

**EXAMINING CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN IN
LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY ON AN SA SME PHARMACEUTICAL
ORGANISATION.**

RESEARCH REPORT

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by

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21 December 2022


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"My genade is vir jou genoeg. My krag kom juis tot volle werking wanneer jy swak is."

2 Korintiërs 12:9

I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the following individuals, as without them this research report will not have been possible:

- 1) To the remarkable leadership women who have participated in this research study, thank you for making time to share your individual thoughts and experiences within me. I have learned a great deal from each one of you throughout this journey. You are all incredible in your own way and have left a mark along my career path.
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- 5) Lastly my greatest thanks and appreciation goes to my heavenly Father, who has provided me with the opportunity to be able to gain further knowledge and insight into the world he has placed me.

DEDICATION

To my daughter, the one that sat numerous hours with me doing her homework, school projects or studying. You are my life and greatest blessing. You come from a generation of strong independent women, and I want you to always remember that you are capable of anything. Never lose who you are and keep the sparkle in your eyes. It speaks wonders of who you are.

ABSTRACT

The research sought to investigate whether women in leadership positions in an SME pharmaceutical company in South Africa are encountering challenges and whether these challenges are a result of specific barriers. The research therefore identified and attempted to analyse what the challenges are that women in leadership positions in the SME pharmaceutical organisation are encountering or have encountered and whether these challenges are a result of historical barriers against women in leadership positions still being in existence and experienced in the SME environment. Consequently, the research questions and objectives focussed on identifying the challenges encountered and if there were specific barriers that contribute to women in leadership positions challenges within the SME. The sample selection would have consisted of seven present and six past female staff members that either currently hold or previously held a leadership position within the organisation. In the end, in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with six participants using a semi-structured open-ended discussion guide. The research study used a phenomenological method with a non-probability sampling technique, followed by thematic analysis. The finding was that although a shift in perceptions about females taking up leadership positions has been noted, this shift is not occurring quickly enough. The main challenges identified “social paradigm” barriers such as the working environment, mentorship, training, and perception challenges faced by female leadership. SME organisations are encouraged to promote leadership morale through effective directed mentoring, learning and development programmes to enrich their leadership staff. Furthermore, by reducing bureaucracy, mid-level leadership may be able to make effective decisions which could foster a growth mindset.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Barrier – It is something that prevents or hinders peoples' movement or access.

Career – The professional development that a person wants to achieve in their working life.

Experience – The everyday experiences of a person in the discharge of their primary functions which the person reflects on, perceives, feels, endures or enjoys.

Leadership – Being the way in which people change the mindset of others and move the organisation forward to accomplish identified goals.

Women Leaders – This term is used interchangeably for female leaders, female managers, female supervisors and female senior staff.

SA – The abbreviation stands for South African.

SME – The abbreviation stands for small and medium-sized enterprises with less than 200 staff members.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background

Since 2018 market trends indicate that there has been significant growth experienced across functional areas, not necessarily only from a financial point of view, but across all operational spheres within pharmaceutical organisations globally. One may say that the growth has been fuelled by people becoming more conscious of living a healthier lifestyle and more recently, this has been accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. In the ever-changing economic environment, pharmaceutical organisations quickly realised the need to be more adaptable in the way their businesses are to be conducted. These organisations managed to incorporate changes such as, acquiring a unique composition of intellectual assets (personnel); increasing cost allocation to research and development to stay abreast of a continually fast changing economic environment and industry of the operational status quo of organisations within the industry. The industry has realised the need and emphasis to adapt, grow and implement change faster than other industries who struggled and ultimately closed down due to the neglect of placing an emphasis on rapid change.

The world and humankind have also become more conscious regarding good health care after the global COVID-19 pandemic effects not just economies and industries, as previously mentioned. People have started to grasp to a greater degree the importance of looking after one's health and how the pharmaceutical industry can contribute to their livelihood through the array of products it provides for a healthier lifestyle. This shift of mindset has led to people placing more emphasis on a well-balanced lifestyle and complementing this with pharmaceutical products (both prescription and non-prescription), leading to the extraordinary growth being experienced by pharmaceutical organisations over the last three years. Directly or indirectly, it has brought change to this industry and the healthcare sector of the global economy. Through having the ability to adapt fast the industry has seen expansion of continuous improvements and advances within their product line offerings to the consumer market both on the prescription and non-prescription product fields.

An acknowledgement is to be made of the manner in which change has been adopted by the pharmaceutical industry and its leadership; leaders in pharmaceutical organisations seemed naturally obstructive when faced with fast-paced changes, however continued inventing different ways to combat the unknown at that point in time. The pharmaceutical industry primarily being focused on research, development, manufacturing, and distribution of medication (Mikulic, 2021), has within the reporting period of 2020 generated global revenue of 1.27 trillion U.S. Dollars (Mikulic, 2021) while South Africa achieved an equivalent of 3 billion U.S. Dollars in revenue (Parrish, 2020). The top pharmaceutical revenue generating organisations generated a total of 81.3 billion U.S. Dollars in revenue, which was largely attributed to their record-breaking sales of their respective variant composition of vaccines to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (Mikulic, 2022). As important as this question of growth is, analysts and market interpreters should further investigate how organisational leaders deal with added responsibilities and how they managed to guide their organisational human resources in reaching their organisational vision, mission, and goals. Undoubtedly the ability of any leadership team to steer their respective organisation to greater heights comes with added challenges. Organisational success is involved in understanding the composition of the leadership team and the effect that this has on the actual strength and success of the organisation.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem statement describes the context of a study and assist in identifying the direction that the research study is going to undertake (Maxwell, 2013). By investigating the topic, the researcher wished to explore if global studies conducted by researchers in other sectors hold true within an SME pharmaceutical environment.

It has further been observed by Mikulic (2022) that within the top performing pharmaceutical organisations revenue class of 2021, the global senior leadership team consist of only 31% women representatives. In 2020 the South African subsidiary, of the top performing pharmaceutical organisation according to Mikulic (2022) review class of 2021, won the Equal Representation and Participation Category at the Gender Mainstreaming Awards (<https://www.pfizer.com/about>

[/people/executives](#)). The organisation had also been elected as the second finalist in the Women in Executive Committees in Multinationals category and was elected as the joint third finalist in the Investing in Young Women category (<https://www.pfizer.co.za/About>). The other top performing pharmaceutical organisations within review class of 2021 analysis has a leadership team within a ranging representation of 27% to 36% of women (Mikulic, 2022).

Globally the pharmaceutical industry forms part of the healthcare sector, and on the African continent alone data from 2021 indicates that figures for women in leadership on a management level ranged about 31%, senior management about 29% and executives at about 23% (Seedat, 2021). It could therefore be argued that the higher up the corporate ladder leadership positions go, the smaller the representation of women there are. In the South African workforce, data results from the *Quarterly Labour Force Survey* for the second quarter of 2021 concluded that the labour market is more favourable to men in comparison to women. Employed women within the South African labour market find that prospects of being appointed to decision-making positions remain challenging. As within the second quarter of 2021 managerial positions were occupied by 66,9% men and 33,1% of women (STATS SA Report, 2021). These percentages globally, in the African continent and locally within South Africa mentioned is no different to the situation in South African pharmaceutical industry female leadership composition. It is evident from these percentages that women in South Africa and across the world are still facing challenges where they occupy leadership positions.

Substantial efforts are being made by organisations and governments in South Africa and globally to enhance female representation in leadership positions; is what being conducted addressing the challenges women are encountering in leadership positions and career growth towards leadership roles. When contemplating these figures mentioned for conglomerate pharmaceutical organisations' composition of women in leadership positions and the South African statistics, various questions come to mind.

Question such as:

- a) Are there any specific challenges encountered by women once they reach a leadership position?
- b) Are these challenges related to specific barriers?
- c) Are the challenges due to specific barriers the reason why women are underrepresented in leadership teams?
- d) Is there enough being done for women in leadership to assist them in their personal growth to enable them to be promoted vertically?

The main question that can be put forth is that of whether these questions have an implication for women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation in the South African economy. With SME organisations, being remarkably smaller than their conglomerate counterparts in size, it is therefore understandable that they (SME) would have different organisational structures, cultures and working environments. Against this background the researcher sought to examine challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME organisation of the pharmaceutical industry and further investigate the barriers contributing to the challenges faced by such women. By identifying the challenges that are being encountered by women in leadership and the barriers leading to the challenges, management of the SME organisation may be in a position to realign their personnel objectives and parameters to provide more specific career guidance and support programmes. In doing so management will see their female leaders being better equipped to handle and overcome challenges that they may encounter in their careers and to work more effectively within the organisation. This also applies to the empowerment and upskilling of junior female staff members early in their careers. This in turn should lead to further staff and organisational growth.

1.3 Research Questions

The overarching focus for this research study was to identify and examine challenges encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation. The first research question was formulated to be:

- 1) What are the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in an SME pharmaceutical organisation?

The second question was:

- 2) Are there specific barriers that contribute to the challenges being encountered by women in leadership within an SME pharmaceutical organisation?

1.4 Research Objectives

Research objectives derived from the study's research question, form more investigative questions to be answered within the research study report (Blumberg et al., 2014: 68).

The primary aim of this research study was to identify and examine the challenges that are being encountered by women in leadership positions in an SME organisation that operates within the pharmaceutical industry of the South African economy. It further set out to determine whether the challenges that are being encountered by women in leadership were due to specific barriers and whether there are any similarities between the challenges and barriers that women in leadership positions within the SME face.

To answer the research questions, the following objectives addressed and guided the research study:

- 1) To identify challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.
- 2) To identify the specific barriers that are the reasons for women in leadership positions experiencing challenges within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

1.5 Abbreviated Literature Review

Leadership is defined by Davis and Newstrom (1989) as the process by which individuals are encouraged and helped to work enthusiastically towards objectives; leadership is a human factor that assists an individual or a group in identifying where

they are heading, and which motivates them towards their goals. Mekonnen (2019) provides us with the illustration that leadership is like being a conductor of an orchestra, that without any leadership, an organisation would be a mere gathering of people and machinery just as an orchestra without a conductor there would be only musicians and instruments. What Mekonnen (2019) wants to make clear to us through this illustration is that an orchestra, just as an organisation, requires leadership to develop their precious assets or talents to their fullest capacity.

In literature the term leadership is defined in a variety of ways as it is a broad term. Focussing more specifically on female leadership, it can be defined as women being able to occupy leadership positions. Others may define it from a feminist point of view of being a matter of equality and the right to the same opportunities as men (Mekonnen, 2019: 2-3). However, women find themselves encountering many obstacles and/or difficulties in their daily routines due to personal factors, organisational culture, and socio-economic factors, stemming from societal perceptions. With these obstacles and/or difficulties mentioned, women are not completely excluded from leadership positions but do hold a minimal portion of key leadership positions within the labour market across all industries (Kalekye et al., 2020: 84; Makhubela, 2021: 7). Even with women occupying key leadership positions, they do not always fully participate in decision and policy making processes in accordance with their leadership role, duty, and responsibility due to obstacles and/or difficulties being encountered. This lack of involvement in turn leads to the disempowerment of women (Pharoah, 1999: 51; Kalekye et al., 2020: 85; Makhubela, 2021:7). Growth, skills, expertise, and empowerment comes through one's engagement with others (colleagues, subordinates, mentors) in the industry and organisation. However, is this evident within an SME pharmaceutical organisation as well, and not just within larger organisations.

The following section will make mention of certain barriers that women in leadership in an SME organisation may be faced with that can result in challenges being encountered.

1.5.1 Barriers for Women in Leadership

According to Kulkarni and Mishra (2021), in developed countries around the world throughout different organisations the percentage of women occupying leadership positions is higher, but within both developed and developing countries women face the same barriers during their careers. The gender gap is prominent, the glass ceiling is still in existence, organisational processes are stringent, micromanagement of staff members by narcissistic bosses occur, females work against each other; and women are seen as not being assertive enough, are some of the barriers that may be experienced by women in leadership positions. However, character traits such as high emotional intelligence, empathy, democratic leadership style, sincerity, and the ability to make decisions under critical circumstances are strengths that women bring to leadership positions, beneficial to any organisation (Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021).

1.5.1.1 Stereotyping

The achievements of women leaders are measured by their leadership styles and outcomes, whereas the achievements of their male counterpart leaders are measured by organisational competitiveness, control or hold over the organisation. Hyde (2005) argued that an effect of gender disparity is that women leaders experience organisational biases at the workplace. The gender composition at the workplace could impact one's gender identity and the respective gender stereotype (Chen & Houser, 2019). In the presence of a leadership team consisting of all women members with a women leader, gender identity is not prominent, since both the leader and the members belong to the same gender, whereas if the group is mixed with a woman leader, she may experience the influence of gender stereotyping attitudes in decision-making. Gender stereotyping is still in existence throughout a variety of spheres within females live, so the research study attempted to identify if it is as true to women leaders within the SME environment and what might be the challenges they encounter.

1.5.1.2 Glass Ceiling

The focus of the glass ceiling is of organisational practices and interpersonal biases being the preventive reason of women's career progression, barriers such as lack of policies and promotional discrimination constitutes the glass ceiling effect for women

in leadership (Ganguly et al., 2017: 46; Kisi, 2019: 62). Gupta (2018) makes reference to barriers encountered by women in leadership positions under the glass ceiling concept being attributed to that of a discriminatory working environment, individual perceptions and social factors. Furthermore, from an organisational sphere women can encounter a lack of gender inclusive policies, absence of career planning, and unsupportive organisational and management culture (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016: 314; Kisi, 2019: 62). This research study attempted to establish whether the glass ceiling is prominent within the SME environment.

1.5.1.3 Mentoring and Training

Mentoring and training are managerial interventions that help reduce discriminatory behaviour towards women leaders and their underrepresentation and work quality in the working environment. Mentoring and training programmes help understand and enhance individual strengths and strategies required to succeed without compromising the organisational values, thus help shaping women towards their desired leadership career goals (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007). These learning and development programmes can help women leaders to acquire new skills, knowledge, and expertise, find a work-life balance, and assist in overcoming challenges that they may face. Career development support at the workplace through mentoring and training assists women leaders to make career advancements (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Progress in women leaders' careers is also enabled by actively fostering professional relationships and networks to facilitate career and leadership development, taking up relevant opportunities and making the best choices (Mate et al., 2019: 865). The research study attempted to identify whether the support structure such as mentor and training programmes are available to women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation. Also investigated where the possible challenges are encountered by women in leadership if too much or little appropriate training is provided and no suitable mentor can be identified.

1.5.1.4 Perception of Women in Leadership

There is a perception that women leaders face prejudice due to gender differences at organisational level (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). If women tend to be more assertive or oppressive in leadership roles, they face organisational bias due to stereotyping.

However, less incongruity is found if women prefer more democratic or charismatic leadership approaches, as these are typically known as feminine characteristics (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). If women in leadership positions are self-promoting, aggressive and commanding in nature, they will be seen as deviating from their gendered role and will get only a few positive reactions in the organisation. To the extent that women fulfil their leadership role in a particularly dominant, assertive, directive or self-promoting style, they represent greater deviation from the recognised norms of female gender roles and would receive fewer positive reactions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

According to Werhane (2019: 198-199) women mostly find that to be effective within their position they had to be self-assured at all times of their knowledge base and their vision or objectives. Women should have the character trait of being adaptable as they are to encourage innovation, could transform a team, empower and inspire others, not being afraid of being superseded and encourage new leadership styles and methods. Individuals within leadership positions are faced with many obstacles and decision-making dilemmas daily. The research study attempted to identify and further investigate what the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions are as a result of the perception of females in leadership. In addition, the research study tested whether challenges encountered by women in leadership positions are due to specific barriers.

1.6 Research Methodology

Research methodology allow a researcher the platform to explain their reasoning for undertaking a specific research approach. To be able to address the research problem undertaken a researcher has to decide upon a quantitative or qualitative method. Quantitative research methods rely on measurable information such as numerical numbers and figures, whilst the qualitative research methods rely on non-quantifiable information such as words, sentences, and narratives (Blumberg et al., 2014: 148).

This research was concerned with the lived experiences of the participants in the study. The participants' experience of what their challenges, failures, battles, and

influences they encounter or have encountered within their leadership positions as females in an SME pharmaceutical organisation. Therefore, a quantitative approach was found to not be suitable for this study and a qualitative approach was undertaken, gathering information through written and spoken word to complete the analysis on data collected. The qualitative approach also provided a platform for engagement with participants thus gaining a better understanding into their lived experiences.

1.6.1 Qualitative Research Approach

According to Creswell (2013) a qualitative research approach is a method that is employed to establish the meaning of a certain social phenomenon from the views of the participants. Qualitative research involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical tools. These tools include case studies, personal experiences, introspections, life stories, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts and productions, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in participants' lives. Furthermore, Leedy and Ormrod (2015: 269) define qualitative research as incorporating a number of methods that are in some respect quite different from one another. Accordingly, qualitative researchers display a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, always striving to better understand the subject matter at hand. These authors are in alignment with their statements and/or ideals on qualitative approach.

To have been able to address the research problem, questions and objectives of this research study, the researcher followed a qualitative research approach.

1.6.2 Population and Sample Framework

Defined by Blumberg et al. (2014: 174 and 188) a population of the research is the total collection of elements which researchers wish to make some inferences about, can be divided into groups of elements and selection maybe randomly done.

The identified area of focus is an SME organisation that has its head office situated within the Lonehill suburb in the Gauteng province in South Africa. It is a

pharmaceutical organisation specialising in the prevention and management of lifestyle related diseases, such as abnormal cholesterol, insulin resistance, stress, and inflammatory pain due to unhealthy lifestyle choice, to name a few. The organisation was the chosen population area from which the sample size was drawn from. As the organisation is a growing Small and Medium Sized Enterprise it has a work force of 23 full time staff members. The composition of the work force can be depicted as follow:

TABLE 1.1 The composition of the present work force

Staff	Quantity	Percentage	
Male	7	30%	
Female	16	70%	
Total	23	100%	

Years worked at organisation	Quantity	Percentage	Staff Level Grading
0 to 5 Years	4	17%	Junior Level Staff
5 to 10 Years	7	31%	Mid-Level Staff
>10 Years	12	52%	Senior Level Staff
Total	23	100%	
Management Staff	9	39%	Mid-Level & Senior Level Staff

Qualitative research involves a sample selection for two reasons:

- 1) Relevant practical and resource-based issues,
- 2) Related to the importance of the focus question (Mason, 2018: 54-55).

Researchers in the social science will, at some stage in their research, be sampling people, or conceptualising people as their sampling units or sampling categories (Mason, 2018: 62). This is based on the notion that people are distinguishable, unitary, discrete and whole categories or, in other words, we know what they are, and we can tell them apart (Mason, 2018: 62).

As the organisation’s workforce can be divided into levels of seniority and gender, for the sample size only the female mid-level to senior level staff members, present and past were selected for this research study. The organisation’s current work force can be depicted as follow:

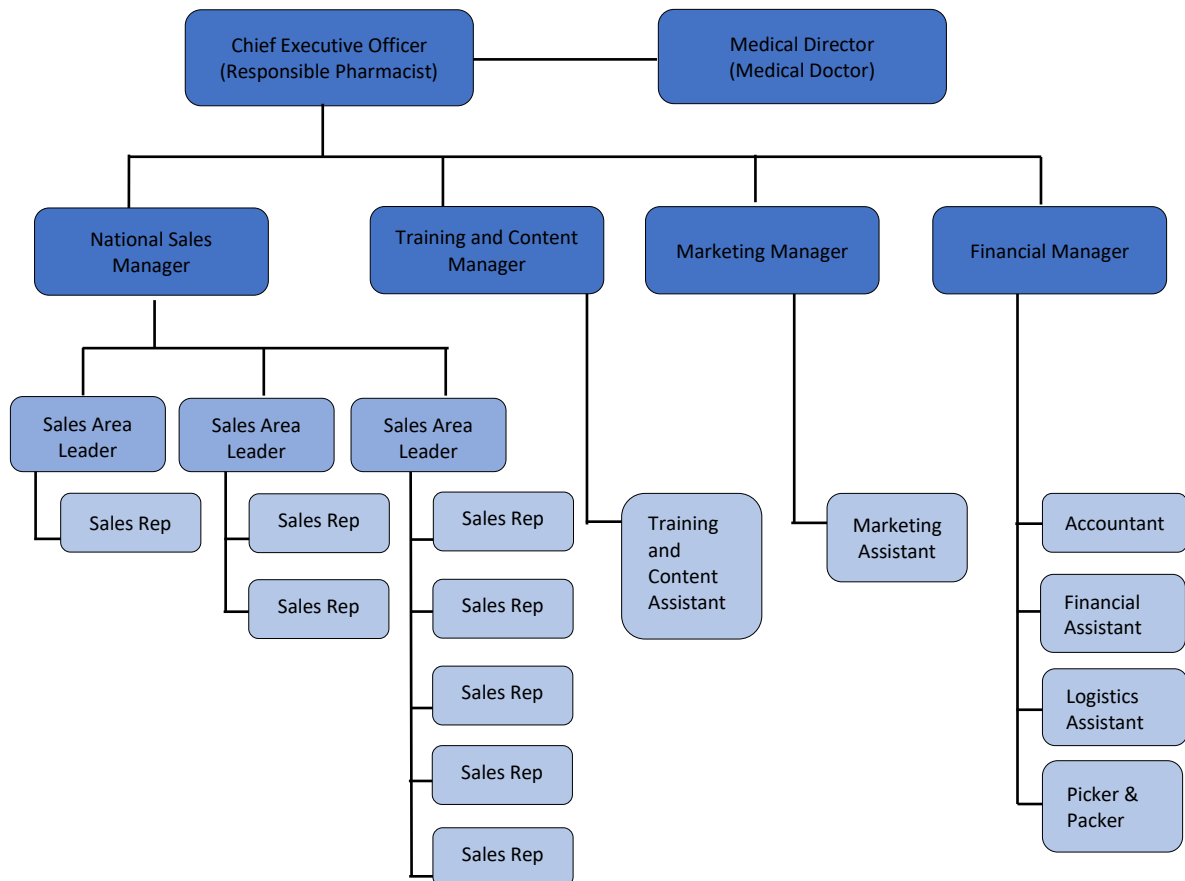


FIGURE 1.1 The organisational organogram

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was applied to the sample selection within the identified population. The sample size of 13 participants was identified to partake in the research study.

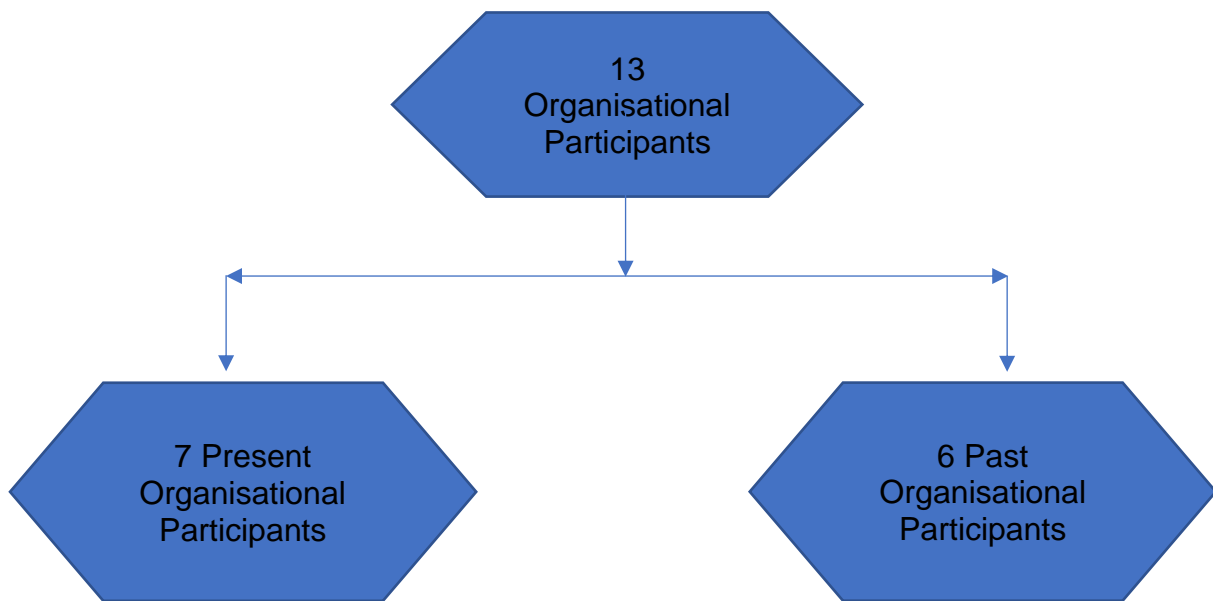


FIGURE 1.2 The ideally envisaged composition of the participants

Six past organisational female participants were selected from the population area to make up the sample size. Reasoning behind the selection of these past employees was to determine the contributing reasons why they have left their leadership positions within the organisation. Also, to analyse their challenges encountered with that of the present leadership to establish if the working environment in the organisation has changed at all for women, for worse or for better. The seven present organisational participants have been selected as they are female participants and form the leadership team of the organisation presently. The aim of the research study was to obtain information from the lived experiences of women within leadership positions. The composition of the sample can be depicted as follows:

TABLE 1.2 The composition of the sample

	Quantity	Percentage	Working Experience in Organisation
Present Female Organisational Participants	7	54%	
Past Female Organisational Participants	6	46%	
Total	13	100%	
Chief Executive Officer			>10 Years
National Sales Manager			>10 Years
Sales Area Leader 1			>10 Years
Sales Area Leader 2			>10 Years
Sales Area Leader 3			>10 Years
Training and Content Leader			>10 Years
Marketing Manager			>10 Years
Past Leadership Personnel			5 to 10 Years and >10 Years

1.6.3 Data Collection Method

The data collection activity of a research project is about asking the questions of who, what, when, how, and where all to obtain answers (Blumberg et al., 2014: 255). The primary method of collecting data for a qualitative research study is that of either qualitative interview, focus group discussions or participant observation.

This research has made use of a combination of semi-structured and open-ended questions within the study. Semi-structured interviews usually start with specific questions for all participants, questionnaire type questions, but allow the interviewee to follow their own thoughts later, whereas structured interviews mostly start with the participant's narrative and may not have any specific question or topic list to be covered (Blumberg et al., 2014: 246).

1.6.3.1 Recruitment

Participants have been selected based on their gender (female) and staff level grading (mid-level and senior level). The recruitment of the identified participants to undertake

in the research study had followed the process of obtaining the participants contact details (personal or organisational) from the organisational proxy. On obtaining the contact details the researcher ensured that it was stored in a safe secured environment to protect the information of each participant and organisation. The identified participants were contacted through email correspondence which outlined the research study aim, objectives and requesting from them to participate voluntarily in the research study. The researcher had provided the participants with a certain time to respond on the research study participation requests and followed up on all non-responses through email correspondence and telephonically.

1.6.3.2 Data Collection

The research study had followed the form of 1) the compilation of existing literature and 2) conducting face-to-face interviews on a virtual platform or in person depending on availability of the participant's preference and location. Appointments, virtually or in person, was set up with participants at a time and venue most suitable to their schedules. Data were collected on interview questionnaire sheets and voice/audio recordings during the engagement sessions.

1.6.3.3 Fieldwork Time

On receipt of an Ethical Clearance Certificate from UNISA's Ethical Clearance Committee fieldwork regarding; 1) recruitment, 2) receiving signed confirmation of consent to participate in the research study from participants, 3) setting up interview dates and times, 4) conducting interviews and 5) the analysis of information was scheduled to take between 1.5 and 2 months. The interview discussion questions, whether conducted virtually or in person, took between 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

1.6.3.4 Interview Process

Interviews with participants were conducted by the researcher and followed a set of semi-structured and open-ended questions. During the interview sessions answers provided by the participants on the questions were noted down on a questionnaire answer sheet by the researcher. An answer sheet was filled in for each participant.

Before each interview session commenced the researcher, had obtain permission from the participant to record the engagement in voice/audio format in order for the researcher to engage and probe more effectively with the participant during the session. Transcribing of information obtained from participants was conducted by the researcher after each interview.

1.6.3.5 The Discussion Guide

The discussion guide was structured in the following sections:

1) Section A: Demographical Information

This section of the interview required the participants to provide background information about themselves. It included age, gender, qualification, job title and work experience years.

2) Section B: Challenges of women in leadership information

This section of the interview required the participants to provide information regarding their experiences and challenges which they encounter working within the SME organisation.

3) Section C: Perceptions of women in leadership information

This section of the interview required the participants to provide information with how according to their experiences and viewpoints, they are being perceived and received within the SME organisation.

4) Section D: Factors affecting women in leadership

This section of the interview required the participants to provide information about their views on the contributing factors to the challenges being encountered by them.

The interview set of target semi-structured questions have been attached as Annexure 1 to this document.

1.6.4 Data Analysis Methods, Techniques and Instruments

After each interview the researcher reviewed the questionnaire answer sheet and listened to the voice/audio recording. By doing this the researcher made notes of interesting points and thoughts of the participants.

1.6.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

The identified chosen method to analyse the qualitative data have been that of non-statistical thematic analysis to present the research findings.

1.6.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an appropriate principle for guaranteeing that a qualitative approach evaluates what it is supposed to evaluate. It is thus crucial for research to evaluate its worth. It may be ensured through the following:

A) Credibility

It is the establishment that the research findings are credible from the participants' point of view. This has been obtained through using the most well-known and established methods, comparing finding of primary data collected to that of the theoretical informational data. A prior pilot study was expected to be conducted with three participants to test the flow of the research instrument and questions that may be found to be ambiguous or confusing. A further aim was to test the duration of the interview to refine further while remaining within the agreed time.

B) Dependability

The more things are analysed the more dependable they become. This was achieved through conducting reviews of primary data collect to assist in highlighting categories and topics that might have been overlooked.

C) Transferability

It denotes the extent to which the research study results can be hypothesised and applied in other contexts. This was achieved through ensuring that the findings can be applied to other related studies in similar environments and

areas, ensuring that the documented findings are accurately analysed for ease of application in similar studies, and a detailed description of the data collection is provided.

D) Confirmability

It is the extent of objectivity in displaying that the finding of the research study is not influenced by the researcher but rather by the participants. This is achieved through explaining how bias has been removed, and no data collected was manipulated or modified.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics within all research discipline fields must form the central focal point on which planning, designing, execution and reporting activities are conducted on, which are reliant on the interactions with human beings. The aim of ethics in research is there to ensure that no individual is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from any research activities in which they take part in (Blumberg et al., 2014: 28).

1.7.1 Informed Consent

The researcher obtained a formal signed Ethical Clearance Certificate consent form from UNISA's Ethical Clearance Committee and the organisation under review had given written consent for research to be conducted at their organisation. Field work did not commence before these two stakeholders had given their approvals.

Further to this, signed informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to conducting the face-to-face interviews. All consent forms were also accompanied by a confidentiality clause, to protect the population sample and selected participants of managerial staff's personal information and responses.

1.7.2 Protection from Harm

Research is to be designed in a manner that promotes information to be gathered from participants that does not lead to any physical harm, discomfort, pain, embarrassment, or the loss of privacy to the participants in any way (Blumberg et al., 2014). All

participants had a right of choice to participate or not in the research study on their free will.

Participants were not subjected to any form of physical, emotional, or mental discomfort or harm. All information that was gathered through the participants, analysis concluded, and recommendations made in this integrated management research report project will only be made available to the organisation, upon formal request, and the academic institution of registration, UNISA.

1.7.3 Right to Privacy

All information obtained from participants and conclusion drawn on this research study will be kept confidential and anonymous. This has been achieved by their identities being masked by referring to them for example as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. The integrated management research report and the conclusions drawn will be made available to the educational institution, UNISA, and the organisation's executive proxy who provided written approval on request.

All individuals have the right to privacy, and it must be respected by researchers at all times, as it is not only important for the retainment of validity but also the protection of participants (Blumberg et al., 2014: 32-34). Right to privacy on information obtained from participants will be kept confidential and personal information and responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential.

1.8 Chapters Outlined

The chapters in this research study will be laid out as follow:

Chapter 1: This chapter started the research journey with the intention of providing a brief introduction into the research study in order to illustrate the research study scope and significance. The chapter then further identified and discussed the research statement, questions, and objectives. An explanation of the purpose of the literature review; research method and approach undertaken was provided. Lastly, concluding with ethical consideration.

Chapter 2: This chapter provides an analysis of literature in the area, essentially providing an overview of all the matters relating to the research study. This provided a theoretical and conceptual framework for the direction the analysis had followed.

Chapter 3: This chapter presents the research design, research approach, sampling, data gathering, analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations that the research study undertook. All having been conducted in accordance with the research statement, questions, and objectives.

Chapter 4: This chapter provided the detailed findings from participants through data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 5: This chapter provided conclusions and recommendations for future research that can be undertaken. The chapter also allowed for a reflection on whether the research questions and objectives have been realised.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter deliberated the research philosophy and methods to be adopted in the research study. The research objectives prompted a qualitative and exploratory approach. This chapter further briefly discussed the data collection, analysis and presentation of information. The next chapter will present a more in-depth literature review.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Existing Literature Review Introduction

This chapter explores and analyses selected theoretical data that has relevant influences on the topic. Further to the analyses of data this chapter will attempt to identify and provide existing literature information that is available on an array of matters concerning the research topic, problem statement, questions, and objectives. The researcher used information drawn from experts that have previously expressed their thoughts, ideas, and theories on related fields of the specific research topic study area. This chapter reviews the prevalent challenges that has been encountered by women who have access to and are placed in leadership positions. Tracking the path of established barriers that might still be in existence restricting women in leadership positions, the researcher will explore connected areas. These areas include, but are not limited to matters of stereotype discrimination, the glass ceiling effect (the limited growth further than senior management level), mentoring, training, and perceptions. These barriers mentioned might be the causes for the various challenges being encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME organisation.

2.2 Definitions and Conceptualisation

2.2.1 Leadership

From the outset it is important to introduce what the term “leadership” means. It is often not fully understood or known to individuals. It is often perceived by individuals in society that leadership can only be associated with a working environment, or a designation given. This is not the case and leadership have a much broader dimension than only one understanding. Views on leadership are found to be mostly centred on the roles of managers, supervisors, and executives as being leaders and the impacting power they possess to influence others (Collinson, 2011; Collinson et al., 2018; Schweiger et al., 2020).

The term leadership has been studied and investigated across different spheres of the academia and physiological spheres. Few of the research studies conducted on the

area of leadership describes the topic as an evolving nature, so the area of leadership has to its various minutiae and dimensions (Northouse, 2019; Sims et al., 2021). It is for these reasons that the concept of leadership is very often misunderstood, giving way to misconceptions within individual thoughts and societal ideals. Further to this one definition, studies into leadership's multiple facets have indicated how leadership encompasses the ability to have an immense power and impact on individuals' thoughts, societal ideals and organisations due to its connectedness of backgrounds and experiences (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Randolph-Seng et al., 2016; Chin et al., 2018; Sims et al., 2021).

To be considered a true leader, an individual must make the decision to act as a leader, to lead and make insights into others' decision making and performance (Chemers et al., 2000; Quigley, 2013; Sims et al., 2021). In the working environment leadership is often more than not concerned with one's ability to be able to motivate employees and colleagues to strive to achieve both organisational goals and their personal career goals (Chemers et al., 2000; Sims et al., 2021). In the modern era, even within the instances whereby women are making the cognitive decision to pursue a role of leadership, literature, and statistical figures reveal that they are still being underrepresented. This is due to the many challenges having been experienced by women compared to that of their male counterparts.

As underrepresentation of women finding themselves employed within top positions in organisations across all industries is a continuing problem. Women in leadership in particular have continuously been a major topic of discussion, due to the continuous underrepresentation of women in top positions of organisations across industries (Soklaridis & López, 2014; Mythili, 2019; Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021). This underrepresentation of woman in leadership positions within the working environment can be due to a lack in leadership preparation programmes (such as mentoring and training), discouragement of women taking up leadership roles (through stereotyping and glass ceiling), stemming from the negative perception of women as having the ability to be successful in leadership roles. Barriers such as the above-mentioned, may lead to challenges being encountered by women and cause a ripple effect on their

underrepresentation in leadership roles, an area of discussion which the research study wishes to explore. Current available literature on leadership provides a minimum of evidence on how certain behaviours endorsed by individuals, organisations and societies impacts women's involvement in various leadership contexts.

2.2.2 Stereotypes

A barrier that can be encountered by woman can be that of stereotyping, a term that can be explained as a fixed, overgeneralised belief about a particular group or class of people, which can affect the manner in which people tend to interpret and remember information and through this respond act in a particular manner towards that group or class of people (Ellemers, 2018; Agut et al., 2021). Stereotyping has a direct influence on how an individual perceives another; these perceptive ideals results in a variety of barriers that we may find in society and the working environment specifically.

Societal perception of males find that they are more interested in things (subject matters), in relation to females being interested in individual connections, which flows through to the working environment. Therefore, from these flows the discernment that women are more suitable for development and supportive roles as they have the ability of fulfilling professional links with colleagues (links of self-awareness, empathy, effective listening), as opposed to strategic and technical roles. It is therefore evident that gender and gender ability is still a common barrier being faced by women and a challenge that they may encounter when voicing their strategic and technical ideals, as opposed to their rational intelligence (Pretorius et al., 2015; Zikode, 2020). Through history women have been trained to be inferior in the concept of leadership, whereas men were brought up to be self-assured and proficient, henceforth men continue to dominate leadership positions (Philliah, 2016); there might still be discrimination and prejudice that is in existence towards women with respect to their ability to lead and manage. These views on how women should act and interact might even be more evident by women within smaller organisation than within larger conglomerates, due to the smaller tight knit culture and working environment.

Through the research topic the researcher has further investigated these views and influences on how women, specifically women in leadership positions are perceived in the SME working environment, by their colleagues and subordinates.

2.2.3 Glass Ceiling

The term “glass ceiling” can be defined as the instances whereby women have progressed to a leadership position and at a point find themselves at a stage in their respective careers or organisational hierarchy past which they are unable to advance. These growth desires may be to that of a more senior level, gaining more knowledge or expertise, resulting in a vertical or horizontal obstacle in their career growth (Hennessey & Carroll, 2014; Islam & Jantan, 2017; Kisi, 2019). The glass ceiling barrier can hinder women’s mindset and goal determination within their own careers, these psychological effects on the respective individual’s mindset might lead to the individual not having the determination to pursue opportunities that came their way. In the SME environment, growth both vertical and horizontal can be hindered by the size of the respective organisation; individuals can find themselves progressing quickly to a management position but after a while find themselves stagnating with little opportunity to move. This limited career expansion can be due to no further promotional growth level or a lack of further training, or no mentoring being provided. The study has further attempted to identify if there exists a challenge for women in the study experiencing a career block. The impact of career perception is then having to decide to take a step back within their careers if choosing to move to bigger conglomerates within the same industry or different industries outside to their knowledge base for growth aspirations or opportunities.

2.2.4 Mentoring and Training

Mentoring can be described as a process whereby one individual (with more experience, knowledge, and expertise) provides support to another individual (with less experience, knowledge, and expertise) on their professional and personal development. This interaction between one individual willing to provide guidance to another can shape the leadership development of an individual. Whereas training is the process by which tools and educational information is transferred to develop an individual’s knowledge base and skills in a specific area, competitive and successful

within the working environment. Du Plessis and Barkhuizen (2015) state that according to their studies, lack of training, poor talent management and a lack of mentorship are some of the most prominent career barriers for women. When one has a good mentor that guides and supports you on your career path it has been proved to have a major impact on achieving one's career goals. Finding the correct mentor in one's working arena can be a challenge, especially for women, as they are hesitant in selecting a mentor due to the possibility of the mentor having stereotypical tendencies (Zikode, 2020; Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021). Training programmes that are conducted with the focus on leadership development has been defined by Santos et al. (2015: 471) as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. Effective training and mentoring also contributes to the success of a new leader introduced to a leadership role or promoted to a more senior role. The SME environment seldom has a sizable capital outlay to implement large scale training and development programmes to enhance employees' knowledge base, skills, and expertise. Hence, employees are often left to enhance their own abilities with their own time and capital. This more than often results in situations where it is found to be difficult for employees to find suitable mentors within their organisation, outside of the organisation these individuals tend to search for mentorship from strong characters not operating in their professional sphere or industry but rather in a specific field of study which they are accustomed to.

2.2.5 Perceptions

Women in leadership can be found within situations whereby they attempt to become what they think others want them to be, having accepted the impact that societal norms and paradigms have on their work quality, performance, and behaviour (Vronman and Danko, 2020). Vronman and Danko (2020) mention that women commonly aspire to become what they are perceived to be by others and between them seeking to achieve ideal worker status and enacting a style somewhere between the stereotypical connotations of agentic and communal behaviours, in consequence women leaders expend a great deal of emotional labour to find the perfect balance (Vronman and Danko, 2020: 860).

2.3 Theoretical Framework Underpinning the Study

2.3.1 Role Congruity Theory

Where an individual's character is recognised with that of a group's social role, the role congruity theory has provided us, amongst other things, with two leading forms of prejudice towards women in leadership (Eagly and Karau, 2002: 573):

“(a) perceiving women less favourably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leader role less favourably when it is enacted by a woman.”

The consequences that have been proven by Eagly and Karau (2002), and various other authors and academics after them, is that the attitudes towards women in leadership are less favourable and results in women finding it more difficult than their male counterparts to obtain a leadership position ((Eagly and Karau, 2002). This is seen to be evident still as statistics show that women are still being underrepresented within various leadership level roles, despite various organisational and governmental attempts to promote awareness and encouragement of women in leadership. The role congruity theory probes further and informs us that when there exists a situation of heightened perception it is less advantageous for women to pursue leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Goodwin et al., 2020). Here again, mention is made to *perception* being the cause of barriers faced by women within the working environment. Bigger conglomerates have dedicated policies in place to minimise barriers for their female employees and assist them with their career and personal growth relative to SMEs.

Women within leadership continue to gain traction in research within a variety of disciplines. This can be attributable to the contributions made by women in the working environment or even to the organisation they are working for that strives for equal opportunity in leadership positions (Bullough and de Luque, 2015). In an organisational environment that promotes equal opportunity for both males and females to attain leadership positions, the leadership team may place high value on the mentoring of women into leaders, thus decreasing the gender stereotyping on

leadership roles reducing the hindrance on development (Chin and Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Bullough and de Luque, 2015). This said, there remains a gap that needs to be closed on the awareness of varieties of barriers, from structural to cultural and societal, that women in leadership roles face daily within their leadership roles or when working towards reaching a more senior leadership role. As to how woman leaders are being perceived in terms of their leadership efficacy and style are influential factors in their working experiences, so gaining an understanding of the influential factors will allow for a better clarification of their engagements within the working environment (Ely et al., 2011; Sims et al., 2021).

2.3.2 Social Paradigms

Societal paradigms such as gender, race and class are historical conversational-based boundaries that have through the centuries led to how power and privileges within societies are distributed and assigned (Anthias, 2012: 5). Social categorisation and organisation employ the structure of gender and race, which profoundly impact individuals social, political, and economic existence (Anthias, 2012: 10-12).

Through the generations within the working environment leadership positions have mostly been perceived as a male province (Eagly & Karau, 2002: 573-576; Makhubela, 2021: 2-3). Furthermore, the male-controlled beliefs of male superiority and female inferiority can be to the detriment of the meaningful participation and empowerment of women (Chan & Mbogoh, 2016; Akinola, 2018; Ojatorotu & Olaopa, 2018; Makhubela, 2021: 3). In the economic sphere attributed to work force participation many professional roles have started to shift from a predominantly male to a female workforce, in which the roles of women have been advanced in such a manner that they are starting to take over leadership roles and being offered leadership positions more frequently than in past decades (Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021). Also, women in leadership are different to male leaders as they provide a unique value addition to the team and organisation in the form of strong communication skills, empathy towards others and intermediary skills. It has been conspicuously observed in recent decades that great strides have been made by women in pursuing and obtaining leadership positions within the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. However, in the

pharmaceutical industry, opportunities for women are lagging behind or are stagnating at a certain percentage to that of their male counterparts. For women to reach a leadership position comes with its challenges.

2.4 Challenges of Women in Leadership

Theoretical frameworks point out that perception is the main starting point for challenges being experienced by women. As negative perceptions lead to negative connotations for women in leadership, such as gender stereotyping, lack of career guidance for women due to the nonexistence of training and mentoring facilitation, and a ceiling being reached within an SME organisation. The negative perception of women in leadership roles leads to historical barriers being faced by women in leadership and having to encounter an array of challenges and discouragements.

The term challenges refer to the need to participate intrinsically within one's working career, to grow and develop one's skills and progress in one's career vertically or horizontally (Mainiero and Gibson, 2017; Zikode, 2020). Organisational factors internally or externally affect women in leadership positions' experiences, as this may be stereotypical aspects, glass ceiling, lack in mentoring or training, non-support or lack of recognition of their performance, and resistance to them occupying leadership positions (OSSREA, 2008; Wirth, 2004; Mekonnen 2019; Zikode, 2020).

2.4.1 Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotyping is a barrier that emanates from societal norms, flowing from a societal perception paradigm (Tharshini et al., 2016; Zikode, 2020), which continues to plague women in leadership positions whether in large or smaller organisations. Human evolution has shaped our minds to believe that leadership roles are occupied by men and hence, not the place for woman (Sloan, 1999; Merchant, 2012; Day, 2014; Longman & Anderson, 2016; Ndebele, 2018). These historical mindsets are still present today with most leadership positions within most organisations still frequented being held by men (Ellemers, 2018: 165; Kisi, 2019: 60). These gender stereotypes from a societal point gives rise to organisational challenges being encountered by women and the barriers they face. It follows that gender stereotyping within leadership

positions continues to be in existence and may have a negative impact on women as they are viewed as not having the qualities required to be successful leaders (Elsaid & Elsaid, 2012: 1; Kisi, 2019: 60). Women in leadership are continually experiencing situations of being undermined by their male colleagues, being subjected to the false notions that they lack resilience, ability, and the expertise desired to face hard-hitting or threatening working situations (Bodalina and Mestry, 2020: 1).

Eagly and colleagues, through their meta-analysis of gender stereotypes since the mid-20th century, found that there still exists a lack of intervention for women to gain advantage within the level of leadership (Eagly et al., 2020). The ongoing discussion on factors that define leadership positions based on gender might lead to a negative impact on the outlook towards women. It is often noted within the working environment that the voice of women within a male-dominated leadership team is marginalised, and that only when women take up a composition of a third or more of the leadership team, are their voices heard (Thomson & Lloyd, 2011: 108). Individual's conceptions of leadership diverge with their stereotypes about women, resulting in prejudice and discrimination towards women leaders (Giacomin et al., 2021: 2). The existence of gender discrimination barrier may be a leading cause of undermining of women in leadership, should it be found that women in the SME organisation still experiencing this bias.

At present, challenges are still being encountered by women in leadership positions, more so for women employed in lower to middle level leadership positions (Bodalina and Mestry, 2020: 1). In instances when women leaders that find themselves within a leadership team of mixed gender, they may experience gender stereotyping influences their decision-making processes and ultimately the performance of their team, their performance, and the organisation (Chen and Houser, 2019).

Stereotypical assumptions of gender differences between men and women, also makes it difficult for women to obtain opportunities or to be placed within more senior leadership positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Ndebele,

2018). A study by Robinson et al. (2017) adds that men are four times likelier to be advanced to more senior leadership positions (Robinson et al., 2017; Bodalina and Mestry, 2020: 7). Societal perceptions are that men can commit fully to their jobs, career aspirations and perform well in the working environment that were created, whereas women can't (Gregory, 2003; Gill & Arnold, 2015; Cundiff & Vescio, 2016). It should be mentioned as well that women with high ambitions and motivation find the resources and fight to overcome challenges and professional barriers that gender stereotypes result in when they are not aware of the challenges so they neither encourage patriarchy nor succumb to status quo underpinning women's employment patterns (Mythili, 2019: 127).

2.4.2 Glass Ceiling

From a societal point of view, society has made exceptional progress through the decades to narrow the gap between men and women. Still however, within the working environment the glass ceiling effect is probably still one of the most frequent career blocks that most women in leadership position encounter. Women in leadership in an SME organisation find it difficult to progress up the organisational ladder.

Research data shows that women are often more ambitious than men at entry level, with 58% of women aspiring to reach senior management, compared to 48% of men (Piggot et al., 2017; Zikode, 2020). Women that possess high potential are found to make a slower progression up the career ladder, even when they adopt similar career management strategies to men; few women reach top senior leadership positions and are found to be trapped in low and middle levels leadership positions (Catalyst, 2018; Agut et al., 2021). Women are still repeatedly being hindered in their ability to work at their optimal level, leading to them being discouraged from applying for senior leadership positions and not growing vertically to more senior leadership positions (Moorosi, 2010; Bodalina and Mestry, 2020; Zikode, 2020).

According to Ryan and Haslam (2007), women are more likely to acknowledge the existence of the glass ceiling and the threat and unfairness that is the effect of it. In more recent study mentioned that it is to the benefit of women, as their ability to not

be blind to this fact and its effects allows them to navigate through the glass ceiling to achieve their expected goals and targets in their careers (Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021: 9). Through this determination and perseverance to overcome their challenges encountered, women in leadership are likely to progress vertically and slowly increasing their representation on boards (Kulkarni and Mishra, 2021: 9).

Women in leadership positions are represented rather less than men in upper leadership status of organisations and it may be attributable to the glass ceiling effect (Cook & Class, 2014: 91; Kisi, 2019: 60). The glass ceiling effect on women hinders their success, from attaining higher peaks and their rarity in leadership positions. Although women may start out on an ambitious career path, their later experience in the workplace either deters them from aspiring to senior leadership roles or prevents them from being advanced to an extent equal to that of their male counterparts (Grant Thornton, 2017; Zikode, 2020).

Within an SME organisation the barrier of the glass ceiling is an invisible challenge. There comes a point in the individual woman's career where they have to make the difficult choice to either remain and subsequently stagnate within a given role or make the bold move to another organisation to start afresh. These can be intimidating choices, knowing that when making a career change, they might have to take a step down in staff grading and build themselves up once again to a leadership position, and moreover a senior leadership position. These are factors that may cause emotional and mental exhaustion.

2.4.3 Mentoring

Daily women in leadership positions try to maintain a good work-life balance and work to their full potential achieving their work objectives and career aspirations. These responsibilities have to be met all while encountering various challenges and barriers. At times the individual can have the overwhelming pressure to have everything complete, without an impact on their own wellbeing. In these instances, woman should have the opportunity of reaching out to a mentor who has had similar experiences to guide them on this leadership journey.

The lack of mentorship programmes that are open to women and the effect that it causes on women's progression into and in leadership positions has been found by Kapoor and colleagues (2021: 576). As women that find themselves unable to progress within their leadership positions have often cited that one of the main reasons was due to the "absence of mentors" (Kapoor et al., 2021: 576). The cause of this can be due to the lack of mentoring programmes or even the quality of the mentoring programmes, women could undergo or be exposed to. Mentors serve as "valuable assets" to women in male dominated leadership working environments. Female leaders face greater organisational, interpersonal, and individual barriers in their advancement and thus mentoring is imperative for their growth and success throughout (Kapoor et al., 2021: 576). Despite this, it is important that women in leadership positions irrespective if they are experienced or newly appointed do identify and select a mentor/s in the absence of a mentorship programme provided by their organisation, as mentors are able to assist in boosting their careers, skills and expertise and increase their retention in the working environment (Elias, 2018). However, women in leadership in an SME organisation has additional challenges as there is often no mentors other than the CEO or owner to guide them through challenges. These women have to deal with flat organisational structures due to the size of the organisation.

It has been found by research that mentoring is not only beneficial in personal career advancement for individuals but also for organisational success (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). The capabilities of women in leadership positions can be fostered with an effective mentoring process. Organisations should seriously consider the implications that a mentorship programme may have on their female staff and leaders' development process and advancement. Consideration should be made by organisations to provide platforms of both formal and informal opportunities that is targeted at the specific developmental needs of women at their various levels of leadership in order for them to reach a new leadership level or grow to that of a senior leadership level (Mashele and Alagidede, 2022). Mentoring cannot change existing organisational structures, but rather attain the advancement of social change and development (Ragins et al., 2017). Trying to overcome the challenges that women in leadership face within their careers, mentoring and coaching are a helping agent to

women establishing their strengths and promoting a positive work outlook (Laukhuf and Malone, 2015; Bodalina and Mestry, 2020: 6).

Elaborating on the positive correlation between career advancement and mentoring, Monks (1998) concluded that one could learn the political skills of organisational life more rapidly with a mentor. In learning this, women will be able to take part in the political and more strategic components they may progress vertically in their careers. The absence of mentoring relationships affects the performance appraisals and networking opportunities of women. However, within the presence of a supportive and active mentor relationship the probability of being appointed into critical roles and being assigned important work becomes higher (Ferry, 2013; Jeon et al., 2018). As within the presence of a good effective structural mentorship programme it has been noted that female mindsets are impacted positively (Appie et al., 2020). Their attitudes and ambition drive increase in terms of their believing they have the abilities to reach a leadership position and grow vertically further into more senior leadership roles. It can then further be observed that women's representation in leadership roles and their further growth in leadership positions increases, overcoming their challenges and barriers. As through the mentorship relationship they develop the required political organisational skills to navigate through barriers, know how to manage and integrate their personal and professional abilities, knowledge, and expertise in their disciplines (Stuckey et al., 2019).

Mentoring programmes are enablers that have the ability to help women to maintain a good work-life balance and still grow their knowledge base and expertise to cultivate them into leadership positions or more senior leadership positions. Women in leadership are subjected to a false notion of their not being resilient or having a lack of experience to handle tough situations when these may arise (Chisholm, 2001; Mathipa and Tsoka, 2001; Bodalina and Mestry, 2020). A lack in mentorship has been named as a significant barrier, and mentors do not only provide support professionally and personally that guide individuals into their career and work life balance, but can, more generally, also act as role models to encourage women to pursue careers in challenging fields (Shi et al., 2021: 210-211).

2.4.4 Training

In the absence of certain required knowledge and skills required for an individual or a group to effectively perform a task or duty, organisations will always turn to training programmes to overcome challenges or barriers in order to instil the missing information in their staff members (Dipboye, 2018). Several studies have revealed that women in full-time employment tend to receive less training and have fewer opportunities for professional development in organisations compared to men, owing in part, to the idea that women do not need training as they perform less skilled tasks (such as analytical, technical, and strategic skills) for which training is unnecessary (Munjuri, 2011; Kirai & Mukulu, 2012; Zikode, 2020). Santos et al. (2015) found that when a leader is trained in functional leadership skills, it improves the effectiveness of the team members they are leading. Talent management and leadership development programmes are becoming a point of necessity to organisations, to replace traditional patterns and create new era leaders (Satiani et al., 2014). It should form part of any organisation's plan, as it allows the organisation to remain competitive, innovative, and adaptable to the changing needs and environment, but for this to be effective, training programmes have to be information-specific, staff level grading-specific, with ever-changing content and objectives. Setting up the correct content for the organisation will foster the correct set of skills with the correct level of staff.

The Peter Principle, states that individuals are promoted or climb the organisational ladder until they reach their level of maximum incompetence; so, an individual may be competent in their area but once they have been promoted to a leadership position may become incompetent in their dealings with people (Farias et al., 2021). Training is thus an enabler once they reached a leadership position. Training and development are vital resources that helps employees to keep abreast of new ideas, learn aspects (such as analytical, technical and strategic skills) and develop management and leadership skills, which assist in personal development and career advancement (Kyndt et al., 2009; Fernando et al., 2014; Zikode, 2020).

Training programmes, developed for the enhancement of an individual's strengths and competencies provides a better understanding to assist with an individual's career growth and to succeed in a leadership role (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). When training programmes are implemented to encourage women, evidence for the effectiveness of these is found to be mixed (Bohnet, 2016; Erkal et al., 2022). This may be due to the content not being focussed enough to cover necessary needs and skill development, or due to female staff having been discouraged in their careers, and beneficial to the ambitious few that use each opportunity presented to them. It is worthwhile noting that training is a tool that allows women in leadership to be able to develop an adaptive mindset to their surroundings. Learning the ability to change their thoughts will allow them to be less rigid, learn and grow further (Mohanakumar et al., 2022). SME organisations seldom have enough leeway with their respective organisational budget to implement policies and procedures for training programmes. Not being provided with the necessary support to succeed within a leadership position, can see woman encountering challenges that they are unable to resolve or overcome.

2.4.5 The Perception of Women in Leadership

The working environment is an area that is consistently subjected to how one should conduct oneself in an appropriate manner and behaviour. The environment being influenced by individual, organisational and societal interpretations, and norms. It is therefore presumed that individuals that consider and apply for a leadership position would have thoroughly considered the social power that comes with a leadership position, as social power is the power haven over a group of individuals or given to a leadership group (Pansardi, 2012, Goodwin et al., 2020).

Women leaders that find themselves within a position whereby they portray and execute more agentic traits and little communal feeling are perceived to not have the ability to lead (Grandey and Gabriel, 2015; Vronman and Danko, 2020); they are perceived as staff members that have to be checked on to make sure they grasp the work. There are many supporting studies that make evident the ability of women to excel within leadership positions, that women leaders lead their organisations to better performing organisations (Eagly et al., 1995; Carter et al., 2003; O'Regan & Oster,

2005; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Hoobler et al., 2018; Goodwin et al., 2020).

However, the stigmatisation of women often occurs as their responsibility to care for their family and children are viewed as being counterproductive to their aspiration of a leadership career (Ely et al., 2014; Padavic et al., 2020; Goodwin et al., 2020), this being a societal perception. In this instance women are being perceived to only be caregivers. Sheppard and Johnson (2019) mention a poll that had been conducted by *Management Today* and the Institute of Leadership and Management, in which the results reflected that female CEOs were perceived by their employees to be more trustworthy, warm, and nurturing than their male counterparts, therefore empowering and growing more staff members. In contrast, Mensah (2018) found that men leaders have leadership traits of being domineering, authoritarian, individualistic and controlling; the attributes of leadership for men and women are found to differ.

The occasion does arise in which women often force themselves to fit into how they feel they are being perceived and this comes at a cost. As women strive to be the ideal leader, they devote significant time and energy on work requirements, regardless of their other personal and family obligations as to not fall prey to the perception of them being not able to lead, and this may lead to potential energy drain (Bailyn, 1993; Williams, 2005; Vronman and Danko, 2020). In the SME environment leaders are seen to work longer hours, take on multiple tasks to build up a strong organisation. Leaders try for the best all under close observation from the owner, in instances this may seem like micromanaging staff or distrust from the owner on individuals placed in management roles. Continuous interruptions or view that someone is hovering over your shoulder may lead to women leaders having the notion that the owner or managing director is perceiving them as not being capable of leading and make decisions.

2.5 Conceptual Framework Envisaged

Through the discussion of the concepts of barriers faced by women in leadership may lead to challenges in their working lives. This research study investigated whether the

following framework is evident to women in leadership positions within an SME organisation.

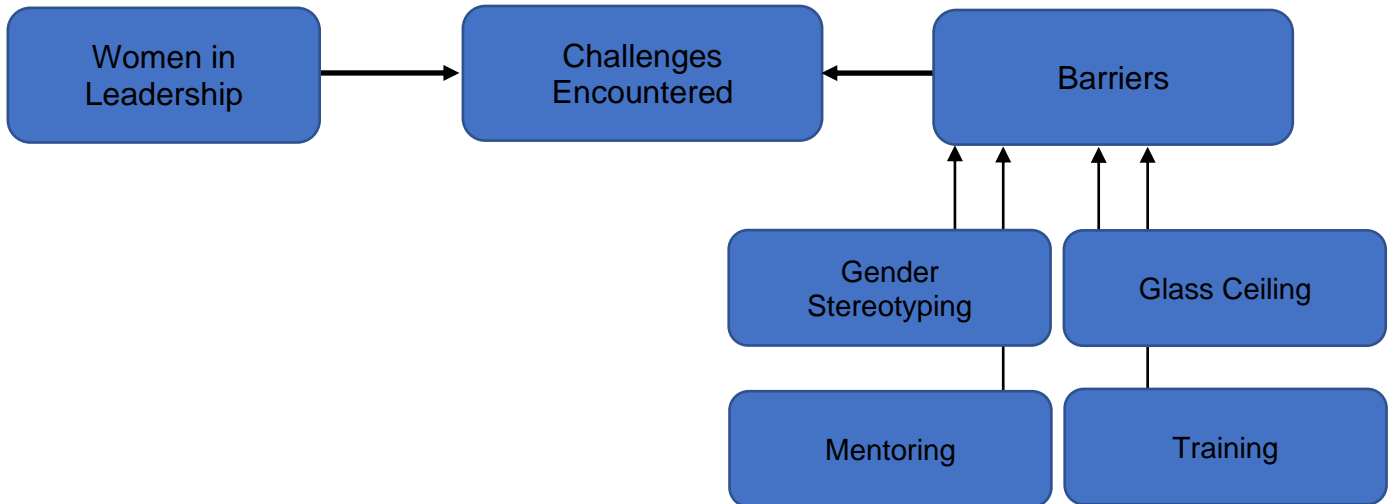


FIGURE 2.1 The conceptual framework

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter revised existing literature from a variety of contributors to the field of women in leadership; what leadership is, barriers in the form of gender stereotypes, the glass ceiling, mentoring, and training and how women are perceived. These barriers that may lead to women in leadership position experience a variety of challenges daily within their working careers. Furthermore, the chapter made mention of the frameworks of the Role Congruity Theory and Social Paradigms used in the research study in terms of its interpretation of how barriers that might still be in existence therefore being related to the problem under research in the study. The literature review reveals that women will encounter the challenges in their respective working careers especially in leadership positions, unless efforts are made to understand the challenges being encountered and the barriers that cause them.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the research study was to examine and analyse lived experiences of women in leadership positions within a South African pharmaceutical SME organisation. The aim further set out to gather information which could be identified as challenges encountered and the barriers that is a result of the challenges encountered especially by women in leadership in the SME organisation.

To be able to gather accurate information, it is important to choose the appropriate research methods for the study. The methods of a study can be to describe as ‘the why’ you are going about your research in a particular way (Saldana, 2015: 10). In addition, Mason (2018: 32) provides us with a definition that method is the logic of the way you underpin your research design as a potential answer to your research question, as well as making decisions about most aspects of the research process. Researchers therefore must plan their overall research design and specify their research methods in a purposeful way, depending on the research question, different designs and methods may be appropriate, “it is a way to make the review much more manageable and applicable to the research question” (The University of Melbourne, 2021: 6). The inclusion and exclusion criteria can include the sample size of the data, peer reviews, the setting of the research whether in business, communities, or the healthcare field.

This chapter of the research study report aims to provide descriptive information on the research methods chosen for the study. We start off by providing a justification on the approach taken and discuss the theoretical basis of the chosen approach. It is followed by an examination of the population area identified and sampling technique applied. The data collection technique of a semi-structured in-depth interview process and analysis of information obtained is then further discussed. In conclusion the chapter provides a comprehensive discussion on ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is that of a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire with interview. The research study seeks to identify various lived experiences of the female participants that currently occupy or have occupied a leadership position. Furthermore, a case study is also applicable as it examines a specific system, a group of females who occupy or have occupied leadership positions within the identified SME.

3.3 Research Approach Identified

As stated in Chapter 1, the study used a qualitative research approach; where information was obtained through a formal, objective, and systematic process which allowed the researcher to gain insights and to explore the depth and complexity of a phenomenon being researched. This method describes, tests, and examines the cause and effect of relationships and is seen to be more appropriate for the study, as it is more frequently applied within social paradigm research for lived experiences of participants.

3.4 Research Approach Define

Qualitative research is defined by Bhandari (2020) as the process by which non-numerical information is collected through means of text, video or audio and then analysed to gain understanding of concepts, opinions, and experiences. This qualitative process is followed for researchers to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate innovative ideas for further research (Bhandari, 2020). In addition, Creswell (2009: 59; 2013) adds that a qualitative research approach is a method employed to establish the meaning of a certain social phenomenon from the view of participants, as previously mentioned in Chapter 1. Creswell (2009: 178, 2013) goes on to state that in the qualitative research approach one purposefully selects participants that will assist the researcher in understanding the research problem and question/s.

3.5 Research Strategy Identified

The researcher undertook the research study to identify if there are any challenges encountered by women in leadership and whether there are specific barriers that is leading to these challenges. The research study therefore analysed the experiences and thoughts of the participants, gathered through individual discussion sessions between the researcher and the participant. It is for this reason that we can say the research study used a phenomenological method.

Padilla-Daiz (2015) says a phenomenological paradigm is employed to enable an interpretation of opinions of the targeted participants. This allows the researcher to investigate the phenomenon in more detail. A phenomenological research paradigm is viewed as an interpretive dimension where a theory can allow for informing, supporting, or challenging a policy and action, thus bringing out the perceptions of the participants. In addition, this approach also allows for the description of what the participants have in common with the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014), through drawing a comparison on what their individual lived experiences are of being employed within a leadership position in an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

3.6 Population

The identified and targeted population of a study is the entire set of elements that characterises the research phenomenon. Creswell (2009) postulates that the target population is the population the research draws the sample from, the population can thus be an organisation, specific group of individuals, sectors, or industries.

An SME organisation registered and trading within the pharmaceutical industry of the South African economy has been identified and served as the base where the sample was drawn from. The nature of the research topic requires for the researcher to target female staff members that occupy or have occupied a leadership role within the SME pharmaceutical organisation identified for this research study. The research has been grounded on the lived experiences of the staff members that occupy or have occupied leadership positions within the SME pharmaceutical organisation.

3.7 Sampling Technique

A sample can be defined as a subset that encompasses and represents elements of the entire population from which inferences can be drawn from. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 119) adds that a sample of participants is selected from a larger group of individuals, better known as a population. Taken from the identified population for a research study information is collected from the sample size, known as the participants in the population (Philliah, 2016: 68). Creswell (2013) argues that a sample identifies the actual research participants that the research ought to draw perceptions on, in addressing the research problem at hand.

The study, by virtue of being qualitative in nature, has adopted a non-probability sampling technique which endeavours to have use normative means. The study has used the purposive technique as the researcher has specific knowledge of the participants and the latter has specific knowledge of the subject matter and possess necessary sample characteristics.

In this study the researcher had only select female participants with association to the SME pharmaceutical organisation. The female participants identified by the researcher to participate in the study have either currently been employed in a leadership position or had previously been employed in a leadership position at the SME. The researcher has selected 13 female participants in total to contribute their experiences and thoughts to the study. The selection of both present and past participants is made to determine whether:

- a) Challenges encountered by, and views of the participants are the same or have they changed over a period;
- b) The barriers that lead to or may have led to challenges remained consistent or changed over time;
- c) There have been changes or consistency, why might this have been and may it have been for the better or to the detriment of female leaders.

It is to be noted that the age of the female participants and level of experience all varies and will provide for further analysis of challenges based on age and working experience. The researcher has selected these participants purposefully as they bear knowledge of the investigating research matter. From this the participants gender, staff level grading and knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry and organisation are key determinants for selecting them to participate in the study.

The targeted sample size for the research was thirteen (n=13) semi-structured in-depth interviews. Female leadership staff members were interviewed to prompt information to address the research questions and objectives based on their experiences and thoughts on the research matter.

3.8 Data Collection

Data can be any information that a researcher identifies and accumulates for a research study to facilitate them in answering the research question/s and objectives being put forth through the research study. A qualitative approach was identified as being appropriate for this study. As it would allow the researcher to engage more with the participants and delve into what their lived experiences were with regards to the research question/s and objectives.

The first research question was:

- 1) What challenges are encountered by women in leadership positions in an SME pharmaceutical organisation?

The second question was:

- 2) Are there specific barriers that contribute to the challenges being encountered by women in leadership within an SME pharmaceutical organisation?

The objectives being identified to answer the research questions:

- 1) To identify challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.
- 2) To identify specific barriers that are the reasons for women in leadership positions experiencing challenge within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

The data for this research study has been collected through conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with consenting participants. The following section will discuss in detail data collections and capturing of the in-depth interviews.

3.8.1 Contacting Identified Participants

To obtain the contact details of the selected participants the researcher spoke with the authorised person to obtain access to contact details of prospective participants, so the researcher could recruit them. The researcher had initially reached out and contacted each participant by means of email correspondence, to inform them of the research study that was being undertaken by the researcher and provide details on the research study to the selected participants. The researcher had included information of the research study's aims and objectives, and the researcher highlighted that participation was entirely voluntary and that no benefits or rewards will flow from, nor will there be any detriment from participating in the research study.

The correspondence had further informed participants as to why they had been chosen to participate, assured them that all information would be kept confidential, and securely stored. The information provided also stated that interviews would only be conducted by the researcher with discussions lasting between 45 to 60 minutes; furthermore, there was an option of doing the interview either virtually or in person at a location where participants were most comfortable. The importance of mentioning the time of the interview and platform was for the participants to plan their time accordingly.

As all the participants occupy leadership positions, it may be difficult to get an appointment, to this end, an option of two dates and alternative times was provided. A time period of seven days from date of initial email, was allowed for the participants to

respond, should no confirmation had been received, the researcher followed up telephonically to enquire whether the email was received and if there are areas that need further clarification.

3.8.2 Consent Forms

Participants were required to sign a consent form of participation and only those who had signed the research consent form were allowed to participate in the study. The data collection process from recruitment to conducting the interview only commenced after getting the ethical clearance certificate from UNISA's Ethical Clearance Committee; fieldwork lasted for approximately two months.

3.8.3 Interviews

Although scheduling, gathering, and conducting of interviews can be daunting, it is argued that it is also exciting and engaging. According to Blumberg et al. (2014: 217) "qualitative interviews are much better suited for any kind of qualitative research, especially when the researcher does not have expectations regarding the explanations of phenomena, but rather searches for yet unknown explanations". Considering the focus of this study, qualitative interviews were conducted to understand the participant's behaviour, mindset, and experiences.

Interviews are the more commonly used techniques for the gathering of information when engaging in qualitative research. The researcher has chosen the method of conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews as it was the most appropriate methodology to address study objectives. An in-depth interview takes place when the researcher interviews the selected participants to freely express any ideas, feelings and motivations about the research study matter being studied. The researcher takes an ontological stance that participants' knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, stories, narratives, experiences, interactions, and perceptions are meaningful properties of the social reality that the research is designed to explore (Mason, 2018: 111).

The discussion guide included both closed and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions have been used in the discussion guide in a bid to give room for probing and seeking clarification on the study under investigation. Insight can be gathered through this interview type as to learn more about the participant's situation, experiences, and their feelings; it also provides for the opportunity to interpret body language and facial expressions (Marshall, 2016), which assists the researcher in understanding the research concern and how changes may be implemented.

3.8.4 Semi-structured Discussion Guide

A semi-structured discussion guide, designed by the researcher, was used to frame and gather participants' viewpoints and perceptions regarding their lived experiences on the research questions (Blumberg et al., 2014). The qualitative approach provides flexibility that enables the researcher to explore new themes and produce richer data through in-depth probing and open-ended discussions. Questions were set up in a probing manner to get participants to think deeply and set a platform for engagement and reflection. The questions have included demographics and open-ended questions as the former forms an integral part of any questionnaire to identify characteristics such as gender, age, education qualifications and so forth. These demographics are often essential to gain better understanding of the sample and context for participants' feedback. Open-ended questions on the other hand, seek to explore qualitative aspects of a research study more in-depth, providing participants freedom to respond in detail on their thoughts and feelings.

3.8.5 Data Collection Time and Place

All data that was collected from the participants was conducted as per date and time indication received from them. The researcher thus worked according to the time, location and platform as determined or preferred by participants which offered convenience for participants. The duration of the interview was between 45 to 60 minutes and in instances where participants did not have sufficient time, follow-up discussions were arranged subject to participant's availability; this, however, was not prevalent.

3.8.6 Collection Recording

To ensure that the interviews were captured correctly, the researcher sought permission to record the proceedings at the beginning of the interview session with the participant. During the interview settings voice/audio recording were made by the researcher. These voice/audio recordings were for the use of the researcher only. The researcher also took notes during the interview which allowed for optimisation of data and capturing details both verbally and non-verbally for data interpretation and analysis.

3.8.7 Language Medium

All interviews were conducted in English and in cases where participants preferred to express themselves in their home language, they were encouraged to do so, after which the researcher would translate verbatim to English.

3.9 Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is not as easily to conduct as that of quantitative approach due to the open-ended nature of responses. There are very few well established and commonly accepted rules and guidelines that are in existence that aid in the analysis of qualitative data (Zikode, 2020: 73). Sekaran and Bougie (2013) further demonstrate that the analysis of qualitative data is not that simple at all. Qualitative data is often analysed through using the thematic analysis approach. The thematic analysis approach provides for the exploration of open-ended interview questions in a qualitative study, thus reducing data in a flexible manner (Castleberry & Nolan, 2018). Care is to be taken in the process of identifying, analysing, and finding of themes in data through the thematic analysis approach. As such, researchers always ensure transparency and credibility and confidence in their findings (Castleberry & Nolan, 2018). It is therefore important to engage themselves within the data collected in an attempt to not just empathise but sympathise with the viewpoints of the participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis

The framework of thematic analysis follows the steps of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

3.9.1.1 Compiling

The analysis of data started at the initial interaction with the participants. The researcher had taken down notes of the participants' engagement with the researcher about the study matter, gaining more information and clarification prior to them making the decision to participate in the study or not. The second phase of analysis happened when the actual interview was conducted where the researcher recorded verbal and non-verbal answers. The non-verbal answer may be the participants emotions, facial expressions, tone of voice throughout the interview sessions. The researcher picked up on what sections, within the discussion guide, made the participants uncomfortable or uneasy, and engaging more at these points to find the root cause of these hesitations and discomfort. Also, by recording parts of the discussion guide the participants were more engaging in and passionate about. During the interview sessions the researcher also made notes of aspects that stood out and would make a large impact on the study. Information during the interviews were captured through voice/audio recordings and making notes of the answer provided by the participants. The researcher after the interviews familiarised herself with the information gathered through the process of reading, analysing the notes made and listening to the recording taken. Through doing this the researcher was able to also organise the data accordingly to make sense of the data and interpret it appropriately.

3.9.1.2 Disassembling

The researcher highlighted any commonalities identified within the challenges being described by the participants and their thoughts and views on how they are being perceived within the organisation; and barriers resulting in challenges for the participants. By doing this the researcher engaged in finding any connections that might have emerged from the information collected. This led to the grouping of information into common concepts and ideas relevant to the study matter.

3.9.1.3 Reassembling

After compiling the data collected into groups, the researcher proceeded to assemble the information into themes.

3.9.1.4 Interpreting

This process was to compare all information obtained by the in-depth semi-structured interviews to that of existing literature review selected within Chapter 2; conducting systematic analysis of the two data sets, primary and theoretical; identifying if there are persisting expectations imposed still on women within the working environment of the SME organisation.

3.9.1.5 Concluding

After all the data had been analysed the researcher provided a conclusion and recommendations on the study matter from the information obtained.

3.9.2 Trustworthiness of the Study

3.9.2.1 Credibility

This was obtained through using the most well-known and established method, comparing findings of primary data collected through the in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants to that of the theoretical informational data drawn. A pilot was conducted upfront to test the flow of the research instrument and questions that may be found to having been ambiguous or confusing. A further aim was to test the duration of the interview in order to refine further and remain within the agreed time. To this end, three participants would have been chosen for this purpose. Thereafter the researcher continued with the data collection process.

3.9.2.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the research findings drawn are reasonable and based on a logical and well-documented process (De Vos et al., 2011). In the research study this was achieved through conducting reviews on primary data collected through the

in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants to assist in highlighting categories, themes and topics that might have been overlooked. It has further been enhanced by the making of voice/audio recordings of each interview with the participants and making notes on the interview sheet. The latter was conducted to ensure that information was documented at a proper level and all information could be reviewed and compared.

3.9.2.3 Conformability

This was achieved through the researcher not manipulating or modifying any data that has been collected for the study. The researcher ensured that all findings are solely based on the experiences, ideals, thoughts, and narratives provided by the participants. Nothing was viewed from the researcher own ideals, experiences and perspectives on the research matter. The researcher documented all occurrence and happenings throughout the research collection phase and continuously reflected on the study's concerns.

3.9.2.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which research findings can be transferred to other contexts (Bryman, 2008; De Vos et al., 2011). In this research study transferability has been achieved by making sure that the findings can be applied to other related studies in similar environments and areas, ensuring that the documented findings are accurately analysed for ease of application in similar studies and detailed description on data collection is provided. The research study made use of various data sources such as, primary data in the form of interviews with participants, noting of information during the interview, listening to voice/audio recordings and reviewing theoretical literature data.

3.9.2.5 Authenticity

Authenticity was obtained through analysing the quality of answers provided by the participants and the energy of the participant in the interview. Through this analysis the researcher had either prolonged the engagement as to obtain more valid responses or carefully guided discussion back on track.

3.10 Ethical Clarification

Ethical considerations are imperative for research since it serves to protect both the researcher and the research participant (Powell, 2013). The research is to be conducted conforming to the ethics of the bodies of concern. This more easily phrased means that research should be conducted with honesty and integrity. Adherence to ethics within research also means that it deals with recognising and protecting the participants' human rights. Achieving this through obtaining signed research informed consent forms for participants, providing anonymity and confidentiality to the participants by donating them a specific code and by gaining access and acceptance.

3.10.1 Voluntary Participation

Participation was entirely on a voluntary basis and no gratuity in kind or form flowed from participating in the research study. The participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the research study at any point without any repercussion on them personally or within their working environment and roles. In this regard, the researcher did not coerce or intimidate the participants into taking part in the research study.

3.10.2 Consent Form

All participants that participated within the research study have been sought to a researched informed consent form. Consent was sought by the participants through sending a request letter to sign consent that informed the researcher they were willing to participate in the research study.

3.10.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The research study ensured confidentiality during the research process and duration. The information that was collected during the interview sessions was kept in confidence between the researcher and the participant present, as to guarantee that the participants are not subjected to any harm in any form. Anonymity was also guaranteed on data presentation; no personal names were mentioned anywhere in the research and all participants were allocated a special code.

3.10.4 Approvals

Written approval and permission to conduct research at the participating SME organisation identified and with the selected population area participants was obtained from the organisational proxy and authorised individual of the organisation to conduct the study and to obtain other relevant personal information regarding the participants. Ethical clearance for this research study has been obtained from UNISA's Ethics Clearance Committee before the commencement of the qualitative research study's data collection process. Only upon the receipt of approval from UNISA's Ethics Clearance Committee did the field work commence.

3.10.5 Storage of Data

All data that was collected during the research study was stored safely and securely to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all the participants. Electronic information has been stored on a password protected electronic device. The paper base data has been stored in a locked file cabinet at the private residence of the researcher. Data collected for this study will be stored for five years.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research method adopted to gather data where a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire was used to frame discussions and analysis. The sampling technique applied was non-probability purposive sampling. The chapter further discussed qualitative means engaged in data collection, analysis, and presentation of information. Lastly the chapter concluded with ethical matters highlighted. The next chapter presents the feedback received, data analysis conducted and the research findings.

CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH DATA COLLECTED, RESULTS AND RESULTS DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly restates the research study problem statement, questions, study objectives and how data was collected. A summarised description on the population area and sample participants follows. A description of the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews conducted with each of the participants presented after that. The chapter ends with a comprehensive discussion on the integration and synthesise of identified themes that have emerged through the data collection process.

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this research study report, the researcher sought to examine challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions within the pharmaceutical industry of an SME organisation. From this stance, a primary and secondary research questions were formulated:

- 1) Primary research question - What are the challenges encountered by women in leadership positions in an SME pharmaceutical organisation?
- 2) Secondary research question - Are there specific barriers that contribute to the challenges being encountered by women in leadership within an SME pharmaceutical organisation?

Following the above questions, the researcher identified two study objectives to address the research problem and questions, as well as to guide the study. These were:

- 1) To identify challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.
- 2) To identify the specific barriers that are the reasons for women in leadership positions experiencing challenges within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with each participant, guided using a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire. The researcher made use of a thematic

analysis approach to analyse the transcribed feedback collected from the participants during the individual in-depth interview sittings.

4.2 Brief Description on Population Area and Sample Size

The following two sections gives a brief review on the population and sample size of the research study.

4.2.1 Population Area

The researcher identified an SME pharmaceutical organisation that was incorporated in January 2002 and has its head office situated within the Lonehill suburb of Johannesburg in the Gauteng province in South Africa. The organisation found its roots through an entrepreneurial venture between a medical doctor and pharmacist; the SME pharmaceutical organisation specialises in the prevention and management of lifestyle related diseases. To this end, the SME provides a unique blend and formulated phytochemical non-prescription medication to consumers. The organisation is a growing SME organisation; throughout its lifespan the organisation showed considerable growth, moving from strength to strength.

4.2.2 Sample Size

The organisation presently employs a staff count of twenty-three full-time employees. This sample selection of thirteen participants (n=13) comprised present and past female staff members who are or have been in a mid, senior or executive level staff grading.

4.3 Data Collection

Data was collected from the participants through in-depth interviews, in both a face-to-face and virtual platform settings according to participant's preference. The discussion guide used was a semi-structured open-ended instrument. This permitted participants to provide detailed responses of their thoughts and lived experiences regarding the subject matter. All interview sittings were recorded on a voice/audio tool, with permission obtained from the participants.

Interview settings followed ethical considerations firstly through the signing of an informed consent form obtained for each participant interviewed. No personal identification of the participants nor the SME organisation has been used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and the SME organisation. Each participant had been provided with an alphanumerical pseudonym from the start of contact being made initially through email correspondence for a call to participate in the research study.

The alphanumerical pseudonym for present participants was:

Pres1, Pres2, Pres3, Pres4, Pres5, Pres6, Pres7

The alphanumerical pseudonym for past incumbents:

Past1, Past2, Past3, Past4, Past5, Past6

4.4 Participation Rate

Contact was made through e-mail and telephonically, where the researcher was able to recruit prospective participants. Five of the current female leadership provided their written consent and went on to participate in the research study. However, only one of the six past female leadership incumbents gave written consent and consequently participated in the research study. The six participants were either not willing to participate or could not be reached despite numerous attempts to contact them.

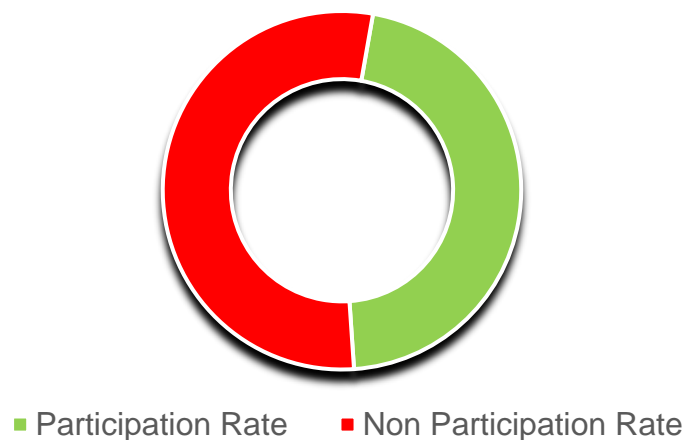


FIGURE 4.1 Participation rate

The poor participation of past incumbents renders the results to be heavily skewed towards current leadership as five out of the total of six participants are current leadership at the SME pharmaceutical organisation. The inability to reach and/or their unavailability of those who had been contacted contributed to the result being skewed toward that of the present leadership team. The SME organisation being small in nature, it was not possible to get substitutes that would meet the selection criteria.

4.4.1 Present Leadership Staff Sample

Five of the seven female leadership staff members that availed themselves were senior staff members with more than 10 years' work experience within the pharmaceutical industry and within the SME organisation under study. It is worth mentioning that one of these participants hold an executive position within the leadership team, with over 25 years' experience in the pharmaceutical industry.

On contact made and conversing with Pres5, the present mid-level female leader highlighted that she did not wish to participate in the research study, stating that:

“I have only been part of the management team for a short while and even during my tenure I did not receive the desired support which resulted in me taking a step back from the role. The entire experience has left an unpleasant feeling to date.”

Lastly the final mid-level present leadership staff member, Pres6, re-emphasised her busy schedule, the researcher could relate as the participant is situated outside of Gauteng and was going through a busy period at the time. Through declining to participate the participant stated:

“My life is just crazy at the moment and my time management sucks!”

4.4.2 Past Leadership Staff Sample

Two selected past leadership participants declined participation expressing that the research study sounded amazing and interesting, however:

- A) Past1 declined saying: *“I would have loved to take part, but I don’t believe I can add any real quality value to the study.”*
- B) Similarly, Past2 also doubted that she would be the right participant, stating: *“I’m not sure if I’m the right person to participate in the study.”*

The researcher was unable to make any contact with two of the selected past participants, being Past5 and Past6, even though different forms of communication were attempted of getting hold of the selected participants. No responses were received back on email and unavailability on telephone numbers; the researcher discovered that both individuals had emigrated out of South Africa. With this in mind the contact details that are on archived record by the SME organisation might not be in existence any longer and both the participants had to be removed from the research.

Even though contact was made with Past4 this past female leader highlighted that she too had emigrated from South Africa and would have liked to participate in the research as the topic was of interest to her. However, she had to decline citing the following reason: *“It sounds like interesting research, and I’d participate; however, I am in Texas, with the time difference I am not sure it would work.”*

The researcher provided Past4 with various solutions on virtual platforms, dates and times suitable to Past4. But these efforts were in vain, and communication ended up at a dead end.

4.5 The Pilot Process

As the participation rate was less than half (6 out of 13 potential participants) a pilot study was conducted on only one participant which was a drop from the projected

three which would have been appropriate had the full sample participation of thirteen been achieved.

During the pilot process the researcher familiarised herself with the interview process, in terms of being able to pick up on the body language, knowing where to engage and probe more to obtain further information or when to pull back as the participant felt uneasy. The researcher also practised the process of listening and taking down notes of important points.

The researcher evaluated the flow and answering during the pilot interview, whether the time allocated of 45 to 60 minutes was sufficient to obtain all the required information from the participants lived experiences. After this initial pilot interview, the researcher refined the discussion guide, as during the session it had become evident that while certain questions were stated differently, they were in fact repetitive.

4.6 Demographical Information of Participants

The demographical information can be depicted as per the table below.

TABLE 4.1 Demographic information of participants

Participant	Age	Number of Children	Highest Qualification Level	Years of Service in the Pharm. Industry	Years of Service in the SME Org.	Staff Level Grading
Pres1	53	3	Bachelor's degree	15 years	15 years	Senior Management
Pres2	42	2	Bachelor's degree	16 years	12 years	Middle to Senior Management
Pres3	47	2	Two diplomas	20 years	16 years	Middle Management
Pres4	40	3	Post graduate diploma	15 years	15 years	Middle Management
Pres7	49	4	Bachelor's degree and Registered pharmacist	27 years	27 years	Executive
Past3	42	2	Bachelor's degree	4-5 years	4-5 years	Middle to Senior Management

From Table 4.1 it is noted that participants' age ranges of between 35 and 55 years, with the majority being between the age of 40 to 49 and one participant over the age of 50 years. It is worth mentioning at this point that all participants are married (although not highlighted on the table) and have children. The education level indicates that four of the participants have obtained a Bachelor's degree, one holds two diplomas and one a post-graduate level qualification. One of the participants is also registered with a professional body. The participants have worked for the SME organisation ranging from lowest being that of 4 to 5 years of service to the highest being 27 years. They hold a combined knowledge and expertise of the pharmaceutical industry on average 16 years. The managerial level representation was that of two participants within middle to senior level, two within middle level, one on senior level and lastly one executive.

4.7 Themes

The processing of data collected from the six in-depth interviews conducted with the participants, a thematic analysis process was followed. The discussion guide consisted of 4 sections; 1) demographical information, which has been depicted within section 4.6, 2) challenges woman in leadership encounter, 3) perception of woman in leadership and, 4) factors affecting woman in leadership. The analysis of sections 2 to 4 will follow in the subsequent sections and are within the arena of an SME

pharmaceutical organisation. The themes that have been generated from the interviews can be categorised as follows:

TABLE 4.2 Themes and sub themes

Themes	Sub Themes
Theme 1: Working Environment Challenges	Glass ceiling
	Work-Life balance
	Workload
	Leadership strategy
	Critique
	Drive
Theme 2: Mentorship	
Theme 3: Training	Development
	Support
Theme 4: Perception	Stereotyping
	Societal views
Theme 5: General	Leadership defined
	Female element

A thematic analysis process was used for the researcher to grasp what the extent of the lived experiences are of the participants within their leadership roles within the SME pharmaceutical organisation. Therefore, being able to obtain related themes from the leadership experiences of the participants was important. The overarching themes were that of working environment challenges, mentorship, training, and perceptions. These were further subcategorised into more specific common themes experienced by all participants. The sections that are to follow will firstly address, with relation to the two research questions, challenges identified and whether specific barriers are persisting still within the current era for females in leadership in an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

4.7.1 Theme 1 – Working Environment Challenges

It is not strange that the female leaders highlighted that challenges are experienced on a daily basis, whether in their personal or working life, this being no different from research on women in leadership positions. The following sub-sections will discuss some of the challenges being encountered by such women.

4.7.1.1 Glass Ceiling

As the organisation is an SME, the glass ceiling is pertinent to all participants. The responses received from questions 8 and 18 under the section of challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide have identified the glass ceiling effect is as follow:

TABLE 4.3 Working environment challenges: glass ceiling comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"If I wanted to grow further, I would have searched for another position at another organisation. This would have been to grow vertically within my career. As within the SME organisation I have reached my ceiling. With that said I was happy throughout the years working with the organisation. Therefore, I did not have the need to grow vertically as I was pushed to grow horizontally."</i>
Pres2	<i>"I am still new within my current role and have a few areas to grow horizontally. However, I do know that I will reach a point whereby I cannot grow further horizontally and will require vertical growth. Which within the SME environment will not necessarily be available."</i>
Pres3	<i>"Horizontal growth there is still area I need to grow and master, but vertically now further growth."</i>
Pres4	<i>"At this point within the organisation there is only horizontal growth available and no vertical growth."</i>

Pres7	<i>"Horizontal growth for me it still continuous as I want to ensure that the organisation has established a brand that is unique, that stands on ethics. Also, to be able to grow my staff members, understand want their needs are and how we as an organisation can support them and provide them with opportunities."</i>
Past3	<i>"As it is a small organisation, there is not really room to grow more vertically into a senior or executive level."</i>

Participants acknowledging a point whereby horizontal growth would stop and they would seek vertical growth, which is not possible in the SME organisation. Participants would either stay and stagnate at the level they find themselves holding or leave the organisation to grow more vertically elsewhere. Pres7 had an opposing ideal to that of the other participant regarding horizontal growth. Highlighting that horizontal growth within side the SME will always be continuous as the organisation is still small and growing a unique brand.

The challenge that is experienced by female leaders within the SME organisation under study is that of reaching a vertical growth career block being a result of a glass ceiling barrier.

4.7.1.2 Work-Life Balance

To maintain a healthy work / life balance can be very difficult. The responses received from questions 13, 14 and 23 under the section of challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide had identified a work life balance challenge as follow:

TABLE 4.4 Working environment challenges: work-life balance comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"I have mastered earlier on how to juggle being a wife, mother, employee and leader."</i>
Pres2	<i>"After COVID-19 it has become more difficult to maintain a work family balance. As from a work life certain organisation have</i>

	<i>maintained working from home, other have opted for a hybrid culture and others are fully back to the office environment. On the family live side, schools, children cultural and sport activities just assumes that all parents are still working from home and have flexibility."</i>
	<i>"What is important to me is to have a good and reliable support structure in place. From transports, to domestic and grandparents or family help, to aftercare service. As this allows to ease the pressure for me and enables me to perform at my best at work."</i>
Pres3	<i>"I am a planner by nature and for me to be able to cope I plan my work week and family routine on a Sunday afternoon. This allows me to just get the week running and going."</i>
Pres4	<i>"My strength is that I have a high tolerance and ability to cope. The busier I am the better I perform. It is also important to focus on one thing and be present within the moment."</i>
Pres7	<i>"I have various support structures in place and do have a support system at home. I also believe that one must not focus too much on finding a balance, when at work be focussed on work and when at home be focussed on the family. By doing this and having support structures in place a balance will automatically be found."</i>
Past3	<i>"It is important to be present, when at work focus on work and when at home focus on home, do not bring work home or home to work."</i>

To be able to be a successful leader as a woman, the participants thought is only as good as the support system that they have in place. If their work and private lives were not planned accordingly, and in detail, they would not have been able to even be in a leadership role or committed fully to the responsibilities it entails. The reason for this statement is that as women leaders they are all trying to give a 150 percent or more to ensure that no one can say that as a leader they have not done their part. Also, to ensure that they are not failing their teams. They are trying to build the organisation to where it was now after COVID-19 and the schools, children's activities, and people have not realised that there now exist different working environments.

Pres2 and Pres3 mentioned that they would not be able to get through the demanding workload and daily challenges of their positions if their week was not planned out in advance. Pres4 showed a great ability to handle a demanding leadership position and family life. When asked if she had ever attempted to teach this skill to her subordinates, she stated – *“I will not know how to, as I just get it done, I just manage.”* Pres 7 and Past 3 have taught themselves throughout their working years to split their work life from that of their family life and that the two are not too interlinked.

It is apparent that maintaining a work-life balance is a challenge encountered by the female leaders of the SME organisation under study. They devote time on extensive planning and mental orientation, backed by financial means to ensure that all is running smoothly daily. This is a challenge due to the perception barrier placed on women in society.

4.7.1.3 Workload

One challenge that all mentioned they experience daily is that of the workload that they have to manage being heavy. The responses received from questions 13 and 18 under the section of challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide highlighted this as follow:

TABLE 4.5 Working environment challenges: workload comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>“I believe that staff members in an SME environment works much harder, as we have to be all-rounders. We are consistently thrown into the deep end and have to make it work. Through the heavy work load we do however evolve and learn more than what is just required from us.”</i>
Pres2	<i>“The workload within an SME environment can become daunting at moments, in between all of the day's craziness you still need to find a way to motivate yourself and your team, deal with everyone's personalities and ensure they are keeping up, handle human relations matters, meet targets and get all routine and ad hoc tasks</i>

	<i>done, conclude meeting and made decisions. The list is never ending."</i>
Pres3	<i>"In an SME environment the pace is fast, every matter is urgent, the sheer volume of the workload is high. Do not get me wrong, the work does not bother me as much as the fact that the workload does not at times allow you to push yourself in thought and ability to be able to learn and grow, it becomes more repetitive."</i>
	<i>"If the workload was divided more, less mistake will creep in, we will have the capacity to learn new this and evolve with the market trends, performance will increase."</i>
Pres4	<i>"There are too little hands trying to keep all the balls in the air and keep things going on a daily basis."</i>
Past3	<i>"When I was with the organisation the staff size was small and the workload manageable."</i>

The remarks from Pres1, Pres2, Pres3 and Pres 4 in comparison to that of Past3 can be analysed that the organisation has grown over the years, comparing responses from present leaders to that of the a past leader of the organisation. However, while the organisational reach has grown, the staff count has not grown in equal measure. Current leadership team had all made it very clear, not holding back in their emotions, that the workload is high. They are trying to manage all types of variables daily plus not lagging behind in the routine work and manage a team of individuals. Assisting them to grow their skills and abilities. Working numerous overtime hours to ensure that the behind-the-scenes work is correct. The unbearable workload can lead to physical and mental exhaustion, leading to them to experience various emotions. But being within a leadership position for a female, they feel that they have to keep their composure, especially in front of their colleagues and subordinates so as to not be perceived as weak or incapable of doing their job. A counter distinction to prove the perception barrier of females in leadership positions wrong.

Pres7 is of the opinion that all staff members still have room for growth in terms of their abilities, as it is not fully being utilised or correct applies. When their growth has been achieved, it will assist them to manage their workload more effectively.

4.7.1.4 Leadership Strategy

When discussing in further detail the area of leadership strategy within the organisation it was found that participants were rather hesitant to respond. By analysing their facial expression, body movements it was a situation whereby they were almost afraid of voicing their opinion lest they say something wrong. The responses received from questions 15, 16 and 17 under the section of challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide brought about the following:

TABLE 4.6 Working environment challenges: leadership strategy comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"Throughout my years with the organisation, we have tried various strategies, some being successful other not as much. I am a firm believer that you have to fully give a person responsibility and trust them, provide them with guidance and support. As the individual will feel that they are growing in a position, and you are stimulating their drive, ambition and thoughts. That will ultimately be to the benefit of the individual and organisation."</i>
Pres2	<i>"It is a difficult one, as currently things are working, and we are moving in a direction that we are growing within the structure. However, the executive makes the final decision on all matters, big and small, it would be beneficial to delegate certain sign-off to senior management. In doing so, we will become more stable and grow faster as an organisation."</i>
Pres3	<i>"We need to put parameters in place that will assist in the learning and upskilling of the staff members. Ensuring more delegation of duties and a smooth day to day running."</i>
Pres4	<i>"We as management need to realise that the organisation must first grow horizontally, getting more staff members and growing departments. Once this is in place, we will be able to grow vertically through the SME section. Sometimes we focus too much on vertical growth, but the foundation is not completely solid."</i>

Pres7	<i>"I have found that through the years female leaders are more committed in certain position than in others. Female leaders also get more done as being a female we are used to having to ensuring that various tasks are done, keeping the balls in the air. Female leaders are also better at being able to establish a good emotional connection with their team members."</i>
Past3	<i>"When I was at the organisation all worked then in that moment."</i>

It was interesting to observe that all participants began with the notion that currently there is not really much wrong. With this said, all participants had different views on how the leadership strategy could be improved. For instance, Pres2 and Pres3 would like to see more delegation of decision making and duties to improve the workflow and quick turnaround, while Pres4 saw a need to increase the workforce for the leadership to be able to focus on decision-making and the business side of the organisation. Pres7 differed, saying that employing someone was a huge responsibility and that the market has also started to change thus leading to o changes in organisational needs.

From Past3, comparison between the past and present it is distinct that the organisation has showed growth, however this was not proportional and aligned to the organisations processes, this is somewhat been left behind in the growth process. At the present moment if something is lacking on the leadership side it is not that they are not able to handle it. It is merely due to them not being exposed to a certain situation and as times are changing, the team is exposed to more and more situations whereby they have to learn as they go. It cannot be foreseen or known; therefore, no training can be provided. The major conclusion that can be drawn is that of the misalignment in thoughts and ideas the female leaders experience between them and the executive. This challenge that is not brought about by any barrier, as the leadership team and executive is of the same gender.

It was remarkable to notice that the SME leadership composition has throughout the years from date of inception, mostly consisting of female leaders; contrasting with the existing status quo of the industry.

4.7.1.5 Critique

At a leadership level you have to consistently deal with constant critique being given from your senior, same level colleagues and subordinates. The responses received from questions 8, 9, 10, 14 and 25 under the section challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide are as follows:

TABLE 4.7 Working environment challenges: critique comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"It is great, I love it. It acts as a pointer for you to be able to know where you are lacking and how to get yourself back on the right track. However, when it becomes personal it is a problem."</i>
Pres2	<i>"As a lady you receive criticism on a daily basis. Being in a leadership position I have found it to be harsh, especially from male counterparts. I have had to teach myself to not react immediately and to not take things too personally. In doing so I am able to analyse the critique, from who it is coming and in which light - positive or negative."</i>
Pres3	<i>"We will always receive critique, we are females working in leadership, trying to break boundaries. I value critique that comes from someone I trust; I have no problem with it and will ask them for guidance."</i>
Pres4	<i>"In the working environment, I have seen that we as females tend to either get emotional or defensive when critique is given to us. In a leadership position you quickly learn to take a step back, not react immediately and to analyse the situation and from who the information is coming from."</i>
Pres7	<i>"I have in the past received some severe criticism from shareholders and staff members. Being a positive and driven individual, I have also taken criticism (whether positive or negative) and turned it into a learning moment. How I am able to do things differently or better."</i>

Past3	<i>"I have found that it was more difficult working with males as they always would have something to say even when the situation does not ask for it. Therefore, critique is good if it is coming from the right individual. You have to learn fast to not take things personally and move on."</i>
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It was surprising to notice the majority of participants had to teach themselves or learn the skill of not taking opinions or critique given to them too personally. Learning the skill to take a step back, analysing the information and the person it is coming from. Once this was done participants would react only to those that they felt were providing them with critique for a good reason and that was coming from a good place. Negative critique was typically brushed off and not responded to, they just let it be and move on.

The two most senior leadership members both took positive and negative criticism and turned it into a learning experience and grew from it. One might say that this mindset to learn from both positive and negative critique comes through years of experience.

The receiving of critique is a challenge that the female leadership members in the SME organisation struggle with within their working environment, a challenge that is brought about through barriers of stereotyping and societal perceptions of females in leadership positions.

4.7.1.6 Drive

Female leaders that are driven can be a result of their personal life circumstance and work life balance mastered. The responses received from questions 24, 27, 29 and 30 mostly from the section perception of women in leadership of the discussion guide has proved the following contribution:

TABLE 4.8 Working environment challenges: drive comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"I have noticed that ladies that are driven reach mid-level management and then either stagnate or are worked out of their</i>

	<i>positions or the organisation through making the working environment unbearable."</i>
Pres2	<i>"The drive of female in the industry and even organisation is a 60/30 split. In my field I see both motivated and non-motivated woman. Women start of as being highly motivated, they want to grow and reach the top. But then at a point in their careers a reality check comes in whereby personal circumstance and family obligation become more important and it is then difficult to find a balance."</i>
Pres3	<i>"Females that have access to a mentor or life coach are the more driven and motivated females. They are the ones that can find a work life balance and have both prosper. As well as assist other subordinates to grow in their own areas."</i>
Pres4	<i>"I do believe that the wheels have started changing, that we as women are now a part of the working environment and our drive and ambitious has started to shift from wanting to proof societal norms wrong to rather being the best in our fields."</i>
Pres7	<i>"Females within the pharmaceutical industry are more driven, of which an attributable factor for this is that they are well educated. They also work a bit harder, as they are challenged more within the industry than their male counterparts."</i>
Past3	<i>"I found within the industry and organisation that women had a drive to be successful, not just be successful on their own but to assist other females to be successful as well. As back then the female representation of woman in leadership position was minimal."</i>

What has been found is that drive and ambition of women in the past was to a certain degree to prove the barrier of societal perception and paradigms wrong. That women can compete at the same level as their male counterparts and be competent, if not even more so than their male counterparts. The wheels have however started turning and more females are starting to become the breadwinners of their families and so becoming more aware of what they want and how to maintain a balance. The challenge however still exists that they have to overcome a male dominated industry and maintaining the drive can be mentally and emotionally tiring.

4.7.2 Theme 2 – Mentorship

There was consensus that mentorship contributed, and still contributes and will in the future contribute not only to their professional career growth but also their personal growth. The responses received from questions 20, 21 and 34 under section challenges of woman in leadership and factors affecting women in leadership of the discussion guide identified the following regarding mentoring:

TABLE 4.9 Mentorship comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"In the working environment I have had my executive and fellow colleagues in different departments be mentors to me. It has assisted me to learn all spheres of the organisation and how it works as one unit."</i>
Pres2	<i>"At industry level it is difficult not only to find a suitable female mentor in a male dominated arena, but when reaching a leadership level certain information become highly confidential and not openly known within a public domain. You therefore need to be careful of what you are saying as to not divulge certain information as the industry is very competitive, making it difficult to have a beneficial guidance conversation and the contact session is not as effective. In the organisation leaders that are more senior to me, does not have the time to get involved within a mentorship program."</i>
Pres3	<i>"It is one of the most important tools to have for me, as it provides a platform for me to learn and grow. I do however find it difficult to find a strong female mentor in the industry as there is not a lot of female mentors available and in the organisation the female leaders are too busy, they just do not have the time."</i>
Pres4	<i>"I do not just have one mentor, I have a few. I believe it is important to have a different mentor for the different facets of your life."</i>

	<i>"For me personally I feel that the most important mentor is your mentor for your personal life, as your personal life affects your work life and career. If you are able through the help of a personal level mentor, be able to find peace and balance, then all other aspects will prosper."</i>
	<i>"With this said I have found it difficult at times to find a mentor in the work environment."</i>
Pres7	<i>"Currently I do not have a mentor. I have however had a mentor that has taught me a great deal."</i>
	<i>"As I have grown through my career, I have moved away from being mentored. I am currently at a point whereby I learn and take from different individuals. You take from them what works for you and apply it. Taking bits and pieces from various individuals through observing them, finding out how they do things and why they do it in a certain way and what the results had been. This for me has become a type of mentoring process, allowing me to be more innovative and not restricted to the views of one individual."</i>
Past3	<i>"It is very important to have a mentor in the industry that you find yourself working in. As a mentor knows how the industry operates, but it had been and still is difficult to find a good mentor for your professional level."</i>
	<i>"I have found it to be difficult to find a mentor within the working environment. As a woman you tend to want to be mentored by a female leader, which is seldomly found in the industry and in the organisation these women do not have time."</i>

Pres2 and Pres4 indicated that they do not only have one mentor but have identified a mentor for the different facets of their lives. It was observed that all participants were opting to be mentored by females and not by their male counterparts with all being hesitant to receiving mentorship by their male counterparts. In the words of Pres3: *"A man within a leadership role has never taught me anything through my career, except of placing more obstacles in my way, making it more difficult for me."*

Pres7 had the sentiment that early within your career it is good to have a mentor to guide you on your career path. However, you get to a certain stage in your career that you must be careful not to become a replica of your mentor, for then it limits your scope.

There is a large difficulty experienced by participants in identifying and finding suitable mentors; 1) within the industry itself, as it is more male dominated leadership and, 2) within the organisation as other women in leadership have too much on their plates already. They just do not have the time to spare in mentoring a colleague or fellow female leader. These challenges flowing from a stereotypical perception barrier.

4.7.3 Theme 3 – Training

Participants in leadership positions demonstrated strong emotion towards the lack of training provided that is directed at role specific needs. Furthermore, there is a lack of training that is being provided by the SME organisation in terms of soft skills (time management, networking, problem and conflict resolution and working with a diverse team) and managerial skills (leadership skills, human relation skills, communication and administrative skills). This being evident through Pres3 statement: *“We require more individual need or role specific training. This will assist in developing each staff member based on their requirements.”*

Participants are seeking directional and planned training programmes that will assist them to be effective in their roles and as leaders. The lack of existence of training is acknowledged and the need for it known, however it is left to the individual to learn and upskill themselves within their own time and finances, as made mention by Pres2 and Pres3:

A) Pres2 - *“Should there be an area or skill I which to develop, especially in the form of a formal qualification it is needed to be done at own cost and time. Which seldom can occur when in a leadership role, as the load of duties and responsibilities is quite large in an SME organisation.”*

B) Pres3 - *"We are not provided with role specific training; this is left for your own accord not just at leadership level but across the board for all staff members."*

Noting that time management training is the area about which Pres6 had declined participation in the study. Time management could have been improved or developed through training.

4.7.3.1 Development

Each woman leader testified that drawing from the fact that there is no formal training and development programs in place by the organisation, there is therefore a lack in personnel development of skills and expertise within the organisation. The responses received from questions 19, 20, 21 and 22 under section challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide are as follows:

TABLE 4.10 Training: development comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"The organisation can do a bit more with regards to training for its staff members, across the board. I personally would have wanted to undergo a more management/leadership training. As it would have been something that I would have benefitted a lot from."</i>
Pres2	<i>"When it comes to training and development of skills, no formal program is followed or in existence. Currently we are expected to gain knowledge and expertise through going through situations."</i>
	<i>"We learn from our experiences as we go along, thus growing with each situation."</i>
	<i>"I do believe that the organisation lack in providing the leadership team with the required training to be successful in their positions. Training in the field of certain soft skills, people management and organisational management."</i>
	<i>"The process currently is learning through error and each situation which is not efficient for growth."</i>

Pres3	<i>"No training is provided, thus no development of skills and knowledge. There is a bit of a lack that exist in this area of the organisation."</i>
	<i>"Currently no career support development programme is in place for leadership nor staff."</i>
Pres4	<i>"Training and development currently are more directed at needs of the industry and organisation. No formal channel of training to provide you with the required tools."</i>
	<i>"Currently you are given a task or role and expected to be able to complete it, with no guidance provided. You have to train and upskill yourself to be able to know how to create a structure for yourself and learn along the way."</i>
	<i>"For me this can be seen as a positive, as your leader already believes in your capabilities, experience and knowledge to be able to complete a task with positive results."</i>
Pres7	<i>"The organisation does not at the current moment provide bursaries for studying. However, do encourage staff to educate themselves in the area of their interest. There are structures in place however whether it is implemented fully, or the employees are utilising it, is not known."</i>
	<i>"It is also important to look at the individual staff member. As certain individual wanting to development will find out what channels the organisation provides. While others are just happy at the level they are on, having no desire to further develop."</i>
Past3	<i>"No formal policy had been in place. Formal training was left up to the individual."</i>

None of the participants had undergone any managerial/leadership specific development training following the growth path in the organisation leading up to a leadership role. Pres4 had made mention of not receiving formal/structured development as a positive as her direct superior already see the potential of a certain skills in her that must just be unlocked. All the other participants said that they in their personal time had to and still currently do set out plans on how to train and develop

themselves further. Training and development are a challenge that is experienced by the majority of the leadership women.

4.7.3.2 Support

The supporting commentary that was comparable for all the participants was that support is always being provided if and when asked for. The responses received from questions 12, 19, 20, 21 and 22 under section challenges of women in leadership of the discussion guide are as follows:

TABLE 4.11 Training: support comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"I have always received support from my CEO and colleagues. I have never lacked support from the organisation throughout me working at the organisation."</i>
Pres2	<i>"If I require support all I need to do is ask my superior or colleagues. But asking even at a leadership level, one needs to have a level of maturity to be able to have the confidence to acknowledge when you are lacking in a certain area."</i>
Pres3	<i>"When I require support, I know that I am able to just ask my superior or sometimes colleagues. However, this is more of a quick solution than that of a formal upskilling process."</i>
Pres4	<i>"If you ask for support it will definitely be provided to you. With this said one must have a level of maturity to know when need assistance and ask for it. If you struggle there is support provided, very open-door policy environment/culture."</i>
Pres7	<i>"I have always received great support from my business partners. This is largely due to us being able from the onset of the business venture identifying our strengths and we do not interfere or intervene or overstep each other's decisions. We provide honest and supported opinions to one another and we do push and challenge one another greatly."</i>
Past3	<i>"I did receive guidance and support when required and asked upon."</i>

The organisation has a strong open-door culture that the executive and fellow leadership colleagues would never turn staff away when they sought assistance. However, one as an individual must have the maturity to acknowledge that they needed support. This sometimes was very difficult for them to admit by themselves, despite being in a leadership role.

This contradicts to the experience of Pres5 whose reason for not participating in the study was that she had not received the support that she required to be successful within her role and took a step back.

4.7.4 Theme 4 – Perceptions

All perceptions stem from societal views and norms passed down through generations. The Role Congruity Theory will not be possible if it was not directly influenced by Social Paradigms, our thoughts and views are influence through society and these filters through to the working environment.

4.7.4.1 Gender

The industry is currently still male dominant. However, the SME organisation under study, has made a shift to a more female dominant leadership team. The responses received from questions 9, 21, 22, 28 and 30 under sections challenges and perceptions of women in leadership of the discussion guide are as follows:

TABLE 4.12 Perception: gender comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"In my experience through the years, mid-level management has an equal representation of male and female individuals. The top-level management within the industry is where the in balance lies, here males are still dominating the positions."</i>
	<i>"Being at senior management level I have found that female mid-level managers are driven and ambitious and have to be thought to overcome daily obstacles. As mid-level male managers are difficult, rude and disrespectful. Thinking that they have to make a statement</i>

	<i>and prove themselves to their seniors. Whereas top level males are more mature and respect both male and female leaders. Much easier to have business discussion with and work with top level males."</i>
Pres2	<i>"I have work for a male manager within the industry, there was no culture of building each up. You were just expected to do what you were told and no room for growth into management for me as a female. With my current employer I am led by a female and the environment is adverse different, all receive the same opportunities regardless."</i>
	<i>"I have found that as a female leader you must consistent proof your worth. Male counterpart tent to assume if a managerial position becomes available, they automatically will take up the position and do not do well when having to report to a female. They do make it difficult daily, interfering in your judgement and decisions made, making it clear in their body language, opinions and communication."</i>
	<i>"I have been in meeting whereby males do not even listen to the opinion of the females present, as they feel females are challenging them. They tend to have a denoting tone toward females. Or they will just agree with your ideas in the meeting sitting but nothing is ever implemented."</i>
Pres3	<i>"The dynamic of the industry is very male oriented, bulldog environment. Being a female working in this environment you need to adopt this fighting spirit. It needs to change. We should not be adopting to be able to survive. We should be able to come with our knowledge, foresight and creativity and move forward together."</i>
Pres4	<i>"Working in the field it is still male dominant. Male leaders tend to have the presence of pushing authority down on females, even though we are at the same leadership level. They will give you the time but not really pay attention to your thoughts and ideas."</i>
	<i>"Within meetings or after meetings I have noticed that it is always the men that will come with additional questions. Knowing that it is not to obtain more clarity but rather to throw you off or rattle you."</i>

Pres7	<i>"The pharmaceutical industry is today still more male dominant. When starting the organisation, I was still very young and inexperienced. I had found that my age had been a bigger obstacle with business individuals than my gender. As for my business partners and business connections, they had all been experienced business individuals with years of experiences. I had to rather prove consistently that I knew what I was conversing by backing it up with factual information."</i>
Past3	<i>"It was then difficult for females to enter a managerial position over that of our male counterparts. It was as difficult to just get a gap into the managerial field. As back then in a team environment people did look up to your male leader/team lead/manager than that of your females. This was industry specific, and I found that the pharmaceutical industry was more male dominant leads."</i>
	<i>"Back then and even now I do not think that it is as easy for men to accept that on a business level we as females can be their equal."</i>

Although the SME organisation had made great strides in changing and challenging the status quo of females in leadership, this cannot be said to be true for the industry as a whole. There still exists an element of resistance against women in leadership, especially from their male counterpart both in the industry and SME organisation. The barriers of stereotyping and societal perceptions of females in leadership does make it difficult for female leaders in the pharmaceutical industry and organisation to stay driven and grow vertically despite their daily obstacles faced.

4.7.4.2 Societal Views

Over the years a lot of awareness have been generated by government and organisations to increase a positive ideal that women can be within the working environment and be successfully. The responses received from questions 8, 10 and 33 are that of:

TABLE 4.13 Perception: societal views comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"Within the smaller pharmaceutical organisations and pharmacy, we are seeing more female starting to dominate. Larger conglomerates are still more male dominated with regards to leadership positions. However, change is starting however small it may be."</i>
Pres2	<i>"I travel a lot and many times at the airport another female traveller will ask me if I am married and have children. When responding yes, they also tend to say it must be difficult having to travel and work and be a wife and mom. How do you cope?"</i>
Pres3	<i>"There is still a societal view that woman cannot have it all, we cannot be a successful leader and still be a wife and mother. We will not be able to cope."</i>
Pres4	<i>"There will also be a perception of women, as men and women will always be different, we have to try lessen the gap. We just have to change historical views of females, change our mindset as in doing so the views we in path onto the next generation will then have a different view and change in societal perception."</i>
Pres7	<i>"It still exists today that females are wanting to consistently prove that they can take on management roles and do want have been done or even better."</i>
	<i>"The thought of male vs female regarding any position should not even been in a female's mind. We need to just enter the working environment and business discussions prepared, have all the facts and it will not matter. As you have then created a situation of dominance in your presence of knowledge provided and contribution to any discussion."</i>
Past3	<i>"We as females will always be seen as the lady that has to take maternity leave, have family and children's responsibilities. This view has not changed even with our representation in the working environment having increase."</i>

	<i>"We can have the same qualification, experience and working years but will still be seen as the wife or mom and not the successful professional."</i>
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Societal views have started to change but are still lagging. The ideal of women being successful leaders, wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends will only change over time to come. As with all other things, change is something that one had to work on now in order to see the fruits of one's labour in the next generation.

4.7.5 Theme 5 – General

During the research study process there were themes that came to light from the participants' side that are worthwhile mentioning. Themes that come about through the interview questions response and by the researcher asking the participants if they had anything to add on to the subject matter. These will follow in the next sections.

4.7.5.1 Leadership

The confidence levels of the potential participants Past1 and Past1 on whether they ever thought of themselves as leaders are doubtful. They carried the title of leadership, however had individual doubts about whether they had truly contributed to the roles or merely followed instructions. The last point was the opinion of others; did this view of leadership contribute to them feeling that others have not perceived them to be a leader within their respective departments or perceived to be merely a colleague, fulfilling a specific task or duty set forth to them by their executive.

Pres2 and Pres4 have defined a leader to be not about a title or designation bestowed upon you from your organisation, but it is about your actions, reactions and interaction with others that makes you a leader.

- A) Pres2 – *"For me to be a good leader I need to show my team members that I am able to do not only my work but their work as well. Whilst at the same time assisting them in doing their work even better. Helping them in their growth areas and skill development. You gain respect and a working relationship with*

your subordinate on a different level. You are not seen by them as merely a manager giving duties.”

- B) Pres4 – *“A leader for me is someone that has the ability to do their own work, the work of their team members. All at the same time assisting each of their team members to grow to their potential.”*

Leadership is all about leading by example, not by dictating. When leading by example you get the best out of yourself, your team members and grow the organisation, as one’s actions as a leader shape others’ ideals to a certain extent. The leadership of the SME organisation has a greater burden to carry than within your larger conglomerates. You have to balance leading a team, making critical business decisions, growing an organisation, dealing with large workload. All at the same time balancing family, work, and team commitments.

4.7.5.2 The Female Element

Females in leadership roles bring an element of compassion and understanding. Female leaders are not just concerned with the bottom-line financial figures of the organisation; they are also concerned with the wellbeing of their subordinates and their professional and personal growth. This was said by the participants. The responses received from questions 31 and 32 under section factors affecting women in leadership of the discussion guide are as follows:

TABLE 4.14 Female element comments

Participant	Responses
Pres1	<i>"We as females are more in touch with our sixth sense, we also have compassion. This assists us within a leadership role to look at each person in our team as individuals and as a whole. Therefore, assisting us being able to help the team member to achieve their goals, the team’s goals and organisational goals."</i>
Pres2	<i>"As a female in a leadership role, I believe that we bring structure to the industry and organisation."</i>

Pres3	<i>"We as female leaders bring structure, a level of empathy towards staff, realism (having to divide up our lives and still be successful), futurism and creativity (where men are more financially guided)."</i>
Pres4	<i>"Leaders need to have a human aspect as we are consistently dealing with individuals. In this aspect females have a head start over men. Men are normally focussed on the outcome. Whereas woman is focused on the outcome but also what they can get out of each of their staff members that will lead to them being better. This leads to bettering of staff and the organisation."</i>
Pres7	<i>"As females we have a good sense of intuition, which is a great strength to have. Having the ability to connect on a more personal level with staff. Lastly, we are so used to juggle a lot a variable within our lives daily that we are more proficient in multi-tasking and handling much more at once."</i>
Past3	<i>"We are more compassionate, not just business all the time."</i>

4.8 Discussion of Results

This section will now discuss the findings of the main themes identified in contrast to the literature presented in Chapter 2. The results discussion that will follow have been arranged in five main themes drawing from the findings which have arisen from the research questions and objectives. Through this having been able to identify the challenges that the participants of the SME pharmaceutical organisation have mentioned are the challenges they encounter and the barriers causing the challenges being faced by the participants, being that of the two research questions.

4.8.1 Working Environment

Challenges that are experienced by the female leaders within the organisation are in an extent linked to the industry in which the organisation, as well as the organisational culture of the said company in particular. Some of the factors that contribute to a challenging environment to compete in can be summarised through the following concepts.

4.8.1.1 Glass Ceiling

Reaching the specific glass ceiling within one organisation is one of the inevitable focuses that is to be faced by women in leadership, especially within an SME organisation. It is a known truth identified by the participant that at some point in their careers at the organisation they will reach a point whereby they have no further horizontal growth areas to grow into and seek the next growth step including that of vertical growth to enhance the psychological and professional need for expansion. Participants identified that a challenge is that if you find yourself in a senior leadership position you will have to stay and stagnate within the organisation, as the next level of vertical leadership is that of the executive. Pres1 commented that: she has seen driven and ambitious females progress quick to mid-level leadership positions than stagnate. She has also mentioned that she herself might have stayed too long within her senior level position. Supporting authors Catalyst (2018) and Agut et al. (2021) as to the reason why women find themselves stuck within their current level positions in organisation for long periods. The other alternative for the participants once reaching the glass ceiling in the organisation is for women leaders finding themselves stuck at a certain leadership level within the SME to make the daunting choice to leave the organisation to move to a larger conglomerate within the same industry or another SME organisation within a different industry, with an option of both vertical and horizontal growth.

From the research conducted participants past and present averred that this situation within the organisation has not yet changed. The organisation had grown but not as fast as its leadership team's knowledge and expertise within their current working environment is growing. Many of the present participants felt as if they have reached their ceiling with little to no movement elsewhere, others who had left, highlighted the need for growth as a key reason for leaving the organisation. Participants were aware that they would reach their ceiling within the SME organisation, a challenge that they are faced with or will be facing. Adding to Ryan and Haslam's (2007) study of women possessing the foresight to acknowledge this barrier and the challenge it imposes on their careers. They acknowledge this challenge is brought about by the glass ceiling barrier in the area of being rather more structural in the SME environment. In contrast

to larger corporates whereby the glass ceiling barrier is more related to discriminatory factors; in this SME the sentiment of Gupta (2018) and Sahoo & Lanka (2016) was not found to be applicable as there is no discriminatory gender application within the organisation.

4.8.1.2 Work-Life Balance

A work-life balance for females in leadership in the SME organisation is one of the most difficult challenges they encounter or did in the past. It is a common trend that this balance between work and life is challenging with not enough time to make sure nothing is left behind, being able to be a strong leader and at the same time run a household as mother or wife, it was felt, was a daunting exercise. To be present, actively participating and giving their all with a busy work schedule with a lot of variables both at home and work is a struggle. All observed that they would only be as good as they can be within their leadership role if they plan accordingly and have a solid support structure in place. Women leadership have also found it important to show their children, the next generation, that it is important to have a work-life balance. To have a passion, a drive to build one's own career, but to also have a social and family life at the same time.

Finding the work-life balance is a challenge that is being faced by all the leadership participants in the study as there are many variables, consistently changing on a daily basis in the SME environment and home life. A challenge that is a heightened societal perception of what the roles of females are and their place in society. The women leaders of the SME organisation are consistently attempting their level best to prove not only that the societal perception is wrong, but also to themselves, that they can be exceptional within spheres of both their personal life and work life.

4.8.1.3 Workload

The workload that the leadership team of the SME organisation has to carry is at a higher scale than that within your larger organisation with financial means for a larger human capital pool. Often it is felt that as soon as you have everything sorted, a new problem or situation occurs. As a female leader in an SME organisation, you have to

be observant of each detail, fast paced and motivate your team members. This leaves little time for personal growth as your day is packed with routine work, ad hoc tasks, and meetings. It therefore becomes important that you as an individual plan small tasks and goals for yourself and evaluate your personal growth on a regular basis. The workload for the leadership members has changed over time as the organisational growth has not balanced with the appointment of more staff. It should be noted that even though the workload is identified as being larger, growing for the sake of growing is not always good, rapid growth is not always good. As with growth and quick expansions comes different challenges if the correct structures are not put in place.

The burden of a heavy workload is a challenge experienced by the female leaders in the SME pharmaceutical organisation that is unique to an SME environment and not stemming from a social paradigm barrier. The personal count is limited, workload large and within the pharmaceutical industry consistent changes occur as the administrative and regulatory requirements change and are implemented.

4.8.1.4 Leadership Strategy

The major concern for all leadership members is the absence of delegation of duties. This is more commonly seen within an SME environment, whereby the executive has the final signoff on the majority of decisions, irrespective of the impact to the organisation. This is at times frustrating to the leadership members wanting to take action and having to firstly wait for approval. The participants highlighted that bureaucracy plays a key role in their respective frustrations and wish to be held accountable for decisions they make to promote the strategies of the organisation. It was well illustrated though the conversation that if the goals, duties, and strategy are clearly highlighted with the freedom and responsibility to achieve everybody will do their utmost to achieve these goals. These sentiments from the participants may be seen as a barrier for not only individual leadership growth but organisational growth as well.

4.8.1.5 Critique

A specific concern that come from the majority of participants both past and present leaders is that of them having to have taught themselves to analyse, critique, especially the critique received from male subordinates, colleagues, and business associates, as it is not always intended to come from a good place. But rather a point of being perceived that females are not fully capable to handle the pressure and responsibility that comes with a leadership seat; being perceived as having to be consistently checked up on, as their capabilities are not adequate. These ideals of the participants link to the statements of Grandey and Gabriel (2015) and Vronman and Danko (2020) in Chapter 2. A positive factor is that after going through the analysis phase all female leaders would question and engage with the individual/s that provided them with critique, whether they agree or not, to learn and grow from the information provided. A challenge that is brought about through barriers of stereotyping societal perceptions of females in leadership positions.

4.8.1.6 Drive

As women in leadership grow, become stronger, more driven, and successful within each obstacle they encountered within their careers, a point will be reached at which the gap has been reduced in societal perceptions. At this point there is a need to be aware that it might give rise to a “social family” orientation problem where men cannot necessarily fill the role of the caregiver, generally perceived to be female orientated, as they do not have the capacity to complete this role. Solving one social problem gives rise to another. There is a need to be forward looking in our resolutions and not create other social injustices, the individuals personal drive to achieve the next level of management should not be to despise or failure to create the next generation of female leaders.

In addition to Mythili (2019) it was found that females who possess high ambition and motivation have the drive to push through their challenges. There has been a consensus that women at the start of their careers have the drive to reach a leadership level, a point made by Piggot et al. (2017) and Zikode (2020). However, Pres1 also

noted that female leaders within an SME organisation and within the pharmaceutical industry generally reach middle level leadership and then stagnate within these roles due to stereotypical perceptions concerning female leadership, adding to Catalyst (2018) and Agut et al.'s (2021) sentiments.

4.8.2 Mentorship

Currently within the SME organisation there is no standard operating policy in place that caters for mentorship for either general staff members or leadership members. This is an area that has been identified as lagging behind and through the years has not been addressed formally. Through the information that has been gathered by the female leader participants it was agreed that for them to be a successful leader it was imperative that they had to have a mentor. All identified a mentor is essential to find a balance, provide guidance of different situations and how to overcome them, and achieve greater heights in their careers as Elias (2018) points out. Mentorships have assisted and still assist the female leadership members with communications skills (as at a certain level you need to converse differently); how to handle difficult situations and resolve matters, assist in clarifying and managing duties and responsibility that comes with a leadership role; how to be honest and direct with yourself and subordinates. Participants have a mentor or life coach for different areas within their lives, as to be successful in all aspects and maintain a well-balanced work-life routine. This information gathered links to the study of Kapoor et al. (2021), that a female's progression into a leadership role is substantially enhanced through mentorship.

In the absence of a mentorship programme provided by the SME organisation, participants have all on their own accord reached out and found a mentor outside of the organisation and even industry, validating the study conducted by Elias (2018) mentioned in Chapter 2. All participants by identifying and choosing a mentor/s are particular in their selection process and have found it to be difficult in the working environment and industry. Aligning with Zikode (2020) and Kulkarni and Mishra (2021), it proved to be valid in the SME pharmaceutical organisation and environment as it is a challenge for the female leaders to find mentors. They are very hesitant in their selection, noting that females have the preference and desired to be mentored by

other strong, independent senior female leaders. None opted to be mentored by a male colleague, as they are not sure of men's different kind of perception. The best mentor for professional advancement is within the same industry as a mentor within the industry has the knowledge, expertise, and experience of how to navigate through the industry and its hurdles. These challenges flowing from a stereotypical perception barrier.

4.8.3 Training

4.8.3.1 Development

The Peter Principle as mentioned by Farias et al. (2021) in Chapter 2, has been found to be true within challenges encountered by leadership both past and present. The participants all have the desire to undergo training that is more leadership specific. They have the required qualifications, work and industry knowledge and expertise. However, they are lagging behind in the people management, conflict resolution, decision making and business side of what a leadership role brings and requires. Participants all desire to undergo or take part in training to enhance leadership skills through specific courses to upskill themselves. It is generally expected from the individual to do training in personal time, which is rarely available; it is also expensive.

In the absence of non-specific leadership training and development programmes not being provided by the organisation to its leadership team, it does lead to the leadership team finding it difficult at times to complete their responsibilities and challenges effectively and efficiently. If more time and monetary value can be allocated to the leadership members training and development, they will feel that they are being seen and valued. If they have this valued feeling it would enable them to learn and develop an adaptive mindset, which is in accord with Mohanakumar et al. (2022). By improving these components through training and development, it will lead to increased employee competence, productivity and eventually to organisational and employee growth (Falola et al., 2014). This will encourage even greater contribution to the overall success of the organisation and will also ensure that newer, more effective ways are being implemented to get more work done in less time rather than having to continue

with the older techniques. This would ultimately lead to the organisation reaching its targets and more, therefore increase profit and increase incentive pay-outs to the workforce. Mpofu (2020: 12) mentions that business needs to ensure that: 1) they continue to hire and develop managers who can deal with present as well as future issues facing the organisation and 2) keep management engaged in developing people and make employees understand the link between sustainable products, processes, and strategic business goals. All these are only possible through further training and development, investing in the leadership team.

4.8.3.2 Support

The SME organisation has a very open-door policy culture. However, this culture will only be beneficial to you if you possess the level of maturity to be able to ask for assistance when needed and be specific in the assistance that you require. Being an SME organisation, opportunities are created for staff members, that is not just based on qualifications but when the executive sees one's potential and abilities and drives one in a direction, if they were willing. As training and development are not only the organisation's responsibility but yours as an individual as well, it starts with wanting to grow and learn. Also, by giving individuals' responsibilities, it allows them to get the direction they need to grow towards and what skills they are to focus on developing.

4.8.4 Perception

4.8.4.1 Gender

Through this research study conducted the Role Congruity theory proved to be exemplified within the pharmaceutical organisation, female leaders have found that there is a perception that when a managerial role opens, a male will automatically receive it. It becomes difficult for a female when obtaining that role to work effectively with their male subordinates. When dealing with business partners, female leaders have found that they are not treated equally by male counterpart. The perception is that they are not capable of handling the role, brings the effects of Social Pattern into play.

4.8.4.2 Societal Views

Through the research conducted it has been found that the societal ideals have led to males, stay at home moms and the older generations having very strong opinions of ambitious working moms and females. Consistently being faced with these societal preconceptions, having to prove them wrong is a challenge encountered by the leadership team of the SME organisation.

4.8.5 General

4.8.5.1 Leadership

Leadership styles are different from person to person, not everyone can be a manager or leader. It is a skill and a mindset that cannot be bought. Leadership to some is just about the financial association or title, others do not fully understand or grasp what a leader is, or what defines a leader. A leader is not just a title that is bestowed upon you within the working environment. But do SMEs do enough to foster women in leadership and a leadership mindset to their female staff members? Or is it merely a designation provided to staff members within an SME organisation and the responsibility and accountability is not fully bestowed on the staff member. This is due to the size of the organisation and all decision-making resting with one individual. As within larger organisations career assistance, training programmes, women in leadership programmes and awareness are fostered to change the perception of women to assist and build them towards better equipped leaders.

In Chapter 1 problem statement section Makhubela (2021) pointed out that women who participate in leadership positions do not *fully* participate in any leadership decision making processes. This could be the reason why certain women that have occupied or currently occupy a leadership role within the organisation do not view themselves as leaders. In the organisation there is a precedent of only a selected individual being able to make or sign-off on decisions for the organisation. No complete delegation exists in decision making. It was found that the factors of being able to make or sign-off of a decision is an important factor to the mind-set of the female

leader's staff. In the environment these women might be perceived not to be in a leadership role even though they are senior staff, leading to their individual perceptions that they are not leaders.

4.8.5.2 Female Element

The study that has been conducted by *Management Today* and the *Institute of Leadership and Management*, as mentioned by Sheppard and Johnson (2019) accurately about to be true in the thoughts of women in leaders in the SME organisation. They have all agreed that females bring a sense of structure, empathy, creativity, support and understanding to their team members. These are qualities that are often lacking in male leaders as they are more concerned about the bottom-line figures. As per Lopez and Ensari (2014) the female leaders have all taken their female characteristics and carried them through to their leadership position, staying true to their qualities and abilities within their leadership roles and not succumbing to the status quo of societal ideals.

4.9 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to present and discuss the research results obtained from the thoughts, ideals, views, and experiences of six participants in the pharmaceutical SME organisation. The results have identified five themes through thematic analysis and furthermore a total of twelve sub-themes linked to the five main themes. The next and final chapter will present a conclusion, recommendations made by the researcher and lastly what the limitations of the research study are.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The research study was undertaken with the aim to explore challenges that women within a leadership position in an SME pharmaceutical organisation encounter and whether these challenges have contributing barrier.

The aim of the report is for the SME organisation to address identified shortcomings and aid the management team to realign their staff objectives and parameters for their leadership team to provide more directed career guidance and support. At the end of this chapter the researcher will consider possible and practical recommendations. These changes are recommended so that the organisation can establish whether their female leaders can be better equipped to handle and overcome challenges they encounter in their working careers and environment and see them work more effectively within the organisation and industry, that is, assisting in overall professional and organisational growth.

5.2 Conclusion Discussions

To fulfil the purpose of the research study, the objectives were achieved through responses obtained from the participants on the following being posed:

- 1) To identify challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.
- 2) To identify the specific barriers that are the reasons for women in leadership positions experiencing challenges within an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

5.2.1 Research Objective 1

Responses received from participants led to themes, as discussed in Chapter 4, can be categorised as follow: 1) challenges within the working environment; 2) the absence of mentorship within the organisation; 3) no leadership structured training being provided; 4) perception; and lastly, 5) general concerns and challenges within a leadership role.

The leadership identified challenges that they encounter consistently and these are ever changing; however, what remains consistent, within the SME environment, is work environment, mentorship and training. Work environment challenges include the three most prominent challenges namely, the glass ceiling, workload and bureaucracy of the executive having the final authority for all decisions whether big or small. Leadership cited not having received or undergone directional leadership training where they find themselves battling to resolve problems or make more effective and efficient decisions and lead their teams. In an industry that is male dominated, it is difficult to find the appropriate mentor for guidance especially finding a senior female that can perform the task.

An interesting point had arisen from the findings, is that of a supportive organisational culture within the SME organisation, stemming from the advocacy of an open-door policy being consistently promoted. Being female, they should also not deviate or lose the unique female characteristics they have and apply it to their leadership positions.

5.2.2 Research Objective 2

Although a shift has begun in the thoughts of society with regard to females taking up leadership positions, one can argue about whether this shift is occurring quick enough. The challenge remains a discussion point on whether women can also take up managerial roles and be as successful and effective as their male counterparts in leadership positions. The added dilemma is how female leaders compete in the business world with the responsibilities at home and perception of females in the world.

The role congruity theory and social paradigms all have their starting point at that of perception. It was found that certain barriers are still in existence within the SME organisation and have led to certain challenges being experienced such as the glass ceiling, work-life balance, critique, drive and mentorship. Whereas workload and leadership strategy are challenges that is not caused through a barrier but unique to the SME organisation.

5.3 Conceptual Framework

After all the information had been gathered from the participants and analysed, the concepts presented within Chapter 2 was found to be valid for this research study, with an addition:

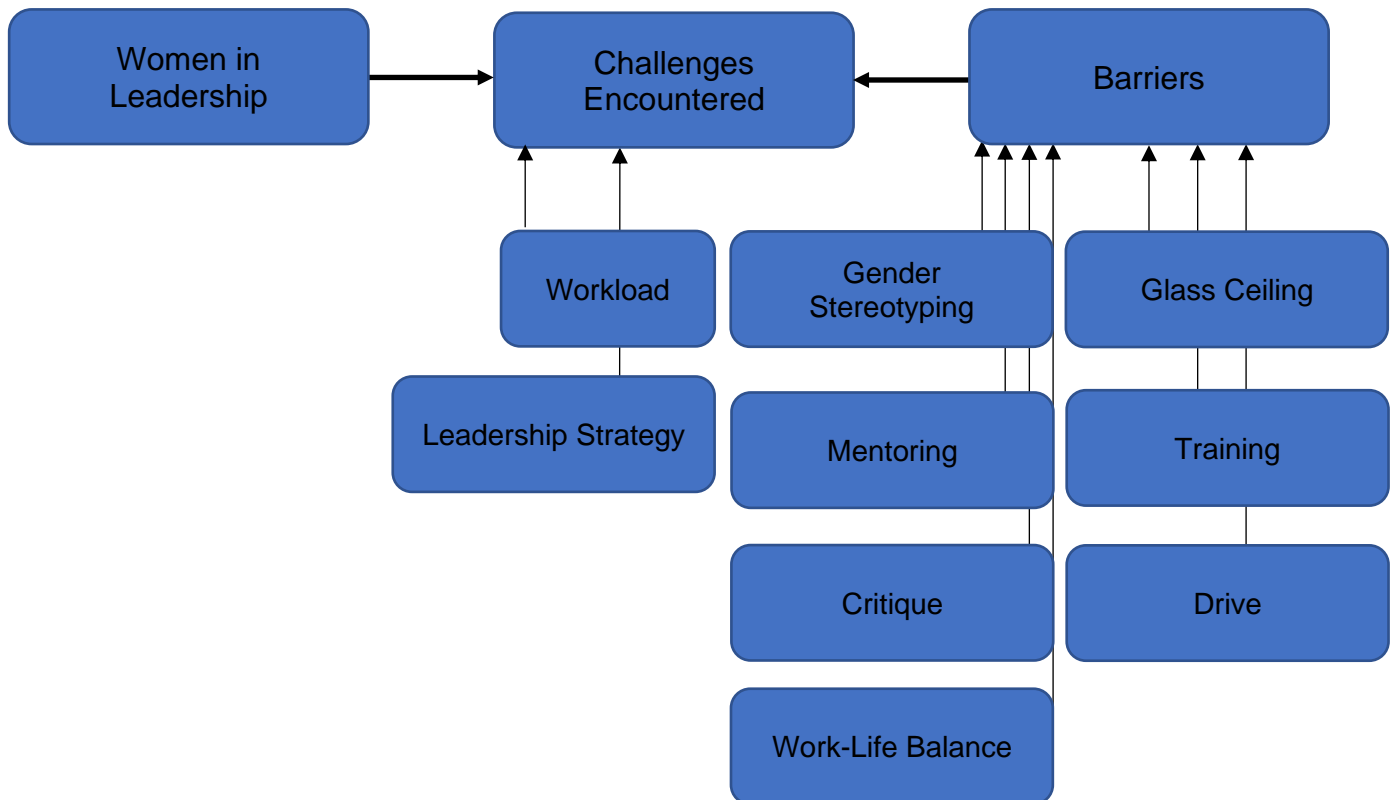


FIGURE 5.1 The concluding conceptual framework

Challenges encountered by women in leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation are, to a certain degree, derived from stereotypical societal views of barriers for women that are still persistent. Partly this is also due to the working environment of an SME organisation.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Work Environment

There is a need for the organisation to work towards removing the glass ceiling associated with SME organisations and environments. This is not to say the

organisational structures must change, but there should be a re-focus on how organisations promote growth. Expanding the workforce horizontally remains a challenge, once this challenge is overcome or worked around, focus can shift to maintaining the workload of female leaders. Individuals are challenged to complete different functions within SME organisations. This in many instances, causes added workloads to female leaders, evident in the organisation chosen for this research study. If the organisation is able to grow gradually in a horizontal space it will see the changes filtering through the organisation which could potentially lead to the organisation growing vertically. This ripple effect of change in organisational structure with the opportunity to grow could possibly lead to more opportunities for the leadership team to grow horizontally and delay the glass ceiling effect in their careers.

Through the interview discussions many female leaders felt they are not entrusted with decision making process. This point was discussed through the research study that leaders within the organisation do not feel they have the autonomy as individual leaders to make decisions and be kept accountable for decisions made. This type of organisational bureaucracy needs to be eliminated and the executive should allow female leaders to make decisions for growth, fostering a leadership style of inclusivity will create a sense of belonging. Once these decision-making responsibilities are shared and entrusted to female leaders, further growth could be expected with the main focus on making informed decisions. This frustration expressed by almost all participants, echoes the same sentiment that if they could be given the opportunity to make decisions, leadership in turn would see that the end goal remains to meet and exceed the organisational strategy put in place by them and executed by the female leaders across the organisation.

5.4.2 Mentorship

Mentorship is a platform from which female leaders within the organisation can be exposed to other female leaders through mentorship programmes. When one has a good mentor that guides and supports their career path, it has been proved to have a major impact on achieving one's career goals. From previous chapters the researcher attempted to explain that in the working world female leaders are still not exposed to

mentors within an organisation and especially not in the SME organisation discussed. Once the SME organisation is comfortable it is an initiative that they can incorporate through the organisation to encourage other to take part and be included in programmes that will allow them to notice other females in the workforce that have the potential to be grow into a leadership role. A mentorship programme that will see the executive mentor senior leaders, senior leaders' mentor junior leaders, and junior leaders mentoring regular staff members.

5.4.3 Training

The organisation tends to ignore the need to upskill their leadership. A recommendation would be that the organisation should identify the need to invest in their leadership. Although people in leadership are equipped with necessary academic qualification, skills and expertise, the organisation fails to ensure that their knowledge base and skills remain updated with the ever-changing working environment, industry, and economy. By investing more in its leadership, this should lead to an increase in morale and overall productivity. Training and development opportunities for women to move up the career ladder and assist them within the position can be considered as one of the solutions to address the challenge of under-representation of women in top management positions and assist them to be able to handle challenges they encounter and overcome barriers they are faced with.

5.4.4 Perception

Change can come from the perception of one changing their views from the traditional or how others look at the world; it can start at a low level or individual views and impact the views of many others. If change happens at a lower level, it will have a greater effect on society and its perceptions. One can discuss change and the expectation in detail, but it should be clear that also the perception of female about other females should be implemented. Females at times can be the greatest impediment in the empowerment of other women towards each other, so it is important that females and especially females within leadership roles change their respective views towards others, not by breaking down other female leaders but rather growing them into leaders.

From an organisation side, the SME can do more to enhance awareness of women in leadership. The executive and more senior leaders should put procedures in place that will allow certain decision to be taken and signed off by mid-level staff member at least. This will assist them to grow and create a mind-set shift. However, it should be re-emphasised that perception is a “social paradigm” only, so much can be done at an organisational level, if individuals within the organisation see the need to change this may be implemented throughout the organisation.

5.5 Limitations

The limitations that have been identified for this research study are:

- A) Only one South African SME pharmaceutical organisations was identified for the study. Future studies could consider increasing the population to include more SME pharmaceutical organisations within a specific range, region, area, or country, or even within different industries.
- B) The organisation had only 23 staff members and therefore, is quite a flat organisational structure: thus, by design, implying limited opportunities for vertical growth. It would have been better if there had been a larger headcount, to examine both horizontal and vertical issues adequately.
- C) The study only selected female leadership members for their views and lived experiences. Future studies could consider increasing the sample selection to include male leaders and/or female and male subordinates in order to gain their views on women in leadership positions in an SME pharmaceutical environment.
- D) Limited theoretical studies have been used, due to the limited frame of the integrated research report. Future studies that are more focussed would be in a position to provide more in-depth insights, as these studies would be in a position to delve into past research that may have been overlooked in this research.

5.6 Report Chapters Summarised

The chapters in this research study were laid out as follow:

Chapter 1: Started the research report with the intention of providing a brief introduction and background into the research study to illustrate the scope and significance. Further identified and discussed the research statement, questions and objectives. An explanation of the purpose of the literature review; research methodology and approach undertaken was provided. Lastly, concluding with ethical consideration.

Chapter 2: This chapter provided literature work on prior research conducted in the area, essentially providing an overview of all the matters relating to the research study. Providing a theoretical framework of the Role Congruity Theory and Social Paradigms, as well as challenges that may be encountered. The chapter concluded with conceptual framework.

Chapter 3: This chapter presented the research design, research approach, sampling, data gathering, analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations that the research study had undertaken. All having been conducted in accordance with the ethical consideration and standards.

Chapter 4: This chapter provided the presentation and discussion on the findings from participants through data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 5: Ending the research report with providing a conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study for future research to consider. The chapter also allowed for a reflection on whether the research questions and objectives have been realised.

5.7 Conclusion

Through the research study it became relevant that even though we live and work in an ever-changing society and working environment, female leaders still have their unique challenges in the corporate world. Organisational leaders have made strides to change the status quo, however, more needs to be done to encourage and promote the role of females in the working environment too bring change around the boardroom table. The pharmaceutical industry and conglomerate organisations must take a leaf from the SME organisation and start providing more options in terms of leadership positions for females, not merely stop at the training and development phase. The SME organisation studied has made enormous strides in changing the status quo of leadership team composition; they challenged the notion that only males should be

leading organisations and through their bold choices saw the organisation grow from strength to strength over the past two decades with females at the stern.

This chapter presented the discussion on conclusions on the research objectives, the conceptual framework validity, recommendations made by the researcher and the limitations of the research study. The chapter concluded with a summary of the research study chapters.

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ANNEXURE 1 – INTERVIEW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions Asked During Individual Interviews

Good day,

I trust that all is well.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. If at any point in time during the interview you feel uncomfortable, please let me know and feel free to ask any questions that you may have as we go along.

Section A: Demographical Information

1) What is your age?

2) What is your marital status?

3) Do you have any children, and if so, how many?

4) What is your highest level of education?

5) What is your job title/function?

6) What is your leadership level (junior, middle, senior management or executive)?

7) How long have you been working within the pharmaceutical industry and for the SME organisation?

--

Section B: Challenges of women in leadership information

8) What was the challenges you had to endeavour to reach your leadership role?

9) Why do you think you had to endeavour these challenges?

10) The challenges encountered, is it unique to you because of your gender? If so, why do you think it is?

11) In your opinion, do you think these challenges are unique to the pharmaceutical industry and an SME pharmaceutical organisation? – please elaborate.

12) What type of support did you receive when you had been appointed in a leadership role? From the organisations, male and female colleagues.

13) What are the challenges you encounter on a daily basis within your role?

14) How do you deal with opinionated critique?

15) In your opinion how do women in leadership positions in this industry handle their roles?

16) Do you think that women are more competitive within this industry and SME pharmaceutical organisation?

17) What would you change about the organisation's leadership strategy and why?

18) Are there any career obstacles you can identify in your organisation that hinders your vertical growth?

19) Does the organisation have the necessary career support development in place?

20) What can the organisation do better to support career advancement and growth to avoid leadership stagnation?

21) How important is mentoring and training towards your career development for you?

22) Is the organisation doing enough with regards to training to ensure their leadership team is equip with the necessary knowledge, skill and expertise?

23) How do you balance family responsibilities, your workload and other responsibilities?

24) What is your view about women taking leadership roles in organisations?

Section C: Perceptions of women in leadership information

25) What sort of reaction did you receive from others, when you showed interest in leadership?

26) How did you obtain your leadership role, through recruitment or promotional growth?

27) How many females are within a leadership role in your organisation?

28) What is your experience with your subordinates both male and female?

29) How would you describe the overall attitude towards female in leadership in the industry?

30) Are men and women leaders treated differently in the industry? How?

31) What would you say is the significance of women leaders in the pharmaceutical industry and SME organisation, what positive and negative do they bring?

--

Section D: Factors affecting women in leadership

32) In your opinion what can be done more to improve the role and status quo of women in the industry?

33) In your view, what are the internal and external factors that leads to barriers being experienced by you in your leadership role?

34) How did you prepare yourself for your leadership role/position? (In terms of training and mentoring).

35) What are your future aspirations in leadership, for advancing your career beyond the current leadership point?

36) What do you think would improve women's participation in leadership positions even further within the industry?

Is there anything else you would like to add before the session is ended?

Thank you for participating in this research study.

ANNEXURE 2 – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa PO Box 392 Unisa 0003 South Africa
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Email: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.sblunisa.ac.za



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

04 August 2022

Title: Examining challenges encountered by women in leadership: A case study on an SA SME pharmaceutical organisation.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Carlyn Jantjes, and I am conducting research towards the completion of a Master of Business Administration degree under the supervision of Noluvuko Mathibe, appointed by the Department of the Graduate School of Business Leadership at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Examining challenges encountered by women in leadership: A case study on an SA SME pharmaceutical organisation.

WHAT IS THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study seeks to examine challenges that are being encountered by women within leadership positions within an SME pharmaceutical organisation in South Africa and to what the reasoning factors or barriers may be for them having to encounter the identified challenges.

I am conducting this research to find out whether women in leadership within an SME pharmaceutical organisation are encountering any challenges, what the reasoning factors or barriers are that leads to women in leadership within an SME pharmaceutical organisation in the industry having to be faced with the challenges identified.

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WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been selected to form part of the research study as you currently or previously were within a leadership position in an SME pharmaceutical organisation. Forming part of a well-represented female leadership team of an SME organisation within the pharmaceutical industry of South Africa.

The study will entail that data for the research be collected from the population identified as the Medical Nutritional Institute SA (Pty) Ltd, within a combination sample size of 13 leadership staff members both present and past to the organisation.

Your personal contact details have been obtained from your present or past employer of the Medical Nutritional Institute SA (Pty) Ltd organisational proxy. Your work and personal contact information obtained from the organisational proxy will be kept confidential and only used to liaise with in respect of this study matter.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY / WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

The study involves for the researcher to conduct an in-depth interview with each participant individually whereby a set of semi-structured questions will be asked. The questions have been constructed in the following format, of which the format is open ended:

1) Section A: Demographical Information

This section of the interview questions will require the participants to provide more personal information about themselves. To make mention of a few, it will be in the form of age, gender, qualification, job title and work experience years.



2) Section B: Challenges of women in leadership information

This section of the interview questions will require the participants to provide information regarding their experiences and challenges which they encounter within the industry and working within an SME organisation.

3) Section C: Perceptions of women in leadership industry information

This section of the interview will require the participants to provide information with regards to how according to their viewpoints they are being perceived and received within the industry and SME organisation.

4) Section D: Factors affecting women in leadership

This section of the interview will require the participants to provide information to what their views are on the contributing factors are of the challenges being encountered by them.

The interview will last approximately between 45 to 60 minutes and will take place on a date, at a place and time most convenient to the participants. The interview sessions with the permission of the participant will be recorder by means of audio in order to ensure accuracy within the analysis of data. Alternatively, the option is also available for only notes to be taken down during the interview sessions should the participant be more comfortable with this medium.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to partake within the study, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form for participation. It is to be note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

Participants that are currently employed by the Medical Nutritional Institute SA (Pty) Ltd should note that their decision to participate or not within the study will in no manner influence their current employment conditions, as the research study is merely for academic purpose for the researcher.



Therefore, all participation to the research study is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

By identifying the challenges that are being encountered by women in leadership and the reasoning factors or barriers leading to the challenges, the benefits of this study will be to provide recommendations on incentives and enablers to the management of the SME organisation. In order for the management of the SME organisation to be within a position to realign their personnel objectives and parameters in order to provide more specific career guidance and support. That will see their female leaders being better equipped to handle and overcome challenges they may encounter in their working careers and environment, and to work effectively within the industry and organisation.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not be subjected to any form of physical, emotional or mental discomfort or harm. All information that is gathered from the participants, analysis concluded, content and recommendations to be made in this integrated management research report project will only be made available to the organisation, on formal request, and the academic institution of registration, UNISA.

No risk or inconvenience is attributable to the participants nor the organisation upon participating in the research study. As all participants and organisational information will be kept confidential.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All interviews conducted will be in a setting that is chosen or known to the participants. The names of the participants will be kept confidential, as it will not be recorded on audio or in writing. Therefore, no one will be able to connect a participant to any answers given.

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As all participants answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (for example: Participant 1, Participant 2 etc.) and they will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

All information obtained from participants and conclusion drawn on this research study will be kept confidential and anonymous. As only the researched will have access to the information and analyse the data obtained. Any audio recording will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. It is to be noted that a report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of participants answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of 5 years in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher private residence for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

After the period of 5 years have lapsed, all paper-based information collected by the researcher will be shredded and electronically stored information will be deleted from the electronic device on which had been saved.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

The participation in the research study is entirely voluntary and no payment in kind will be made to any participant in order to participate within the research study. The participants will also not incur additional costs on their behave for having the interview on a virtual

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platform. Should interview be in person, the interviewer will meet the participants in a setting they have chosen, as to minimise cost incurred on the participants' side.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of the Graduate School of Business Leadership, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Carlyn Jantjes on 071 790 3315 or 61949655@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for a period of 12 months from date of final review feedback for UNISA.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Carlyn Jantjes on 071 790 3315 or 61949655@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Noluvuko Mathibe on 011 745 2011 or 082 900 3663 or Noluvuko.Mathibe@africanresponse.co.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for your prospects to participate in this study.

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Thank you.

Ms Carlyn Jantjes

UNISA Research Student

ANNEXURE 3 – INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTION IN AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECT

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Informed consent for participation in an academic research project

Examining challenges encountered by women in leadership: A case study on an SA SME organisation.

Dear Participant,

You are herewith invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Carlyn Jantjes, a student in the Master of Business Administration at UNISA's Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL).

The purpose of the study is to investigate:

SME organisations are remarkably smaller than their conglomerate counterparts in size, it is therefore understandable that they (SME) would have different organisational culture and working environments. Women finding themselves within a leadership position in an SME pharmaceutical working environment encounter various challenges on a daily basis due to an array of factors. Against this background the researcher seeks to examine challenges that are encountered by women in leadership positions in the pharmaceutical industry of an SME organisation and what might be the reasoning factors or barriers contributing to the challenges faced by women in leadership of an SME pharmaceutical organisation.

All your answers will be treated as confidential, and you will not be identified in any of the research reports emanating from this research. As all participants answers to the research study will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (for example: Participant 1, Participant 2 etc.) to ensure anonymity.

Your participation in this study is very important to me. However, you may choose not to participate in the research study and may also withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative consequences to you.

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Please answer the questions in the interview questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible during the interview session. This should not take more than 45-60 minutes of your time.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

Please contact my supervisor, Nolvuko Mathibe (Nolvuko.Mathibe@africanresponse.co.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study. Please sign below to indicate your willingness to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Carlyn Jantjes
UNISA Researcher Student

I, _____ [PARTICIPANT'S NAME], herewith give my consent to participate in the study. I have read the letter and understand my rights with regard to participating in the research.

Participant's Signature

Date

ANNEXURE 4 – ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South Africa
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

25 July 2022

Ref #: 2022_SBL_MBA_009_FA
Name of applicant: Ms CL Jantjes
Student #: 61949655

Dear Ms Jantjes

Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Ms CL Jantjes (61949655@mylife.unisa.ac.za , 071 790 3315)

Supervisor: Ms N Mathibe, (Noluvuko.Mathibe@africanresponse.co.za , 082 900 3663)

Project Title: Examining challenges encountered by women in leadership: A case study on an SA SME pharmaceutical organisation..

Qualification: Master in Business Administration (MBA)

Expiry Date: December 2023

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance, SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Outcome of the SBL Research Committee: Approval is granted until December 2023

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 22/07/2022.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached
- 2) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 3) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.
- 4) An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.
- 5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

45 years Building leaders who go beyond



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Kind regards,

NBW Mlitwa

Prof N Mlitwa

Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee

011 - 652 0381/ wiltonb@unisa.ac.za

Pmsweli

Prof P Msweli

Executive Dean: Graduate School of Business Leadership

011- 652 0256/mswelp@unisa.ac.za

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ANNEXURE 5 – SUPERVISOR LETTER OF CONSENT

MBA5929 CONSENT TO SUBMIT RESEARCH REPORT FOR EXAMINATION 2022

Consent is hereby given to:

Student Name: Carlyn Lereiz Jantjes

Student Number: s61949655, to submit her research report in its final form.

Supervisor Signature:

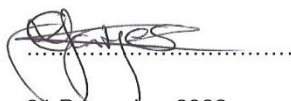


Date: 21 December 2022

Supervisor Name: Nolvuko Mathibe

The student acknowledges that sufficient feedback was provided by the supervisor and that she took the responsibility to attend to the feedback in a way that satisfies the requirements for a research dissertation on the MBA and MBL level.

Student Signature:



Date: 21 December 2022

ANNEXURE 6 – TURNITIN REPORT

Digital receipt



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

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EXAMINING CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN IN
LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY ON AN SA SME PHARMACEUTICAL
ORGANISATION.

RESEARCH REPORT

Presented to the

Graduate School of Business Leadership
University of South Africa

by

CARLYN LEREIZ JANTJES
Student Number: s61949655

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Supervisor:
Ms. Nolonko Mithbe
Date:
21 December 2022

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ANNEXURE 7 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OWN WORK

ANNEXURE 7 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OWN WORK

I, the undersigned **CARLYN LEREIZ JANTJES**, student number: **61949655**, hereby declare that this integrated research report is my own original work with the exception of quotations and references which are attributed on their sources. This integrated research report has not been previously submitted to any other university and will not be presented at any other university for similar or other degree award.

SIGNATURE: Ms. CL Jantjes



DATE OF SIGNATURE: 21 December 2022

ANNEXURE 8 – LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATE

expertenglisheditorscc

CERTIFICATE

Expert English Editors CC 2007/147556/23
Member: J R Levey
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have edited this document for English style, language usage, logic and consistency; it is the responsibility of the author to manually accept or reject the suggested changes and interact with the comments to finalise the text. The references need to be completed and finalised by the client.

Disclaimer: The student, Ms CARLYN LEREIZ JANTJES Student Number: s61949655 has been advised to rework sections of her study before submission.

Author: **Carlyn Lereiz Jantjes**

Student number: **s61949655**

Title: **EXAMINING CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY ON A SOUTH AFRICAN SME PHARMACEUTICAL ORGANISATION**

Degree: **MBA (Master of Business Administration)**

Institution: **Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa**

Sincerely

Dr Carol A. Macdonald for Expert English Editors

M.A. Linguistics (Wits); M.A. Linguistics (Reading University UK.) PhD Edinburgh (UK)

Electronically signed

2022-12-12

Members: J Levey. Reg. No: 2007/147556/23

ANNEXURE 9 – PROOF OF REGISTRATION



1606

JANTJES C L MRS
1806 ESSENWOOD CRESCENT
NOORDWYK
1687

STUDENT NUMBER : 61949655

ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861 670 411
FAX : (012) 429-4150
eMAIL : sbl@unisa.ac.za

2022-01-09

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION EXAM.DATE	CENTRE (PLACE)
Proposed Qualification: MBA (90070)						
Study units registered without formal exams:						
MBA5929		Integrated Management Project	48	E		
Study units registered for exam period January/February 2022:						
@ MBA5904		Managing Human Capital	24	E	As per dept requirements	
@ MBA5905		Strategic Management	24	E	Will be informed	
@ Exam transferred from previous academic year						

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

To avoid cancellation of your registration or examination entry and forfeiting your minimum initial payment, you must submit the following to the Registrar (Academic) by return of mail:

- 204 The Research outline as indicated on the departmental website for the qualification for which you have applied.
- 204 A copy of the transcript of your complete academic record(s), issued by the Registrar of the university/s previously attended by you.

Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register).

Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study, and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.

Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESONline for study material and other important information.

Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.

Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

RECEIPT NUMBER: 20220109-0525-027
CASH: 762.00
CHEQUE: (Straight)
CARD: 762.00
POSTAL ORDER: (Straight)
MONEY ORDER: (Straight)
FOREIGN: (Straight)

STUDY FEES: 762.00

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 26678.00



Yours faithfully,



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