenge there is, is always resolved, and something will work out, so I strongly believe in that.

Participant 7 also relied on God for assistance in dealing with the challenges she faced:

I had to source for the Upper Power to be able to deal for me and it was not easy. For me I had to rely on God.

Participant 2 believes that God had predestined her career pathway and she should obey, and therefore whatever challenges she faces, God will assist her:

I am too religious because I then looked at really how things had turned out to say for sure this is where I was meant to be and I thought... and whatever I am going through, God will help me to carry that ...I have got this strong belief that our destinies are predetermined and we must always really hope to fit into the predetermined paths that are there for us.

A belief in predestination was confirmed by other colleagues, and participant 2 reflects on those comments and the challenges she had overcome. These were a confirmation of her predestined pathway.

Participant 3 works with other people who want her to critique their work and states:

I don't know whether it is just a God-given talent, I tend to give positive criticism, and people will say can you please critique this. Because I know when it comes to you, you are going to give positive feedback and maybe that helped me to advance.

In addition, participant 3 obtains assistance from an academic at the University of the Witwatersrand to publish her master's dissertation:

Even with publication, I got assistance and support from somebody who was at Wits, somebody at Wits said bring your master's thesis here, let us see if we can't publish it so that is how I got to publish.

Networking is very crucial in career advancement. Some African academic women have used various platforms to network with others in the field. Participant 3 created a trusting relationship with other professionals who are comfortable with her critiquing their work, and she regarded that as having helped her to advance in her career. In addition, she collaborated with another academic from the University of the Witwatersrand to publish her master's dissertation. This is in line with Settlers et al.

(as cited in Evans & Cokley; 2008, p. 52) that women can increase their publications through networking with others, and that publications in the higher education sector contribute to promotional opportunities. In addition, Phakedi (2015, p. 2) indicates that African academic women need to connect with other researchers and associates, and be open for leadership possibilities. Therefore, it is important for African academic women to find ways of networking with others to facilitate their career advancement.

A network is described by Rankin and Nielsen (2006, p. 110) as a group of people who share information, ideas and favours. On the other hand, Greenhaus and Callanan (2006, p. 536) define networking as “a set of behaviours used to develop and maintain relationships that can potentially provide information, influence, guidance and support to individuals in their careers”. Networking is a career advancement strategy that can assist women to connect with others in order to learn and share information and ideas on issues that can contribute to their career advancement.

In concluding this section, the strategies discussed answer the research question which seeks to explore the strategies used by African academic women to advance in their careers. It further meets the objective of the study which is to gain insight on the strategies that are employed by African academic women towards career advancement within an academic setting.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that African academic women experience various challenges when advancing in their careers. The challenges that they face relate to both the home and work environment. Both environments impact on their success in improving their qualifications. Workplace challenges relate to promotion, work conditions, and staff management; they have a more negative impact on them towards their career advancement than challenges emanating from the home environment.

Furthermore, the findings of the study indicate that the main challenge that African academic women experienced was in relation to family demands. Most African academic women had to care for their children, especially when they were very young. On the other hand, in the workplace, most of them had to deal with staff management issues, such as lack of commitment and negative work ethics by subordinates. In addition, lack of support from line managers and the university system was regarded as a barrier to progress.

The study also found that women have factors that support their career advancement, such as support from family and from the workplace. In addition, they have certain personal strategies and attributes that assist them in occupying leadership positions and to remain in them despite challenges. Personal strategies include goal setting by focusing on attaining the goal; believing in God for strength and assistance; having a leadership style which is characterised by caring for the people they lead; and managing their own career advancement activities and attitudes. The attributes that characterise African academic women and have assisted them in occupying leadership positions are resilience, commitment and self-motivation and hard work.

African academic women have managed to advance in their careers and most of them attribute their advancement to the support they received from their families, especially their spouses. In the workplace those that are below 46 years received more support from their line managers than those that are above 46. Those that are above 46 received more support from their peers, especially when they faced challenging or confusing tasks; whereas those that are younger than 46 relied on their line managers to assist when they faced challenges.

Most women attributed their advancement to endurance; hard work; determination; passion; high self-efficacy; career resilience; and emotional intelligence. In the midst of challenges, they were determined, they had to endure and work hard to achieve their goals. They were resilient.

They used various strategies to advance in their careers. Most of them had leadership styles which were characterised by caring for the people they lead and encouraging them to advance. These leadership styles won over the people they lead. In addition, they have self-motivation strategies that they have used to sustain them, which relate to acknowledging progress in consideration of their context and goals. In addition, they managed their careers, and relied on God for help, strength and guidance in their leadership roles and in facing the various challenges.

In conclusion, their life stories symbolise a coin with two sides; one side displays the challenging factors in their career advancement and the other side the supporting factors. Even as they experience challenges, they also experience supporting factors; they also have personal attributes and strategies to facilitate their advancement.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to provide a summary of the findings which highlight the challenges that African academic women face as they advance to leadership positions; the factors that supported their career advancement; the strategies they used to advance. The other theme that emerged during data collection was the personal attributes the African academic women possess that facilitated their career advancement. Chapter 6 also highlights the limitations of this study and provides recommendations for higher learning institutions on supporting the career advancement of African academic women.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study has found that African academic women experience challenges when they advance in their careers. The challenges experienced are those related to higher education access and success; challenges to accessing leadership positions; success barriers to leadership positions; and race as a barrier to career advancement.

In terms of challenges related to higher education access and success, they experienced various challenges that occur mainly at home and in the workplace. At home, family demands play a major role in delaying most of them from improving their qualifications. Most of them had to consider first their children before they decided to advance academically, for instance, some delayed registration of a PhD, as they thought about family demands in relation to their children.

The other challenges experienced were issues related to race in the form of the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction and prejudice experienced during undergraduate study, as well as experiences of unfair labour practices. In addition,

there were the following: low socio-economic level, in the form of lack of resources; challenges experienced with supervisors at postgraduate study; administrative demands of the leadership positions; and personal and health problems. These challenges had an impact on their success in improving their qualifications. In institutions of higher learning career advancement is facilitated by appropriate qualifications. When one acquires the highest degree, for example, PhD, one stands a better chance of moving from one post level to a higher one.

African academic women faced challenges relating to accessing leadership positions. Some were afraid when entering leadership positions; this is evident as some applied for leadership positions on the closing date for applications. This is an internal factor which relates to a low self-efficacy level with respect to a leadership position; this is due to the mental paintings they created about being in that position. The other challenge with entering a leadership position is related to the delay of being officially appointed to that position and instead being requested to act without formal appointment. The latter relates to flaws in the system that demoralise women as they strive to advance in their careers.

The other challenging factor African academic women experience is related to success barriers in leadership positions. The major challenge they experienced is lack of support from the institution of employment. There are no systems in place to support individuals who are in leadership positions. In addition, there is no training or orientation for individuals who are appointed to these leadership positions. Moreover, some of them experienced difficulties with their line managers who did not behave towards them in a professional manner. Furthermore, some of the African academic women experienced challenges with managing the staff working under them. These challenges have an impact on their own work. The lack of a positive work ethic amongst the staff members reporting to them was a major factor. Therefore, it is important to highlight these deficiencies so that they inform future policymakers at higher learning institutions that leaders may be guided on matters affecting the career advancement of African academic women.

It is also important to look at what contributed to the advancement of African academic women. Their career advancement was influenced by their support systems. They obtained support from their families, especially their spouses and in the workplace from their subordinates, line managers and peers. The support received from their line managers was in the form of guidance and mentoring. Most of the African academic women in the sample received support from their subordinates in relation to work that needed to be done and support from their peers when facing difficult tasks and challenges. With regards to peer support, it was more about comforting one another during difficulties, and helping each other to complete complex tasks.

Moreover, there are personal attributes that contributed to the career advancement of African academic women. The attributes are endurance; career resilience; high self-efficacy; emotional intelligence; determination; hard work; and passion. Most African academic women have shown much determination, endurance and career resilience. In the midst of challenges, they pushed barriers and advanced in their careers.

Furthermore, African academic women used various strategies when advancing in their careers. Strategies such as self-motivation strategies, where one measured performance based on contextual factors rather than on comparing her work performance with that of others. Goal-setting strategies helped African academic women towards working for the achievement of the goals. Goal setting as a motivational strategy was used by most women. Therefore, it is important for women who want to advance to know what they intend to achieve, thereafter to direct their actions in achieving it, and then continually monitor whether they are achieving these goals.

In addition, most African academic women relied on their religious faith during their career journeys, especially during difficult times, in the belief that God would solve all their problems. Furthermore, a factor that contributed to the career advancement of African academic women is their leadership style, which is mainly characterised by caring for those that they lead. This is in line with the literature that states that

women prefer a transformative leadership style, which places emphasis on understanding people; this approach helps them to know how to work with the people they are leading.

In addition, some African academic women under study were consciously and deliberately managing the careers. Understanding of oneself and the ability to identify personal development needs assisted them in their career advancement. For example, planning helped one participant to manage her career. Adding to that, networking helped women to tackle difficult tasks and to move from a lower level of leadership to a higher one.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

The aim of the study was to investigate the nature of experiences with regard to career advancement by African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus. The study used both unstructured individual interviews and the focus group. During the data collection period, the researcher experienced challenges with regard to finding a suitable date for all participants to participate in the focus group. In addition, because of student protests at that period, it was difficult to conduct the focus group. The concern of the researcher was to protect the participants from staff intimidation activities. Therefore, the focus group was conducted after the protest which lasted for two weeks. The focus group took place during the recovery period when all academic departments were investing most of their time in the completion of the academic curricula; therefore the focus group interview had an insufficient number of participants. In total there were four participants, and two left in the middle of the focus group due to academic and leadership commitments. In addition, participant 8 who took part during the focus group was unavailable for individual interviews due to academic commitments.

Consequently, based on the sample size, the findings of the study cannot be generalised. According to Stake (1995, p. 8 as cited in Fouché & Schurink, 2011, p. 322), case studies are about particularisation, and not generalisation. This means that the case study intends to understand a particular case, to know it well, and not to ascertain how it differs from other cases. Therefore, the researcher aligns herself

with Stake that the aim of the study was to understand the case well, meaning to understand the career advancement experiences of African academic women who are in leadership positions, without comparing themselves with women of other races or women in different positions.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are based on the findings on the career advancement experiences of African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus, which is now known as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). They are based on the challenges faced by African academic women and the supporting factors available for their career advancement as well as the strategies they used to advance in their careers. The recommendations are for African academic women who aspire to advance in their careers and for institutions of higher learning. The recommendations are outlined in the following sections.

6.4.1 African academic women aspiring to advance in their careers

African academic women who aspire to advance their careers in academia should ensure that they do the following:

- Be aware of all factors that deny them to access and succeed in higher education. These factors can be as a result of the home and work environment. Thereafter they should find ways of addressing these factors, so that they will be able to improve their qualifications;
- Align their academic daily activities with the promotional requirements of the institution of higher learning where they are working or aspiring to work at, so that they meet those criteria when applying for leadership positions;
- Develop support systems around them in both the home and the work environment;
- Identify mentors who are willing to assist them in their career journeys and create career networks;
- Be determined and passionate about what they do in their chosen careers; work hard; be resilient when facing challenges; and find self-motivating strategies that will keep them focused on their career advancement journey;

- Take ownership of the management of their careers.

6.4.2 Institutions of higher learning

Institutions of higher learning should increase the representation of African academic women in leadership positions. There are areas that they need to target and work on in order to support African academic women in their career advancement. Institutions of higher learning should support African academic women to access and succeed in leadership positions by doing the following:

- Support African academic women who are in leadership positions by identifying their needs and work towards addressing them;
- Provide African academic women who are in leadership positions with free time so that they can improve their qualifications;
- Reduce the administrative demands of African academic women in leadership positions;
- Handle promotional matters equitably for all employees;
- Provide on-going leadership training for all academic leaders, including African academic women;
- Provide training for African academic women in the form of workshops on promotional procedures and strategies;
- Promote mentorship for academic leaders, especially African academic women.

6.5 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

Career development theories must consider the interconnection of race, gender and class which may impact on the career advancement of African women. It is clear that Super's theory considered socioeconomic status as the major determinant for vocational development (Super, 1969, p. 4). The socioeconomic status only illustrates issues of class as the major factor which impacts the career advancement of individuals. However, the interconnection of race, gender and class is not considered, as this affects the career advancement of black women.

6.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher recommends that future research be undertaken to investigate the use of the feedback of psychological assessments to enhance career advancement of African academic women.

6.7 CONCLUSION

African academic women working in institutions of higher learning are under-represented in leadership positions. Various challenges, the need for support systems and strategies have been identified. Furthermore, the personal attributes that contribute to the career advancement of African academic women are recognised.

Institutions of higher learning face a challenge to increase the representation of African academic women in leadership positions. In the same manner, African academic women who aspire to advance in their careers have to take ownership of their career advancement.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A – INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE: Career Advancement Experiences of African Academic Women Working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus

You are invited to take part in this study. I will give brief information on the research, so that you are able to understand why the research is done.

The purpose of the study

The study is part of the research requirement for a Master of Arts in Psychology. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of African academic women who have advanced in their careers.

Participation in the study

You have been invited to this study as you have been identified as an African academic woman who has advanced in your career. Your experience in your career advancement will provide an insight on the experiences of African academic women when advancing their careers.

Consent form

If you decide to take part you will be requested to sign a consent form. Should you decide not to be part of the study, you are free to withdraw from the study.

Research Instruments

There will be an in-depth interview and a focus group interview that will focus on exploring your career advancement experience. The in-depth interview may take an hour and a focus group about two hours.

Potential benefits of the study

Sharing your experiences will assist in developing strategies that will assist other African academic women in advancing their careers. You will also have an opportunity to reflect on your career advancement journey.

Protection from the risk of taking part in the study

Your name or your position will not be mentioned when reporting findings of the study. Both in-depth and focus groups interviews will be kept confidential. The interviews will be recorded for the sake of analysis of data. After publication of the study the recordings will be destroyed.

Review of the study

The study will be reviewed by ethics committees of University of South Africa. The study is supervised by Dr S. D. Mhlongo (mhlonsd@unisa.ac.za).

Contact information

Should you require more information about the study, you may contact Ms M.M. Molotsi at 083 769 9813 or e-mail Matshidiso.molotsi@yahoo.com.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet, and for taking part in the study.

ANNEXURE B – CONSENT FORM

Career advancement experiences of African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus.

Researcher: M. M. Molotsi, MA Psychology student at the University of South Africa.

I, _____ (Participant's name)

Confirm that I read and understood the information sheet,

and asked questions for better understanding of the study

Understand that my participation in this research is voluntary

and I may withdraw from the study at any time

Agree to the audio recording of both the individual

and focus group interviews

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEXURE C – BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM

Title of research project: **CAREER ADVANCEMENT EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN ACADEMIC WOMEN WORKING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, MEDUNSA CAMPUS.**

Date of interview: _____

Time of interview: _____

Duration of interview: _____

Participant number/pseudonym:

Biographical information

Kindly answer the following questions. Please mark with a cross (X) in the appropriate box. Note that you do not have to provide any information that you feel uncomfortable sharing.

Place of birth

South Africa	
Other	
<i>Please specify:</i>	

Age

25 years and younger	
26-35 years	
36-45 years	
46 years and older	

Marital Status

Single	
Married	
Widowed	
Separated/Divorced	

Number of children

0	
1-2	
3-4	
More than 4	

Current Position

Head of Department	
Deputy Director	
Director	
Other	
<i>Please specify:</i>	

Number of years in the current position

Less than 1	
1-3	
4-6	
More than 6	

Number of years with current institution of employment

Less than 1	
1-5	
6-10	
More than 10	

Highest Qualification

Diploma	
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	
Honours degree or equivalent	
Masters degree	
Doctoral degree	

Thank you

ANNEXURE D – FOCUS GROUP AGENDA

CAREER ADVANCEMENT EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN ACADEMIC WOMEN WORKING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, MEDUNSA CAMPUS

Welcome and introduction

Introduction

You were invited to the focus group because you are in leadership positions in the University. I want to tap into your career experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your positive and negative experiences. I want to know what you really think and feel about being in a leadership position at the University.

Purpose of the study is:

- obtain narratives of the journeys by African academic women who have already advanced in their careers;
- observe and document reflections on challenges African academic women went through during the process of career advancement;
- Investigate the impact of the glass ceiling on career advancement of African academic women;
- explore factors that influenced career advancement of African academic women working at Medunsa campus; and
- gain insight on the strategies that are employed towards career advancement by women within an academic setting

Purpose of the meeting is to gather information on your career advancement experiences.

Introduction of the members – tell us who you are and what leadership position you hold in the University

Explain recording methods and ethical issues

Set ground rules

Focused discussion to help understand the topic of discussion

Focused discussion to help understand the topic of discussion

The interview will address an introductory question and three key questions.

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase 'career advancement'? (introductory question)

Can we talk about aspects that acted or still act as barriers towards career advancement of women, particularly African women

Can we talk about factors that helped you to advance in your career

Can we talk about the actions/ strategies you employed to assist you to advance in your career

Wrap-up (ending question, way forward)

If you had a chance to give advices to an African woman who wants to advance in her career, what advices would you give?

ANNEXURE E – CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (TRANSCRIBER)

Research Title: Career Advancement Experiences of African Academic Women Working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus

University: University of South Africa (UNISA)

Researcher: Matshidiso Mercy Molotsi

I, _____, agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the it in any form or format (e.g. memory sticks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Researcher;
2. Keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession;
3. Use the research information solely for the purpose stipulated by the Researcher;
4. Return all research information in any form or format to the Researcher when I have completed the research tasks;
5. Destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Researcher (e.g. information sorted on computer hard drive).

Transcriber:

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

Researcher:

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

Form adapted from www.trentu.ca/research/

ANNEXURE F – CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (EDITOR)

Research Title: Career Advancement Experiences of African Academic Women Working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus

University: University of South Africa (UNISA)

Researcher: Matshidiso Mercy Molotsi

I, _____, agree to:

6. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the it in any form or format (e.g. memory sticks, e-mail) with anyone other than the Researcher;
7. Keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession;
8. Use the research information solely for the purpose stipulated by the Researcher;
9. Return all research information in any form or format to the Researcher when I have completed the research tasks;
10. Destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Researcher (e.g. information sorted on computer hard drive).

Editor:

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

Researcher:

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

Form adapted from www.trentu.ca/research/

ANNEXURE G – ETHICAL CLEARANCE (UNISA)



30-05-2013

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF A RESEARCH PROJECT INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Project: Career advancement experiences of African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa campus

Researcher: Matshidiso Mercy Molotsi

Supervisor: Dr S D Mhlongo, Dept of Psychology, Unisa

The proposal was evaluated for adherence to appropriate standards in respect of ethics as required by the Psychology Department of Unisa. The application was approved by the departmental Ethics Committee without any conditions.

Prof P Kruger
*Department of Psychology
College of Human Sciences
University of South Africa*



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ANNEXURE H – PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



University of Limpopo
Medunsa Research Ethics Committee (MREC)
Prof GA Ogunbanjo: Chairperson MREC
P.O Box 163, Medunsa, 0204, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 521 5617/3359 Fax: +27 12 521 3749, Email: lorato.phiri@ul.ac.za

Ms MM Molotsi
Box 54458
NINA PARK
0156

Dear Ms Molotsi

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, MEDUNSA CAMPUS

Researcher: Ms MM Molotsi
University: University of South Africa
Department: Psychology
Qualification: Master of Arts in Psychology
Supervisor: Dr S D Mhlongo
Letter of approval date: 30 May 2013

Title: Career advancement experiences of African academic women working at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa Campus.

MREC **NOTED** a letter received on the 03 June 2013 requesting a permission to conduct research at Medunsa Campus.

MREC **APPROVED** the above mentioned protocol and granted you a permission to conduct your study at Medunsa Campus.

Yours Sincerely,


PROF GA OGUNBANJO
CHAIRPERSON MREC

06 June 2013

