A Positive Leadership Identity Formation Framework for Women Leaders Towards Overcoming Barriers of Intersectionality

by

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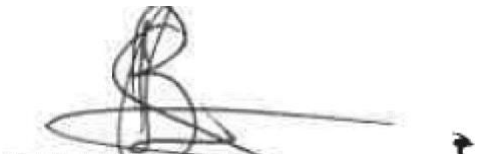

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Abstract

Intersectionality seems to be a barrier to the career progression of women leaders. Gender differences and work-life balance in leadership and career advancement remain more challenging for women compared to men. Despite a wealth of research and decades of implementing various equality regulations and work-life balance initiatives, the number of women progressing to leadership positions in organisations seems to remain low. The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of women leaders and how they overcame the challenges throughout their careers to progress as leaders. The primary objective was to develop a leadership framework for women leaders to support them in overcoming barriers of intersectionality and work-life conflict.

The study adopted a phenomenological interpretivist approach with a two-phased sequential qualitative research design. Phase 1 comprised 12 in-depth interviews with female leaders at management and executive levels from both private and public sectors. Thematic content analysis was conducted and in total, 18 themes within 5 categories emerged from the data. The themes describe the dynamics and the impact of family background and society's perceptions of career women, especially relating to intersectionality. Themes such as Self-leadership, Hope, Positive self-esteem, Resilience, and Positive work ethics describe the behaviour of women leader to overcome the barriers of intersectionality.

Phase 2 comprised a mini focus group with 5 female subject matter experts in organisational psychology. This phase explored the emerging themes from Phase 1 to co-construct a final leadership framework. The themes were integrated into the final framework with 3 main concepts namely *Intrapersonal Capital*, *Interpersonal Capital*, and *Institutional Capital*. Collectively, the positive interaction between the 3C's may lead to *Positive Leadership Identity Formation* (PLIF). The framework can be used as a consulting instrument to coach and develop women leaders towards career progression.

Future research could include the development of a measuring instrument in a quantitative research design based on the PLIF framework.

Keywords: Intersectionality; Psychological Capital; Positive Psychology; Women Leadership; Self-leadership; Positive Leadership Identity Formation Framework

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AA	Affirmative action
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
BEE	Black economic empowerment
CGE	Commission of Gender Equity
HERO	Hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism
PLIF	Positive leadership identity formation
PP	Positive psychology
PPC	Positive psychology coaching
PPI	Positive psychology interventions
Psycap	Psychological capital
SHRM	Society for Human Resource Management
TA	Thematic analysis
TCA	Thematic content analysis
UNILO	United Nations International Labour Organisation
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFA	Working from anywhere
WFB	Work and family balance
WFC	Work-family conflict
WLB	Work-life balance
WOLD	Women-only leadership development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Our choices show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.

- J.K. Rowling

Women leadership is a global term used to describe the participation and influence of women in various domains of society, including politics, business, education, health, and culture (Hoobler, Masterson, Nkomo & Michel, 2018: 2473). Women leaders face many challenges and opportunities, including gender stereotyping, discrimination, bias, social expectations, and empowerment (Eagly & Carli, 2018). The path to flourishing as a mother, a wife and a career women depends to a great extent on the choices women make, which includes taking control of thoughts, behaviour and activities, i.e. leading the "self" towards flourishing and overcoming obstacles in career progression (Wissing, Potgieter, Guse, Khumalo & Nel, 2014). The same authors quote a Spanish poet who said in one of his poems: "We make the path by walking on it".

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to reaching harmony and integration between women leaders' professional and personal spheres (Kalliath & Brough, 2008: 323; Brough, Timms, Chan & Hawkes, 2020). WLB is important because of women's multiple roles and responsibilities in their jobs, families, and communities. It can affect their health, well-being, productivity, satisfaction, and happiness. Organisational culture, policies, practices, norms, and values are all challenges influencing WLB.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces an international perspective on women's leadership and a leadership framework, including psychological capital and its internal resources, hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, to help women manage challenging situations. The research background, theoretical and philosophical frameworks, rationale, and methodology will be discussed.

Globally, most professional women carry the burden of dual responsibilities, such as work diligence and familial duties, typically disrupting their work-life balance. Collegiality facilitates a cordial work environment for women leaders; however, it is an

informal mechanism rooted in a collectivist society (Dousin, Collins & Kler, 2021). The phenomenon became prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic when working from home (WFH) became the norm. The phenomenon continued after the world returned to “normal,” increasingly blurring the boundaries between work and family life (Junker et al., 2021).

Most women leaders struggle to balance their work, personal, and family life while attempting to be productive because of typical societal opinions about women and the lack of structural support (Collins, 2019; Dousin et al., 2021). Therefore, the research proposition is that creating a leadership coaching framework specific to women leaders’ needs could help women overcome dilemmas and reinforce self-mastery and personal growth.

It is important to explore why, despite introducing family-friendly policies such as flexitime and compassion, women still struggle to disengage from work when participating in personal and family activities (Collins, 2019). Furthermore, knowing how women leaders manage their demanding work and family life with or without organisational and societal support is critical as to how current gendered WLB arrangements and policies have increased their challenges.

Banerjee (2016) and Holvino (2016) highlighted the need for empirical research on the intersection of gender and social diversity in organisations. More studies on intersectionality as an analytical strategy regarding work, identity, and complex social inequalities are crucial. Intersectionality is thus the “overlapping” of social attributes, including gender, race, class, ability, religion, and sexual orientation. Such a structure can be used to appreciate how systematic injustices and social inequalities ensue on multifaceted levels, mainly referring to South African apartheid history (Segalo, 2009; 2013; 2020).

In addition, work and family life issues have evolved, posing various commitment challenges. Research has indicated that job satisfaction and successful performance at home minimise conflict and lead to work-family integration (Sultana et al., 2021). The introduction of leave and flexi-time policies (work arrangements) and work distribution and reward schemes significantly impact women leaders’ work and family life. Practical implications with widespread and ongoing consequences must be

identified, given that macro-level changes will continue to disrupt women's WLB (Donnelly, 2016; Hughes & Donnelly, 2022).

Work and family life comprises three main components: i) time balance (reflecting an equal or fair amount of time spent on work and family roles), ii) satisfaction balance (same level of satisfaction obtained from work and family roles), and iii) involvement balance (equal levels of psychological engagement in work and family roles). With the emergence of the Internet and online technology devices over time, communication methods have improved considerably (Currie & Evaline, 2017; Hawkins, Hill, Ferris & Weitzman, 2001).

Further to women leaders' perpetual challenges, research has added the dynamics of positive psychology (PP) as a theoretical paradigm to the ongoing debate (Cabanas, 2019). Positive psychology has been firmly institutionalised as a global field of study, especially in the past decade. Its promise of creating well-being has captured the desire for solutions in times of significant social uncertainty, instability, and insecurity. Gruman, Lumley and Morales (2018) and pioneering authors in PP (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2015; 2018) revealed how, towards the end of the last century, PP progressed to foster science and professions focused on a better understanding of what makes life worth living and resolving long-standing points of contention relating to measuring well-being.

Therefore, PP intended to rebalance psychology's traditional overemphasis on the negative side of life (Kashdan, McKnight & Goodman, 2022: 204; Kashdan & Biswas-Diener, 2014). However, it was found that PP alone has not achieved the WLB it was meant to produce (Pawelski, 2016a; 2016b). This point will be further discussed.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Studies on gender egalitarianism in 36 European, USA, Middle East and South African countries explored the fundamentals of gender equality and differences in early occupational accomplishments (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Wood, Ramirez & Zhou, 2018). Findings indicated that supervisors' or managers' perceptions significantly reflect societal gender stereotypes. For example, supervisors in low egalitarian countries rated women lower in WLB than men. However, in highly egalitarian countries, women and men were rated equal in managing WLB. Therefore, Eagly and Wood (2012)

recommended further research to explore whether WLB criteria vary according to gender and country, as it might address the common belief that women in leadership roles lack structural support (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Literature has indicated that culture and societal orientation play a significant role in women leaders managing work and family life, such as the research by Clark and Baltes (2015, 2017), which detailed a difference in balancing work and family obligations between women in the Netherlands and Pakistan. The findings were that 127 respondents in the Netherlands were more likely to experience work interference by family obligations than employees in Pakistan. The conclusion was that the Dutch are culturally more individualistic, while Pakistanis tend to be more collectivist. Pakistanis focus on family welfare and view any work positively contributing to family life instead of competing against it.

These findings created the desire to explore the collectivist-individualistic debate on WLB from a South African perspective to better understand its impact on women leaders in managing work and family life across different generations. Work-family balance (WFB) views and values differ according to generation (Waworuntu, Kainde & Mandagi, 2022; Aydemir, Dinc & Caglar, 2016). Despite numerous studies on work and family life, little research has been conducted on the impact of work-family conflict (WFC) on women's leadership development. Research clarifying how social support and work-family dynamics influence the blurring boundaries between work and WFC can enhance women's leadership capabilities (Donnelly, 2016; Kalysh, Kulik & Perera, 2016; Loeffen, 2016; McMullan; Lapierre & Li, 2018; Place & Varderman-Winter, 2018).

Connecting work and family life practice with leadership research and education allows for exploring how these dynamics help or hinder women's leadership development. Indications are that more research needs to be done regarding how WLB affects leadership, how gender affects structural support, and how much support would impact women's leadership trajectories (Kalysh et al., 2016; Olsen, Parson, Martins & Ivanaj, 2016; Place & Vardenman-Winter, 2018; Orbach, 2017).

Moreover, Braun and Peus (2018) and Place and Varden-Winter (2018) indicated a lack of empirical research on the relationship between leaders and WLB, specifically, research on how women leaders internally perceive and address their WLB. Lumsden

and Black (2018) and Van Gelderen, Conlin (2017) suggested an implicit expectation that women leaders should have the inherent capacity to manage both work and family (emotionally) better than their male counterparts. However, they acknowledged a lack of research on women leaders' emotional work experiences, especially in male-dominated industries where they are expected to balance several roles at work and home. Thus, the present research interrogates the lived experiences of women leaders in male-dominated organisations.

There continues to be a slow pace of change regarding WLB challenges, affecting women's representation in top management. Below is a picture of the current employment equity at the leadership level in South Africa from the latest report of the Department of Labour for 2023.

Table 1. 1 Employment Equity

Top Management

Period	**AM**	**CM**	**IM**	**WM**	**AF**	**CF**	**IF**	**WF**
2022	8.4%	3.4%	7.8%	52.6%	5.4%	2.4%	3.8%	13.2%

Senior Management

Period	**AM**	**CM**	**IM**	**WM**	**AF**	**CF**	**IF**	**WF**
2022	12.2%	4.8%	8.3%	36.5%	7.8%	3.5%	5.0%	18.6%

Middle Management

Period	**AM**	**CM**	**IM**	**WM**	**AF**	**CF**	**IF**	**WF**
2022	19.3%	5.9%	6.6%	23.8%	15.5%	5.2%	5.2%	15.8%

Description: **AF**: African male, **CM:** Coloured male, **IM**: Indian male, **WM**: White male, **AF:** African female, **CF:** Coloured female, **IF**: Indian female, **WF**: White female

Source: Department of Labour (2023)

The table indicates the lack of commitment of organisations and government concerning African women leadership (Dept. of Labour, 2023).

1.2.1 Policymaking

There is a need for support and commitment at the policy level to ensure that issues affecting women's work and family life are realised in organisations for their representation at the top level (Collins, 2000, 2015, 2019; Lombardo, 2009). To highlight this point, research by Collins (2000) showed that theorising intersectionality in policymaking still prevails. The United Nations Development Fund for Women encouraged the worldwide use of intersectionality theory, resource guides and toolkits in policy-oriented knowledge generation (Kabir, Thomson & Abukito, 2022). That implies that intersectionality frameworks have become instrumental in the national policymaking of most Western countries (Lombardo, 2009).

The United Nations International Labour Organisation report (UNILO) (2019) revealed that women's global labour force participation rate was 49%, 27 percentage points lower than men's. Engaging more women in the world of work would positively impact their well-being since many women would like to work. The fact that globally, half of the women are out of the labour force when 58% of them would prefer paid jobs strongly indicates that substantial challenges restrict their capability and freedom to participate. Therefore, the immediate concern for policymakers should be to alleviate the constraints women face in entering the employment market and address the barriers they face. Society needs to start changing its attitude towards the role of women in the world of work. Too often, society members still fall back on the excuse that it is unacceptable for women to have a paid job. Policies should address the socio-economic factors influencing women's participation and introduce strategies to improve WFB (UNILO, 2019).

Recent leadership research presented women's struggles with WFB, gender bias cultures and the expectance of women to assume status quo leadership approaches (Martin & Edwards, 2018). The pressure to nurture and increase women in leadership is increasing, yet women continue to be played down in organisational leadership positions. Underrepresentation may be perpetuated due to men and women experiencing unique differences in leadership development and execution. Women are better able to develop unique leadership identities and successfully address their leadership obligations when they learn from and experience supportive settings and

are offered opportunities to balance diverse obligations (Brue & Brue, 2018; Kalysh et al., 2018; Place & Varderman-Winter, 2018; Orbach, 2017).

1.2.2 South African Women

There have been nominal studies on women leadership, intersectionality, and WLB in the South African context (Fine and Asch, 2018; KPMG Human & Social Sciences Report, 2017; Society for Human Resource Management, 2017; Anzaldua, 2016; Boonzaaier, 2015; Geldenhuys, 2011; Dhamoon, 2011). Where people co-exist within different societies, genders, races, classes, and other arrangements, they become so entrenched in each other's lives that it becomes difficult to differentiate between insiders and outsiders. Raising the notion of intersectionality, Segalo (2014) proposed a meaningful consideration of the interconnectedness of people's lived experiences.

Pioneering author Yuval-Davis (2009) stressed that while there was an increase in the number of women occupying political spaces in South Africa, the silence around women's struggles persisted, questioning their decision-making powers. There are continuous rules and regulations, not to mention perceptions and attitudes specific to women. That may be perceived as 'conditional belonging' where women are accepted as full citizens with limited power. Current social and economic concerns can be attributed to historical exclusion and discrimination systems. Many voices on the periphery struggle to find their way into the policy papers to determine and influence decisions about people's lives. There is a need to create a scholarly stance where counter-narratives and voices can be heard in a quest for democracy and cohesiveness (Yuval-Davis, 2009).

Geldenhuys and Henn (2017) found that, in South Africa, many Black women continue to carry the multiple burdens of caring for the household while working full-time, thus making it difficult to integrate into the public sphere. Furthermore, genuine integration is not easily attained, and discussions are often artificial and problematic.

In South Africa, many Black women continue to experience what Fine and Torre (2019) called the "presence of an absence" where previously shut doors, such as workplaces and educational accomplishments, are still unavailable. The "presence" may remain somewhat of a façade for them as they continue to face challenges linked to their gender. Whilst Black women increasingly occupy the political sphere

(government and parliament), and their presence is undeniable, challenges concerning their lived realities continue to confront them.

Despite South Africa introducing regulations to address historical imbalances, legislation such as Employment Equity (EE) still faces barriers and unintended prejudice. Mayer (2017) indicated that Black women leaders feel double discriminated against through gender and race and are caught up in postcolonial struggles, a discourse of power, dominance, inferiority, and superiority.

Although Black women will eventually be offered equal employment opportunities, barriers still exist between employers' perceptions of gender diversity and the role of women in the organisation, society, and family (Fernandez, Koma & Lee, 2018). No country yet has completely eradicated gender issues, such as discrimination, abuse, sexual harassment, and patriarchy. Women are still considered less skilled and less qualified for specific jobs (Fernandez et al., 2018). Their presence in organisations is viewed as "beneficial," mainly if political and societal demands for gender equality influence their appointment (Mousa, 2021).

On the notion of flexitime in the workplace, a national study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2017) on employers in South Africa found that even though more employers considered ways to support the return from parental aid and caregiving for women from 2014 to 2017, time to deal with personal and family matters during the workday remained challenging to manage. The research indicated an increase in the percentage of employers allowing some employees to return to work after birth (73% in 2014 to 81% in 2017). There was also an increase in employers allowing employees to regularly work at home (33% in 2014 to 40% in 2017).

However, the research also found there was a decrease in the percentage of employers allowing some employees to take time off to address important family or personal needs without loss of compensation (87% in 2014, down to 81% in 2017). The study also revealed that the proportion of employers who offered work flexibility and other options to all or most workers was significantly lower, ranging from 8% to 59% (SHRM). These findings required further investigation into flexitime dynamics in South African workplaces.

Although studies have focused on women's challenges and representation in organisations, there is still a gap regarding improving the status quo. The Commission for Gender Equality report (CGE) (2019) suggested that the goal of gender equality remains vague in the South African private sector, revealing the challenges efforts face in transforming gender relations. South Africa has a framework of gender-friendly legislation and policies. However, women continue to face severe gender-related constraints sustaining their constitutional human rights in the private and public sectors because of restricted or unequal opportunities. The report specified the lack of willingness to take gender equality seriously, ineffective institutional structures and the capacity to comply with current legislation and policy requirements, and a lack of establishing and implementing internal gender-sensitive policies, programmes, and strategies (Commission for Gender Equality, 2019).

Work and family life policies have provided little insight into WLB, especially flexi-time, in the South African working context (Downes & Koekemoer, 2017). These authors covered the importance of flexi-time in the South African workplace for mothers of all races and flexible working arrangements, including increased productivity, employee loyalty, and commitment (Downes & Koekemoer, 2012). Despite the apparent awareness of flexi-time in organisations, studies have revealed a significant lack of knowledge and understanding about its use. Hence, the earnestness to investigate the need for gender-sensitive work and family life policies and the extent to which gendered WLB arrangements potentially challenge women leaders.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMAN LEADERS AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Gender studies originated in the social sciences and humanities, covering intersectionality, gender social identity, race social identity, and intergenerational diversity, evoking debates regarding their meaning and usefulness for research and teaching. Therefore, these concepts are introduced and defined. Other perceptions discussed are women leadership and work-life balance, the new WLB post-COVID, and women's leadership coaching.

1.3.1 Terminology

This section focuses on the terminology intersectionality, social identity, social identity and gender, social identity and race, and intergenerational identity.

1.3.1.1 Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989), a Black United States (US) feminist activist and critical legal race scholar, introduced the term intersectionality to define how Black women experienced the unique combination of racism and sexism, where race and sex discrimination were treated as separate matters in the US Law and other feminist and antiracist activism. Central to Crenshaw's (1989) activism on intersectionality, the fundamental and explicit nature was grounded in women of colour perceptions and experiences. These experiences did not represent bias but formed the basis for analysing explanatory power and potential beyond practice. Thus, intersectionality formed the core of Crenshaw's critique that the experiences and challenges of Black women were often overlooked in both feminist and antiracist discourse.

Collins (1990) viewed intersectionality within a feminist theory as deepening the understanding of complexities associated with differences, enabling the scrutiny of how gender, race, ethnicity, class, and other identities, influenced by societal power discrepancies, create complex multiple disadvantages for people of difference. Crenshaw (1994) and Collins (2000) presented stories of feminists of colour that challenged white feminists theorising inequality in the US. It stimulated new thinking about analysing the diversity of women's experiences and their resulting marginalisation, widely accepted as intersectionality.

Intersectionality is thus a feminist sociological approach to how individuals, groups and societies operate, considering multiple pioneering sources of individual identity exemplary of current diverse management practices (Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Benschop, 2006; Van der Brink, Benschop, Dennissen, 2020). Over the years, intersectionality theory has been widely debated with limited application in empirical research (Ozbilgin, 2015,2023). However, researchers have been eager to remedy this problem, contributing insightful research on how the theory can be applied and further developed (Atewologun, 2018).

1.3.1.2 Social identity

According to Anker and Felski (2017), a social class is a distinct group in society with common economic, cultural, and political status. Acker (2006) asserted that the concept of class highlights the economic experiences of white men more clearly than those of white women or people of colour because it was developed from a privileged white male perspective. As stated by the 18th-century philosopher Karl Marx, what distinguishes class is those with property and those without. He identified three social stratifications: political power, economic means, and community status (social prestige).

Although Black people had little political power before 1994, using social and economic status to differentiate in different communities was prevalent in South Africa. One of the main differentiators in social status was education. If a person had tertiary education, they were respected as upper class. People from urban areas were also given higher social status than those from rural areas. Social stratification within the Black community was based on privileges offered by the apartheid government. Indians were considered superior to other Black people, followed by Coloureds, while Africans were the lowest class (Acker, 2006, 2012).

Industrial societies are further distinguished by several prominent social divisions: social class based on position in the economic production and distribution system, gender, and racial or ethnic categories. Three factors shape people's most significant returns and advantages: consequences of class, race or ethnicity, and gender. These factors became evident in the distribution of earnings and wealth, judgement and evaluation of social prestige, access to political power and life chances, health care, justice, and educational opportunities (Rothman, 2018).

1.3.1.3 Social identity and gender

Gender is important in defining the power, privilege and possibilities that some people have and others do not have in a given society (Council of Europe, 2023). It affects progress towards equality and freedom from discrimination. Thus, gender is a social structure that places women and men in different and unequal societal positions based on expectations, division of labour and access to power and resources, shaping people's life experiences. It functions as a social category like race and class,

establishing life possibilities and directing people's social relations with others (Andersen, 1993: 40).

Franken, Woodward, Cabo and Bagilhole (2009) viewed gender as a complicated, multilayered social system that gives meaning to the biological differences between men and women operating at three levels: social category, psychological aspects, and power relations and hierarchies.

1.3.1.4 Social identity and race

Crossman (2019) defined race as a social category or social construct distinctly based on certain characteristics, some of which are biological, that have been assigned social importance in society. It is not the biological characteristics per se that define racial groups but how groups have been treated historically and socially. Society assigns people to racial categories, such as Black and White, not because of science, logic, or fact but because of social experiences (Gannon, 2016).

Franken, Woodward, Cabo and Bagilhole (2009) stated that ethnicity and race are two sides of the same coin. The authors defined ethnicity as a social system that gives meaning to ethnic differences between people. Those differences are based on people's origin, appearance, history, culture, language, and religion (Franken et al., 2009: 9). There are four racial classifications in South Africa: Blacks (Africans, Coloureds, and Indians) and Whites.

1.3.1.5 Intergenerational diversity

A 'generation' is a cohort of people born within a certain period (Oxford Languages, online). Bennett, Pitt & Price, (2012) labelled individuals according to chronological age based on the biological rhythm of birth and death. He defined generations as a useful construct beyond age, a gestalt, a fundamental confluence of biology and history. (Bennett et al.,, 2012) positioned generations as a cultural phenomenon as early as 1977. Since then, the 'generation' definition has evolved and spread into the workplace, creating new challenges about the impact of generation issues in the workplace (Bennett et al., 2012).

A study by Baran and Klos (2014) outlined several areas where intergenerational diversity management could build core competencies in new areas, focusing on the learning process, marketing, systems organisation, knowledge creation, and communication. It could improve existing skills and knowledge levels and introduce the

principle of knowledge management between different generations within an organisation (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

The conclusion is that intersectionality is a method of analysis that recognises that people's experiences of power and inequality are constituted not simply by gender or gender and class but by the places they occupy on many salient and changing axes of power existing in any given time and place. The categories people occupy are fluid and changing (Williams, 2018).

1.3.2 Women in Leadership and Work-life Balance

Work-life balance and leadership are intertwined (Mavin & Grandy, 2018; Jammaers & Williams, 2020) as management encourages and provides employees with WLB interventions. Researchers noticed the positive long-term effect these concessions have on worker productivity. Moreover, women leaders who provided social support initiatives acknowledged improved relationships with their followers, enhanced job satisfaction, and reduced work-family conflict among employees (Braun & Peus, 2018; Kalysch et al., 2016; Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2018).

Over the years, attention has been drawn to the problem of women leaders and parenting and addressing the challenges of caregiving while working (Mavin & Grandy, 2016; Sallee, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). These studies indicated that despite an abundance of educated women, the workplace environment is still not conducive to allowing women to be both mothers and careerwomen. With all these challenges, women often find it difficult to balance work and family life, being forced to choose between these critical factors. It leads to women being underrepresented in the workplace, as circumstances force them to stay home despite being suitably qualified.

1.3.2.1 Glass ceiling

In 1978, Lodon coined the phrase "glass ceiling" as a metaphorical invisible social barrier that prevents women from being promoted to managerial and executive jobs or rising beyond a certain hierarchy within an organisation (Lodon, 2017). The term was then broadened to include discrimination against all minorities (Kagan, 2022). A study by Babic and Hansez (2021) indicated that working from home fully impacts the effect of the glass ceiling on job strain and engagement, causing job dissatisfaction and intent to quit. Gender stigma, including WLB, created a glass ceiling for females. Glass

ceiling barriers in the corporate ladder have forced females who wished to advance their careers to act like men in the workplace to prove their “masculinity” (Buddhapriya, 2017).

1.3.2.2 Women Leadership- South African context

Numerous socio-cultural practices,especially patriarchy and religion in African communities deprive women of equality and justice across all sectors of society. Women leaders bemoan cultural tendencies at work and that the choice between adoption and conceiving children is non-negotaible, it is imposed on women by society. Despite pressing work demands and that culture makes them feel quilty if they give their work preference over family (Lenkoe & Nehemia, 2023).

1.3.2.3 New work-life balance

Buddhapriya (2017) indicated that commitment to family responsibility (especially for nuclear families consisting of parents and children) and the employer’s lack of integrated gender-sensitive policies are considered significant barriers affecting the career advancement of women professionals to senior positions. Family responsibilities negatively affect the career decisions of women professionals who had agreed that child responsibilities hinder their ability to achieve job advancement (Buddhapriya, 2017). Most women still believe that putting a career ahead of the family leads to social disapproval and rejection. Therefore, pressure to conform to societal norms is typically higher at the career mid-level.

Women professionals expect support from their organisations and managers to help them achieve better WLBs and develop their careers (Gupta & Sultana, 2022). Important reasons inhibiting women from rising to management positions are the WLB conflict they experience because of their strong commitment to family responsibilities. Furthermore, women are underrepresented in governance and decision-making positions to help create the necessary support structures for WLB (Buddhapriya, 2017; Gupta & Sultana, 2022).

A new paradigm concerning a work-from-anywhere future had already been looming before 2020 within knowledge-work organisations. Personal technology and digital connectivity advanced so quickly that people began to ask whether they needed to be together in the office to do their work (Choudhury, Foroughi & Larson, 2021). During

the COVID pandemic lockdowns, organisations have learned that people do not need to be collocated with on-site colleagues to do their jobs. Individuals, teams, and entire workforces could perform well while being distributed. The model offered notable benefits to companies and their employees. Organisations could reduce or eliminate real estate costs and hire and use talent globally while mitigating immigration issues and productivity. Workers received geographic flexibility (live anywhere they prefer to), eliminated commutes, and reported better WLB. The COVID-19 crisis opened senior leaders' insights into adopting 'work from anywhere' for their workforces. This new paradigm confirmed that WLB is a new reality and is possible to sustain (Choudhury et al., 2021).

1.3.3 Women's Leadership Coaching

Women's leadership coaching emerged from management ideas that started changing during the last decades of the 20th century to raise performance through enhanced engagement and collaboration (Katz, 2013). Organisations discovered the power of executive leadership coaching for women as a complement to training or as a separate enrichment function. Initially introduced for senior management, it expanded to include younger high-potential employees and middle managers, focusing more on women to raise individual, team, and organisational performance (Katz, 2013). MacIntyre (2019: 377) summarised the support of change leaders through executive coaching as follows:

> *Executive coaching is a leadership development tool that facilitates leading organisational change. As a goal-oriented process with evidenced-based research, executive coaching helps develop leaders quicker by engaging them in a conversational model. An effective executive coach designs the coaching sessions to model interactive skills, to transition through personal and organisational change, and to strengthen relationships within an organisation* (MacIntyre, 2019: 377).

The results are that many women have broken the infamous glass ceiling in recent decades and become influential women leaders. However, numerous women can still not envision breaking the glass ceiling trying to force themselves from the 'sticky floor' (Petrone et al., 2023). The 'sticky floor' refers to those women who work and remain in entry-level and low-paying positions, unable to advance because of structural

barriers and individual or personal challenges. Also, they might have received fewer promotions and institutional resources than men at the start of their careers. Therefore, there is a need for organisations to develop women's leadership capabilities (Miles-Cohen, Brown, Shullman & Coons, 2020).

1.4 THEORETICAL PARADIGM: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology (PP) emerged as a new study field when Martin Seligman (1998) decided to use it as a theme for his term as President of the American Psychological Association (Upadhyay & Arya, 2015). His idea was to balance psychology's traditional focus on the negative side of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and highlight the importance of cultivating mental health while helping those with mental illnesses (Seligman et al., 2006). Therefore, PP has aimed to change the focus of psychology from preoccupation with fixing the imperfect to building positive qualities in people.

Seligman (1999, 2019) asserted that internal well-being produces various external benefits. His idea was progressive and aimed to foster a science and profession focused on a better understanding what makes life worth living (Gruman, Lumley & Morales, 2018).

Early PP researchers set the tone for significant growth and development in the field. It was influenced by the desire to provide a systematic and rigorous approach to the scientific study of what enables thriving or optimal development across various life domains (Kern, 2020). However, an unintended consequence has led to one of the most persistent criticisms in the field, namely that PP lacks theorising and conceptual thinking and oversimplifies complex human experiences, often overlooking the nuances and intricacies of negative emotions, challenges, and adversities (van Zyl, Gaffaney, van der Vaart, Dik & Donaldson, 2023.). There is a dominant focus on the individual not appreciating the contextual and dynamic influences of hope and thriving (Colla, Williams & Morles, 2022).

Psychological capital emerged as a collective term for PP concepts: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans & Youssef Morgen, 2017).

1.4.1 Psychological Capital

The core constructs of psychological capital (PsyCap) were derived from PP in general and positive organisational behaviour in particular. The first-order PP assets of PsyCap include hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (HERO) (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017: 1). These four concepts unite the inclusion of research-based criteria positively impacting people's attitudes, behaviours, performance, and well-being (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

1.4.1.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's overall evaluation of and confidence in their self-worth, capabilities, and competencies to achieve or accomplish what they want (Rothmann & Cooper, 2015). It is the understanding of their worth based on their emotions and beliefs about how they fit into or perform in any situation (Seligman, 2011: 57).

Since self-efficacious people believe they can achieve success and produce expected results, they regulate their efforts to pursue their goals. In doing so, they are more persistent when faced with difficulties and stressful situations. It implies that self-efficacy has motivational qualities in that it energises and sustains women in leadership roles (Borgogni, Tecco & Schaufeli, 2017). Thus, women with self-esteem and confidence have more significant aspirations towards leadership roles (Fedi & Rollero, 2016).

1.4.1.2 Hope

Hope is often viewed as an attitude relating to positive expectations about the future and self-belief that change is possible (Meyers, Van Woerkom & Bakker, 2013). A person with hope has a positive emotional and psychological perspective on life (Meyers et al.,2013) and expects the best outcome. Individuals with high hopes often exude high self-esteem levels and lower negative thoughts. Because they want to succeed, they can identify, clarify and pursue ways to succeed. With barriers still existing for women to ascend to leadership roles, it is important for organisations to provide support and hope to women and those already in leadership roles. There is still a predominant discourse in outdated ideas about HERO leadership favouring men (Mitchel & Garcia, 2020).

1.4.1.3 Optimism

Closely linked to hope, optimism is a learned reaction and the general expectancy of positive outcomes across situations and domains. It is the tendency to expect, hope, view and believe that the future will turn out positively (Rothmann & Cooper, 2015: 102-110). Optimistic people view setbacks and failures as temporary and specific rather than permanent and pervasive. Such an optimistic outlook can help women leaders maintain their motivation and perseverance through tough times. In contrast, women with low optimism and high work-life challenges may become discouraged and give up more easily when faced with encounters.

1.4.1.4 Resilience

Resilience theory partly explains PP's concern about adversity and harmful life experiences (Stratta, 2021). Resilience is protective from stress symptom development, allowing people to buffer the stressors or guide them toward a more successful outcome (Stratta, 2021: 79).

For women leaders to survive the hostile workplace environment and deal with societal prejudices, resilience should be at the core of their existence, as this trait builds self-esteem to face any adversity. Positive affect (positive outlooks, sensations, emotions, and sentiments) (Ashby, Isen & Turken, 1999) and mindfulness are significant predictors of resilience. Therefore, more organisations are assisting women leaders by investing in psychological resources, including mindfulness and positive affect, to enhance their resilience (Pillay, 2016).

1.4.1.5 Happiness

Although not one of the psychological capital theories, happiness is an emotional and psychological state characterised by feelings of joy, contentment, and satisfaction with life, a state of emotional well-being. It describes a person's experiences when good things happen or, more subjectively, a positive evaluation of their life and accomplishments (Encyclopedia Brittanica, 2023, online), which runs deeper than a good temporary mood. Happiness maximises pleasure and avoids pain when dealing with the frequency and intensity of pleasant and unpleasant emotions (Sheldon, 2018; Seligman, 2011).

The increased interest in PP and PsyCap has also led to research regarding happiness (Otken & Erben, 2010). Cabanas and Illouz (2017) emphasised that

happiness therapies, services and products have become extremely popular, a significant symptom of the rising trend among individuals to withdraw into themselves to cope with uncertainty, deal with feelings of powerlessness and seek solutions for insecure situations.

Implementing organisational practices, such as psychological coaching, to reduce gaps and create reasonable and more equitable workplaces could increase women's happiness and sustain them in leadership positions (Garcia, 2020).

1.4.2 Positive Psychology Coaching

Positive psychology coaching is a professional development process grounded in psychological theories, aiming to help individuals or groups improve their effectiveness and performance (Vandaveer, Lowman, Pearlman & Brannick, 2018). Working women still find it challenging to maintain productivity at work and simultaneously manage their personal lives. They struggle to find a balance between work and family life. Typically, women and men emphasise self-imposed barriers, which many could stem from a personal front, like managing the home and the desire to spend more time with the family and be involved in the lives of their children (Boone, Houran & Veller, 2018; Spenser & Bean, 2018).

In conclusion, the introduction of PP and PsyChap has presented an opportunity to understand what makes peoples' lives worth living. Towards the end of the last century, the idea of PP was advancing to foster science and a profession focused on a better understanding of how people can reach these goals.

However, literature has made it clear that although the awareness and research on intersectionality and women leaders' WLB is growing, there is still a gap in the literature about obtaining an ideal state of job and work-life satisfaction. Furthermore, research has indicated that, after many years of discourse, intersectionality in practice still exists regarding the recognition and advancement of women leaders and what makes them feel fulfilled.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A two-fold problem emerged from the literature review and theory discussions: a business problem and a theoretical gap or problem.

1.5.1 Business problem

Women leaders still struggle with intersectionality and family and work-life balance while not being supported in achieving the desired work-life balance. . Cottrell, Knox, Hellicar & Sanders (2014) indicate that structural factors, such as policies and work practices, create barriers for women. Furthermore, cultural issues (such as beliefs, stereotypes and values) result in biased perceptions about women's ability to lead effectively. Thus, it is imperative for organisations to create lasting improvement in women leadership, the first step is to recognise that women encounter barriers at all three levels and that macro and micro barriers impact women's ability to see themselves as leaders and, on the other hand, others' ability to consider them for leadership roles (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Despite introducing intersectional and family-friendly policies in organisations, women leaders still struggle with intersectionality and family and work-life balance while not being supported in achieving the desired work-life balance. Women often employ strategies that reflect constant negotiation to achieve power, identity and balance between work and family. While studies have shown an inequity between men and women, current research on intersectionality indicates that not all women have the same experiences in practice.

1.5.2 Theoretical problem

Despite extant research focusing on intersectionality, women leaders and work-life balance, there is still a need for scholarly discourse and research on women leadership, intersectionality and work and family life. Furthermore, no women's leadership framework could be identified integrating psychological capital concepts with women leadership, work-life balance, and intersectionality.

Such a women's leadership framework could be applied in individual and group sessions to facilitate leadership coaching and initiatives and support female leaders' optimal performance while developing their careers.

1.6 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the executive of corporate services responsible for human capital, ICT, marketing, and communication, the researcher has observed and experienced most of the business problems discussed above. Therefore, the rationale and significance for exploring intersectionality in the workplace and women leaders' WLB, psychological capital, and coaching were rooted in the understanding that these factors play a crucial role in shaping women's experiences and trajectories in the workplace.

Limited scholarly work in the field and the scarcity of theoretical explanations relating to overcoming of the barriers of intersectionality in the career progression of women justify the need for further investigation. A leadership framework that integrates the intersectionality of gender and race, social identities and WLB within a positive psychological capital framework does not exist and will contribute to the body of knowledge by the expansion of current available theory.

Existing leadership studies have focused on one or two diverse theories, ignoring the effects of multiple intersecting traits and concepts. Specifically, self-leadership as a theoretical construct was introduced and integrated in a new framework. This study used multiple theories to explore the intersection of social and female leader identities in different contexts. Self-leadership is an emerging intervention more relevant in this context to contribute to building and guiding women leaders to stay the course. Self-leadership is a self-influence perspective that pertains to one's ability to manage, lead and control personal behaviours and develop strategies to achieve desired goals for sustainable competitive advantages (Abid, Arshad, Ahmed and Farrooqi, 2021: 299). This study will hihglight a positive association between self-leadership and positive individual and organisational outcomes.

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The theoretical objectives (TOs) were as follows.

- TO1: To describe the concepts and theories of intersectionality, feminism and work-life balance as they relate to women's leadership.

- TO2: To describe selected concepts from positive psychology and the theoretical paradigm of the study.
- TO3: To formulate propositions and a preliminary concept based on the theoretical paradigm.

The empirical objectives were formulated as follows.

- EO1: To explore how the intersection of gender, race, and class influences the experiences of women leaders in managing their work and family life.
- EO2: To explore women leaders' experiences of managing and overcoming challenges of leadership and intersectionality.
- EO3: To explore the sociocultural practices that influence the experiences of women leaders in South Africa.
- EO4: To explore the behaviours women leaders used to overcome the barriers they experience to progress as leaders within the impact of psychological capital.
- EO5: To construct a leadership framework that integrates women's leadership, intersectionality, and WLB.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question was formulated as follows:

How can a leadership framework that integrates intersectionality, women leadership, work-life balance and psychological capital be conceptualised?

1.9 PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE: ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND AXIOLOGY

The philosophical stance refers to the beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge development (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019: 130). According to Burrell and Morgan (2016), researchers make various assumptions, for example, the realities they encounter in their research (ontological assumptions) (Guba & Lincoln, 1988), how to obtain knowledge (epistemological assumptions), and the extent and ways the researcher and participants' values influence the research process (axiological assumptions). These assumptions shape understanding of the research questions, methods, and how the findings are interpreted (Crotty, 1998).

The researcher adopted a phenomenological interpretivist approach focused on participants' lived experiences and their recollections and interpretation of those experiences.

1.9.1 Ontology

A qualitative ontology focuses on the nature of reality or being. It refers to assumptions about reality and how the researcher views and studies research objects (Saunders et al., 2019: 140, such as organisations, management, intersectionality, and women's working lives. The researchers' ontological perspective is thus positioned in relativism. Reality is subjective and varies from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and from context to context. Such an ontology holds that human senses mediate reality and are socially constructed. Complex, detailed descriptions are constructed through culture and language, representing multiple meanings, interpretations, and realities (Saunders et al., 2019: 145).

1.9.2 Epistemology

A qualitative interpretivist epistemology refers to assumptions about what constitutes trustworthy, credible, and legitimate knowledge and how it is communicated to others (Burrell & Morgan, 2016: page). The researcher understands and interprets the social world from experiences and subjective meanings that people attach to it (Guba et al., 1994). As an interpretivist researcher the author prefers to interact and dialogue with participants through narratives, stories, perceptions and contributions of highly

detailed accounts of a particular social reality being studied, termed the idiographic approach (Neuman, 2011). According to Neuman (2011: 11), idiographic means that the approach provides a symbolic representation or “thick” description of something. An interpretive research report may read like a novel or biography. It is rich in detailed description and limited in abstraction.”

1.9.3 Axiology

Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics in research (Saunders et al., 2019: 145), and the researcher is part of the research. The experiences and values of the participants and researcher influence the collection of data and its analysis (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hallebone & Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Given the different social backgrounds and the realities and challenges of female leaders, it seemed relevant for this study to explore women’s experiences and perceptions of WLB. The interpretivist paradigm assisted in understanding WLB among women leaders and the realities of the world according to individual, organisational and social experiences embedded in social class. As the researcher’s interpretations were key to the contributions, she had to be reflexive about her beliefs, judgments and practices during the research process, how these may have influenced the research and what to do with the new knowledge.

This study focused on the WLB and women leaders’ experiences across geo-political, cultural, and racial groups and classes. It made the phenomenological approach more relevant as it uses various data collection and analysis strategies. The research design involved in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion to collect data on the phenomenon.

Central to phenomenological interpretivism is that the researcher has to take an empathetic stance. The challenge for the interpretivist is to enter the social world of the participant and understand the world from their point of view.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

A thorough description of the research methodology and design is important for conducting effective, dependable, and trustworthy research (Coleman, 2022). It

provides a structured framework for systematically addressing the research problems and answering the research questions (Saunders et al., 2019).

1.10.1 Research Design

This study adopted a sequential multi-method qualitative research design to address the stated objectives and aim of the study. A qualitative research approach provides an in-depth understanding of how participants experience WLB, given their diverse social backgrounds and how they overcame their challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The multi-method qualitative approach seemed relevant to this study as its underlying philosophy was to reveal the nature and multiple realities of situations, settings, processes, relationships, and people (Creswell et al., 2018). Furthermore, a qualitative research approach allowed the selected women leaders to share their opinions and perceptions through narratives or stories. It helped the researcher gain new insights into the phenomenon and address the research problem, especially where the perceptions of WLB may differ depending on cultural and social values and beliefs.

The research objectives and questions are the starting point in developing a research design (Berry & Otley, 2004; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Yin (2012). They provide important clues about the research problem to be addressed. After selecting interpretivism as the paradigm (see 1.9), the next stage was to identify the appropriate design and methods of data collection and analysis for this study. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) described four research designs: phenomenological, case study, ethnography, and grounded theory. This study used the phenomenological design to enable an in-depth understanding of women leaders' perceptions and lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied. Unlike other research designs, a phenomenological study refers to a person's perceptions of the meaning of an event.

1.10.2 Population and Sampling Strategy

Sampling uses a subset of the population or sample frame to represent the entire population or inform about meaningful processes beyond the particular cases, individuals or sites being studied (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Leedy and Ormrod (2015) indicated that identifying the correct sample to represent the entire population or body must depend on the research questions to be answered. Since a qualitative research method was used, the researcher selected participants to yield the most

information about the topic under investigation. This non-probability or subjective judgment method is called purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod (2015).

This study adopted a purposive sampling method as the appropriate method to select participants for the research. The reason for choosing purposive sampling was that the researcher wanted to select key participants (women leaders) with valid information being sought according to definite characteristics such as gender and work experience. Another non-probability technique, namely snowball sampling, was used where participants referred other potential participants to the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The sample comprised women leaders from diverse racial groups (African, White, Coloured, and Indian). The selected participants were employed at middle, senior management and executive level and from various private and public organisations in South Africa. The women had to have an average of three to five years of management experience, with ages ranging between 30 to 55 years.

Phase 1 of the study included 12 female participants. The participants had experience at the management and executive level and were married, divorced, and single. During the data analysis, these women were assigned numbers instead of names to protect their privacy.

Phase 2 of the study consisted of a mini focus group with five participants, of which the women were subject matter experts from different age groups (40 to 60 years). These women had extensive work experience as specialists. Phase 2 was performed to confirm the interview findings and assess the face validity of the proposed leadership framework.

1.10.3 Data Collection

The participants were women leaders across the public and private sectors in South Africa. They were selected from conferences and executive referrals. The interviews were conducted online in a cross-sectional time horizon between April and June 2022 in two sequential phases.

Phase 1: Personal online interviews

In-depth interviews can yield useful information, including people's beliefs and perspectives about facts, feelings, motives, and present and past behaviours (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, online). It was important to remember that when the researcher inquired about past events, behaviours and perspectives, interviewees had to rely on their memories. Human memory is rarely as accurate as technically recorded events.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), interview questions in a qualitative study are rarely structured. Instead, questions are typically open-ended for discussions and storytelling combined in a semi-structured interview guide. This study used online videoconferencing, during which the interviews could be recorded and transcribed. Data from the interviews were used to understand how women leaders negotiate intersections between race, gender and culture and establish an identity at work. Consequently, the semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions for the narrative inquiry was developed from the literature review.

Phase 2: Online mini-focus group

Once data were gathered through the personal online interviews and a draft framework was created, a mini-focus group containing five experts with industrial psychology backgrounds was selected and included in a discussion to validate the personal interview findings. A similar interview guide was applied but with more targeted questions for the mini focus group discussion.

All recorded data were transcribed, combined, and interpreted to be coded into categories and themes and theorised into new knowledge. The new knowledge would be used to write the analytical narrative and create the final framework.

1.10.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the cleansing, comparing, and theorising of data to discover new, related evidence, draw conclusions, and interpret information for decision-making (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020: 96). An important technique associated with qualitative data analysis is thematic content analysis or, for short, thematic analysis (TA), which is done through inductive and abductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning adopts concepts from available data within the research frame of reference and goes

beyond the premised information to derive realistic conclusions (Cramer-Petersen, Christensen & Ahmed-Kristensen, 2019). Abductive reasoning, going back and forth between data, is self-referencing as it allows decisions based on logical conclusions from two or more data sources and suggestions to be factually compared (Cramer-Petersen et al., 2019).

Thematic content analysis

Thematic content analysis (TCA) is an accessible and flexible method of systematically organising and analysing complex qualitative research data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013; Dawadi, 2020), such as the transcripts of interviews (Caufield, 2022). The TCA process involves a search for codes and themes from the data to create new knowledge from the salient narratives (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Dawadi, 2020; Caufield, 2022).

Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 278) defined a theme as patterns emerging from the qualitative data that the researcher perceives as important or interesting enough to develop new knowledge. Themes are thus topics, ideas and patterns that repeatedly emerge from the data (Caufield, 2022), constituting a particular narrative from the developed information. These themes are identified through carefully reading and re-reading the transcribed data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999; King, 2004).

The identified themes typically address or indicate entities concerning the research problem (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). However, it is important to note that identifying themes is much more than merely summarising the data. Clarke and Braun (2013) characterised an upright thematic analysis as interpreting and making sense of the data.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are norms or standards of conduct that differentiate between right and wrong and determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable and legitimate and unlawful data collection methods (Upadhyay & Arya, 2015). The ethical aspects were considered throughout the research, including stating the study's overall purpose, participation risks and benefits, and participants signing the consent forms. An adequate level of confidentiality of participants was granted by assigning numbers

as pseudo names to participants and keeping the interview data stored safely. Any shared information was solely for this study and would not be disclosed to third parties. Identified potential risks involved in questioning (emotional distress) were communicated with the assurance that participants could withdraw at any time during the discussions. Throughout the process, communication concerning the research was done honestly and transparently. Importantly, data collection only started after the Unisa School of Business Learning provided ethical clearance (see Appendix A).

1.12 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study was delimited to women leaders in middle, senior managerial and executive positions from various private and public organisations and different racial groups (African, Coloured, Indian, and White). Participants were from various age groups (between 40 and 60 in both phases). It ensured that intergenerational experiences were captured concerning intersectionality and women's WLB perspectives within a positive psychological capital framework.

1.13 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study contributed to the existing theory and knowledge in a different geo-political and social context to interface work relationships and family life for women leaders and the impact of different social identities, using an intersectionality framework.

Furthermore, the study might promote future policies to alleviate gender-related constraints and under-representation of women at senior management levels. The study adopted a PP lens to explore women leaders' experiences of intersectionality, WLB, and PsyCap concepts.

The study's unique contribution is the theoretical integration of intersectionality and WLB within a psychological capital framework, which informed new theory development towards a positive leadership identity formation framework for women leaders.

This positive leadership identity framework will contribute towards developing leadership skills for women and endow them with the resilience to aspire for leadership.

1.14 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter introduced the background to the study, the motivation and rationale, and the envisaged contribution of the research. It identified the research problem, question, and theoretical and empirical objectives.

Chapter 2 discusses concepts from the literature review on the origin and evolution of intersectionality, particularly focusing on gender, race, and social class. Intergenerational diversity, women's leadership and WLB are addressed in detail to propose a new WLB framework.

Chapter 3 focuses on the origin and theory of PP and psychological capital elements: hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism. PsyCap informs the setting of propositions for the research, and a preliminary conceptual framework is introduced.

Chapter 4 explains the research methodology, including the philosophical stance and qualitative multi-method research design. The study's sample and sampling techniques are described, followed by the data collection and analysis methods. Finally, the trustworthiness and credibility of the research are confirmed.

Chapter 5 presents the findings on intersectionality concerning societal perceptions, racial bias, and social class and its influence on women, intergenerational dynamics, and conquering intersectionality and WLB challenges. The five categories with themes are presented with the participants' verbatim and literature review findings.

Chapter 6 provides a narrative analysis of the findings presented in Chapter 5 and the proposed positive leadership identity formation framework for women leaders towards overcoming barriers of intersectionality.

Chapter 7 concludes the research by providing a summary in which the research problem, objectives, and question are compared and aligned with the research findings. A summary of the research contributions and limitations is given to recommend future studies.

The following chapter discusses concepts retrieved from the literature review on the research topic.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature concepts and theories on feminism, the origin and evolution of intersectionality, women leadership, work-life balance (WLB), and women's leadership coaching are discussed in this chapter.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Research has indicated that women leaders operate in multiple roles, managing work and non-work obligations (Adisa & Mordi 2014; Leonine, Nikkanen & Tuula, Heiskanen 2015; Siller & Hochleitner 2015; Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta, Sang & Wang, 2015). This chapter explores role integration, social support structures and work-family balance (WFB) to determine their influence on women leaders. The barriers to women's advancement in the workplace and the cultural practices preventing women from leadership positions are considered. Additionally, the geo-sociopolitical context provides perspectives on the different challenges women face. This chapter further reflects on the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and identities, such as cultural practices, gender, and organisational policies.

2.2 ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a multidimensional construct relevant to the study due to its three salient levels. It is a theory and a methodology (Haynes, Joseph, Patton, Stewart & Allen, 2020) and exposes the systemic marginalisation of women in the workplace. Intersectional feminism considers the diverse ways each woman experiences discrimination.

2.2.1 Feminist theories

Feminist theories underpin intersectionality and provide a lens through which female leadership and work-life balance can be explored. This study used a similar theoretical lens to interpret and make sense of the data. Theories associated with the research problem included liberal feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, socialist feminism, radical and psychoanalytical, poststructuralist and postmodern, and

transnational and postcolonial feminism (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2014; 2019).

Feminist movements and theory initially overlooked the dynamics of intersectionality that stemmed from the historical exclusion of Black women from feminist movements challenged since the 19th century by Black feminists such as Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), a writer and Black liberation activist. The intersectional movement disputed the idea common to earlier feminist movements that women were a homogeneous category who shared the same life experiences after realising that white middle-class women did not serve as an accurate representation of the entire feminist movement (Terre Blanche et al., 2019).

Seminal author Hurtado (1997) argued that looking at the amount of work that different feminists tackled over more than a century, starting with liberal feminism around the 18th century, it was discouraging to see that inequality persisted amongst oppressive social identities, not only regarding gender but also race and social class. Feminist theories evolved from looking at gender issues for a selected group of women to including other groups of women and oppressed social identities over and above gender. Also, how these issues impacted communities and organisational studies across nations (Hurtado, 1997).

Calas and Smircich (2016) viewed feminist theory as a critique of the status quo and, therefore, always political. The same authors explored various feminist theoretical tendencies and how each contributed to and ignored certain areas within feminist organisational studies. They discussed six feminist theories: i) liberal feminism, concerned with inequality regarding the socialisation of people into gender roles; ii) radical feminism, questioning women's experiences constitutive of gender; iii) psychoanalytic feminism, focussing on the experience acquired in early developmental relations with parents; iv) socialist feminism, which is the confluence of Marxist radical and psychoanalytical, poststructuralist and postmodern, v) transnational, and vi) postcolonial feminism. Postcolonial feminism explores 'third-wave feminist theorising,' which addresses race and class, amongst other issues.

Terre Blanche et al. (2019) further argued that feminist theories include intersectionality as the predominant way of conceptualising the relationship between systems of oppression, which created multiple identities and social positions in

hierarchies of power and privileges. Intersectionality is thus an analytic framework to identify how intertwined power systems impact marginalised people in society. The term reflects various forms of social stratification, such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, disability and gender, both separately and intertwined. While feminism as a theory started investigating the oppression of women of colour within society, it is now applied to all social categories, including those identities typically viewed as dominant when considered independently.

2.2.2 Intersectionality

The term intersectionality developed from Crenshaw's 1989 proposal that intersectionality provides a way of conceptualising identity and its peculiar relationship(s) with power crucial for enabling an appreciation of how people's lives are shaped not only by their identities but also by their relationships and other social factors (Crenshaw, 2015). It merged a continuum of intersectant privileges, marginalisation, and forms of violence. An individual's position on the privilege-oppression continuum depends on the context and prevailing power structures such as patriarchy, ableism, and racism, amongst other things.

Additionally, Crenshaw (2015) argued that intersectionality accounts for why some populations may be more vulnerable to higher forms of violence than others, why they experience multiple forms of violence, and why systemic barriers impact people differently depending on where they fall within the privilege-oppression continuum. Thus, cognisance of these dynamics could lead to avoiding 'intersectional failure' Gayles (2022) and, in the process, demarginalise oppressed groups (Crenshaw, 1989;1991).

In accordance, Asta (2018), Bright (2016) and Dembroff and Taylor (2016) defined intersectionality as a form of oppression stemming from membership in multiple social categories such as "black" and "woman". These categories intersect and create new forms of oppression casually, modally, and relationally different from constituent forms of oppression merely added together. Therefore, analysing oppression stemming from black womanhood is not just a matter of analysing Blackness and womanhood. Though the literature has mostly focused on intersectional minority identities and unique dimensions of oppression faced by minorities, it is worth noting that all identities are broadly intersectional.

Crenshaw and Collins (cited in Knight 2016) stated that, during the mid-1980s to early 1990s, many feminists of colour emerged, using an intersectional and interlocking framework to study different contexts. The drive for these studies came from the need to challenge additive analysing models, which defined gender as the primary form of oppression and other social categories as additional obstacles. However, the call to understand racialised women's experiences through simultaneous oppressions of race, class and gender had emerged long before.

Intersectionality, however, is a contested concept that has been approached from four angles: i) identities (for example, black), ii) categories of difference (race), iii) processes of differentiation and social differences (racialisation), and iv) systems of domination (racism, colonialism, and patriarchy) (Crenshaw & Collins, cited in Knight, 2016). Crenshaw is credited for being among the pioneers of creating intersectionality as a theoretical framework. She identified three types of intersectionality: i) structural intersectionality, ii) political intersectionality, and iii) representative intersectionality. Structural intersectionality refers to the connectedness of systems and structures in society and how those systems affect individuals and groups differently. The production, operation, and maintenance of specific social systems, for example, patriarchy, capitalism, heteronormativity and structures, and laws, policies and culture, maintain privileges for some individuals and groups while restricting the privileges of others through differential treatment or oppressing their rights (Crenshaw, 1991, 1993).

Understanding intersectionality as a field of study includes understanding how the field came to be (its roots and evolution), what content and themes characterise it and how it is situated in current power structures and other fields (Collins, 2019; Grzanka, 2014). The assertion is supported by various scholars, including Bilge (2016) and Grzanka and Miles (2016), who pointed out that intersectionality is rooted in the work of Black feminists and women of colour, social justice activists, and scholars.

2.2.3 Intersectional power

Dill and Zambrana (cited in Knight 2016) expanded on the term, asserting that power is organised and maintained in four interrelated domains, namely, i) structural (institutions), ii) disciplinary (practices that sustain bureaucratic hierarchies), iii) hegemonic (images, symbols and ideologies that shape consciousness), and

iv) interpersonal (patterns of interaction between individuals and groups). Structural power consists of how institutions are organised to produce subordination through such practices as racial segregation, exclusionary policies, internments, forced relocation and denial of the right to own a property.

Grzanka (2016) and Hancock (2015) underlined that intersectional thought was introduced to academia in the early 1970s, when the perspective was used to challenge the absence of sociological research that specifically examined the experiences of individuals exposed to multiple forms of oppression within society. Intersectional thought increased during the 1980s, which was promoted as a replacement for the destructive single-axis framework dominant in areas such as antidiscrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist movements.

2.3 SOCIAL IDENTITY

Social identity is consequently described in terms of gender, race, and social class.

2.3.1 Social Identity as Gender

Franken, Woodward, Cabo and Bagilhole (2009) focused on gender as a layered social system that gives meaning to the biological differences between men and women and operates on three levels.

i. On a personal level, gender organises society by attributing characteristics to women and men. Women are socialised to be emotional and caring, while men are rational and less prone to entering nurturing relationships.

ii. On a symbolic level, gender assigns different values to the activities of women and men. Masculinity is more highly regarded than femininity. Masculinity and femininity are significant to people's lives, their individuality, and what they undertake. For example, when there are many women in a particular profession, that profession will have a lower status (education, nursing, hospitality).

iii. On an institutional level, gender sets a mechanism that builds on a natural conceptualisation of gender. For example, women care for the household, and men are the breadwinners. Not only are women confronted with a different appraisal of activities, but there is an institutional translation that women still do not receive the

same remuneration for the same labour as men. Women do not build pensions at the same rate as men, and women suffer disproportionately, easily falling into poverty.

2.3.2 Social Identity as Race

Veenstra (2018) argued that intersectionality identities based on race, gender and class are presumed in every social interaction. Race, class and gender may all structure a situation but may not be equally visible and important in people's self-definition. Recognising that one category may have salience over another for a given time and place does not minimise the theoretical importance of assuming that race, class and gender as categories of analysis structure all relationships (Veenstra, 2018).

It is presented that people experience race, class and gender differently depending on their social location in the structure of race, class, gender and sexuality. For example, people of the same race will experience race differently depending upon their location in the class structure as working class, professional, managerial class or unemployed and in the gender structure as female or male. Race, class, gender and sexuality are not reduced to individual attributes to be measured and assessed for their independent contribution to explaining social outcomes (Veenstra, 2018).

Intersectionality, while not new, brought together two of the most important strands of contemporary feminist thought concerning the issue of difference (Davis, 2014). The first strand has been devoted to understanding the effects of race, class and gender on women's identities, experiences and struggles for empowerment. It has been primarily concerned with marginalising poor women and women of colour within white, Western feminist theory. Initially, this strand of feminist theory adopted a triple jeopardy approach to class, race and gender (King,1988) by exploring how, with the addition of each new inequality category, the individual becomes more vulnerable, marginalised and subordinate. The focus gradually shifted to how race, class and gender interact in women's social and material realities to produce and transform power relations (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005; Collins, 2019).

2.3.3 Social Identity as Social Class

There is a paradigm shift moving from predominantly attending to gender inequality towards policies that address multiple inequalities. Furthermore, there is a tendency to assume an unquestioned similarity of inequalities, failure to address the structural level, and fuelling the political competition between inequalities (Verloo, 2019). Based upon a comparison of specific sets of inequalities (class, race, and gender), there are structural and political intersectionality challenges. A one-size-fits-all approach to addressing multiple discriminations is based on an incorrect assumption of sameness or equivalence of the social categories connected to inequalities and the mechanisms and processes that constitute them (Verloo, 2019).

Studies show that traditional social science approaches treat race, class, gender and nationality as descriptive variables attached to individuals reinserted into the existing theoretical family models (Collins, 2019). In contrast, intersectional approaches view institutionalised racism, social class relations, and gender inequalities expressed on both sides of power as analytical constructs that explain family organisation in general and Black family organisation in particular. By exploring the intersections of race, class and gender, issues affecting Black families should be approached via an intersectional lens (Collins, 2019).

2.4 INTERGENERATIONAL DIVERSITY

Spiro (2006) described multi-generational as a prominent feature of today's world, with different motivations, values, priorities, traits, and beliefs and divided into four major categories: i) the traditionalist (pre-1946), ii) Baby Boomers (1946-1964), iii) Generation X (1964-1979), and iv) Generation Y or Millennials (1980-2000). Each generational cohort has unique value systems, work ethics, priorities, traits and orientations towards power, loyalty, expectations, and work culture (Atherton, Graham, Spiro & Schulz, 2022). Recent results suggested notable intergenerational continuity in childhood social class but no continuity in home atmosphere, parent-child relationship quality, or childhood health. Moreover, it was found that intergenerational continuity of early life stressors could be modified by the father's education level and mobility, such that a low education level mediates risks and upward education mobility and benefits for the offspring experiencing adverse conditions (Atherton et al., 2022).

2.5 SOUTH AFRICAN STUDIES ON INTERSECTIONALITY

There have been minimal South African studies in this context, indicating a gap in research on intersectionality and WLB. Dhamoon (2015) lamented the struggles Indian women had faced in adopting a managerial identity in corporate South Africa. By placing the women's identity work within a larger socio-political, historical context, he could show the racialisation process of the apartheid system fused with patriarchy. Indian naturalisation practices and hindrances shaped their identity work as the first group of women to enter corporate South Africa (Dhamoon, 2015). However, it was noted that class effects in this study were muted as the women were all descendants of Indian immigrants.

2.6 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Existing leadership studies have focused mainly on one or two diverse attributes, missing the effects of multiple intersecting traits. Hence, this study used intersectionality to explore the intersection of social and female leader identities.

2.6.1 Leadership

Diehl (2014) and Durand and Jourdan (2014) also highlighted women's continuous prejudice in the workplace and leadership roles. They asserted that, despite an abundance of educated and qualified women in the workplace, women continue to be refused to advance to the top of institutional leadership hierarchies. In the 1980s, women caught up with men in attaining bachelor’s and master’s degrees and have since surpassed men in achieving bachelor’s and doctoral degrees (US Department of Education, 2014, 2015). However, women remain underrepresented in specific fields, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

With the rise of work-related stressors, quality of life concerns, such as the expansion of WLB, the desire of women to progress into senior positions, and how work and non-work obligations must be managed became a critical component of career and leadership advancement (Asirvatham & Humprhies-Kil, 2017; Carlson, Kacmar & Williams, 2016; Kossek, 2016; Methot & LePine, 2016).

Jones, Longman and Remke (2018) presented two main barriers to women leadership, namely, personal and structural. Personal barriers are related to self-efficacy or beliefs about their capabilities, and structural barriers are the conflicting responsibilities of work, home and family. Personal barriers are thus intricately connected to structural barriers. Ways to overcome these barriers are policy-oriented, such as flexible work schedules. Even though barriers for women have become more fluid, structural discriminatory barriers still impede women's career trajectories. Women can be taught negotiation skills through a leadership programme, but concrete walls will continue if exclusionary policies and practices remain in place (Jones et al., 2017).

Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2013) focused on second-generation forms of gender bias involving the barriers arising from cultural beliefs about gender and workplace structures, practices and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favour men. These barriers consist mainly of non-reflective acts of bias and exclusion. They are subtle, often unintentional, and supported by gender norms and practices entrenched within institutions. Because these impediments are built into ordinary institutional functioning, they are often invisible to men and women alike. When these barriers accumulate, they can inhibit women's ability to see themselves or other women as leaders.

Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) performed a literature review identifying 12 professional barriers and obstacles. Afterwards, the higher education executives revisited the literature and identified 27 gender-based leadership barriers organised according to the three levels of society in which they operate: macro (society), meso (group or organisational) and micro (individual). i) Macro barriers prevent women from advancing and succeeding in leadership. They cause challenges for women leaders to contribute their expertise and for men to take women leaders seriously; ii) Meso barriers operate at the level of groups and organisations. They represent ways of discounting women's leadership contributions and limiting their organisational effectiveness; iii) Micro barriers operate at the individual level and include the individual's daily interactions. These barriers primarily involve the woman herself, placing an extra burden of responsibility on her shoulders (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Cook and Glass (2014) acknowledged that various organisational interventions were conceived to create pathways for women in leadership, mainly to help them balance

work and family demands, such as improved family policies and attention to measures like affirmative action and actions against sexual harassment. However, despite all these efforts, there has not been a broad corresponding increase in the number of women executives, mainly because of the wide variety of persistent yet invisible barriers described above, which reinforce gendered workplaces and norms for human behaviour. For organisations to create lasting improvement in women leadership, the first step is to recognise that women encounter barriers at all three levels and that macro and micro barriers impact women's ability to see themselves as leaders and, on the other hand, others' ability to consider them for leadership roles (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Organisations need to develop strategies that extend beyond the walls of the workplace to impact societal and personal perspectives on women (Cook & Glass, 2014). The integration, connection and support amongst work and family roles can provide joint opportunities and means of knowledge transfer, encouragement, growth, and cross-role contributions for employees. However, overlapping role demands and responsibilities can also increase perceptions of work-life imbalance and work-family conflict, discouraging women from advancing to leadership roles (McMullan, Lapierre & Li, 2018).

It is important to note that even though strides were made in improving the conditions of women leaders, other contributing factors prejudice women in leadership positions, that is, the lack of mentoring and sponsorship for women and supposed lack of confidence and negotiating skills (Berry & Bell, 2015; Maller & Kossoff, 2019). Organisations' leadership levels are still regarded as the "boys club", where men have close networking sessions, and women tend to be excluded. Studies still provide a piecemeal approach to understanding women's absence in organisational leadership. The limitation of current theoretical approaches is their singular focus on intersectional challenges. Even the broader concept of second-generation gender bias focuses exclusively on the organisation without considering how gendered structures are produced in society and women leaders' personal lives (Berry & Bell, 2015; Maller & Kossoff, 2019).

Kelan and Wratil (2021) affirmed that women leadership is a process of negotiation within the dynamics of privilege as a leader, embodied leadership, and acceptable

femininity. Meanwhile, the normatively defined male body has neither sexuality nor gender; conversely, the ‘body’ introduces gender and sexuality into the workplace. Women in professional and leadership positions face challenges in knowing and negotiating the expectation of dress, appearance, and self-presentation to be evaluated as ‘credible’ and ‘respectable.’ These prejudices force women to choose to be stay-at-home mothers and wives, as family and home might seem like a safe and comfortable place.

Consequently, women’s clothing attracts significantly more scrutiny and criticism, while embodiment norms for elite women leaders are unclear. Women continue to strive to control maternal bodies in line with perceived professional norms of bodily comportment (expected behaviour) (Kelan & Wratil, 2021). Thus, elite women leaders face tension in negotiating embodied leadership as masculine, ambiguous expectations of acceptable or ‘respectable femininity’ and moving in and out of ‘privilege’ as they strive to become credible leaders.

Following are some of the prejudices entrenched in organisations and affecting women leaders with families or those who aspire to have families.

2.6.2 Organisational culture

Elliot (2015) and McKinsey and Company (2014) emphasised that organisational culture is a barrier that keeps qualified women from advancing to senior leadership and management positions in organisations. Most women working in international organisations become sensitive to their marginality at a senior level due to the lack of cultural accommodation for their gender. However, women have gradually gained more presence and power in the workforce. Despite their progress, only 24% of women worldwide have been recorded in top leadership and management positions (Grant Thorton-IBR, 2020). Sexual harassment has intimidated many individuals aspiring to leadership positions in organisations. Furthermore, structural issues, such as policies and work practices, create gender imbalance in the workplace. The conclusion is that corporate business is not doing enough to bridge gender inequality (World Economic Forum, 2015).

2.6.3 Policies and work practices as barriers to success

According to Cottrell, Knox, Hellicar & Sanders (2014), structural factors, such as policies and work practices, create barriers for women. Furthermore, cultural issues (such as beliefs, stereotypes and values) result in biased perceptions about women's ability to lead effectively. These barriers have led to widespread assumptions that certain jobs are preserved for men while others can only be performed by women. Thus, cultural values and stereotypes have promoted the low rate of women in senior management and organisational leadership positions (Grant Thorton-IBR, 2020).

Chinese society expects women to care for their aged parents irrespective of their occupations. Many Chinese senior managers are insensitive when granting professional working women days off to visit their old parents in assisted-living facilities. Inflexible career paths do not help those women torn between career advancement and caring for families and elders. In the UAE, no single woman can board a plane or stay in a hotel unless a male relative is willing to accompany her. Chinese women are also subject to disapproval when travelling alone for international job assignments. Many women who live and work in Brazil, Russia, and India also battle the social disapproval of lone travel (Hewlett & Rashid, 2015).

European country data have shown that since the last decade, there has been a substantial improvement in female presence in senior management positions (European Commission Report, 2016). However, women still do not represent even a third of senior management positions in most countries. In Nordic countries, the number of women in decision-making positions is better than in other European countries. Norway stands out in this regard, with 41% of women in senior administrative positions.

A report by the European Commission on the participation of men and women in leadership positions (European Commission, 2016) recognised the importance of political and legislative initiatives to promote change towards gender balance. According to this report, the most important developments in female presence in corporate leadership positions have occurred in countries that have adopted binding legislation, such as France, the Netherlands and Italy. However, even though considerable progress has been made, the average percentage of female executives in most European Commission companies is still far from a position of gender balance.

The Commission highlighted that obstacles exist at three levels: societal prejudice, gender stereotyping, and organisational barriers, including a lack of dedicated legal compliance monitoring.

2.6.4 Negative societal influences

Kumunda, Kumar and Aggarwal (2014) and Versa (2015) asserted that women had faced several inequalities since ancient periods because of gender discrimination and that social statements for women were unfavourable and unacceptable. Statements implied that women were less capable and powerful compared to men. However, the changing societal, legal and economic environment protects women with the right to education, mobility and equality rights. Changing trends in the financial sector and leadership have developed women more efficiently in every phase. In developing countries, a dominating patriarchal society limits females' lives because male opinions affect the image of females as weak and inefficient (Vaessen & Bandeira, 2015; Cornwall & Sharma, 2014; Raj, 2014).

Amery, Bates, Jenkins and Savigny (2015) and Yasin and Naqyi (2016) discussed the Pakistan context in which a social system of work-family segregation of male and female roles was still strong. It ranged from external influences where, academically, it influenced the childhood environment and, simultaneously, explicit family role expectations. Fortunately, the 20th century witnessed women's expanding gender possibilities by participating as professionals in different fields and actively dissolving the boundaries of traditionally held gender roles. However, economic empowerment and autonomy accompanying professional participation seemed to come without resistance from practices prevailing in family and professional settings. Usually, such resistance impedes women's progress and results in the under-representation of women in upper organisational positions.

Even though recommendations to consider the effects of social structures on women in the workplace have been made, little research has moved beyond the organisation to consider the broader social context in which women live and work. Yet barriers that occur at the societal and personal levels also profoundly impact women's ability to advance into executive leadership (Diehl et al., 2016).

2.6.4.1 Patriarchy

Patriarchy comprises beliefs prioritising male attributes, interests, and practices that discriminate against women (Pache & Santos, 2016). As with other limiting societal logic, patriarchal beliefs are widely shared within a society and broadly influence the behaviour of individuals and organisations. Studies have shown that patriarchy marginalises women within the family, religion, education, state, and corporation (Wry & York, 2015; Cobb, Wary & Zhao, 2016). Patriarchy is globally prevalent, and even in the most equitable societies, women are more likely than men to be denied opportunities and are more often victims of poverty, violence and other social ills (Pache & Santos, 2016).

Emslie and Hunt (2015) emphasised the fact that organisations were initially built in patriarchal societies, and, as such, they represent and promote patriarchal values. Such thinking implies that organisations still reflect a patriarchal society and actively participate in creating and reproducing gender conformity with patriarchal images. These images adapt stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity, placing men in power roles and women in support roles. Ridgeway (2016) and Kodama and Halaburda (2014) asserted that patriarchy is a logic that shapes gendered interests, identities, and practices. It entails beliefs about appropriate roles for men (public and economic) versus women (private and domestic) and the value of male versus female attributes and interests.

Durand and Jourdan (2015) opined that engaging in patriarchy can constrain the femininities deemed appropriate for women to gendered stereotypes. To be admired and held in high esteem, women leaders face gendered double plights. They are expected to perform femininities associated with being a ‘woman’ while demonstrating masculinities expected of those elite positions. Thus, women leaders can find themselves doing gender well (femininity) and differently (masculinity).

2.6.4.2 Femininity versus masculinity

Mavin and Grandy (2016) argued that while the number of elite leadership positions is rising in the UK, progress remains slow, and women’s experiences at the organisational level remain under-researched. Women elite leaders accumulate privilege through hierarchical positioning, which contrasts with social disadvantage based on gender.

Respectable femininity has historically been associated with the intersection of class and gender and described as an ideological construct leading to a set of behavioural norms commonly compared to the 19th and 20th centuries, where respectable women dressed modestly, were sober and well-mannered and confined themselves to private spheres (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). It suggests these women could 'prove' their respectability through conduct and appearance. Atewologun and Sealy (2014) conceptualised organisational privilege and proposed three privilege dimensions, contested, conferred, and contextual, noting the changeable aspects of privilege over time.

There are multiple ways of showing 'acceptable' femininity, which may be perceived differently based on race and sexual orientation. The cultural construction of femininity around the body and emotions and masculinity around disembodiment and rationality reinforce leadership as the domain of men and masculinity, whereby men are institutionalised as 'natural' and women as 'unpredictable' (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014).

2.6.4.3 Collectivism versus individualism

Ammons, Dahlin, Edgell and Santo (2017) further highlighted different experiences of work-family conflict for women from differing racial backgrounds. Using an American national representative survey, they applied an intersectional approach to analysing work and family conflict variations among Black, White and Hispanic men and women. Although researchers have explored the lives and experiences of white middle-class employees in detail, and there was an extensive body of literature indicating how gender affects work-family dynamics, less attention was paid to the experiences of people of colour, the lower class, or how race and gender may intersect to shape the work-family interface (Clauss-Ehlers, 2014).

Huffman, Levia and Culbertson (2013) and Olson (2013) argued that scholars who use collectivist and individualistic orientation as predictors of work-family conflict tend to pursue cross-national comparative work-family conflict research with much less focus on assessing racial and ethnic differences within a country. For example, Olson et al. (2013) studied a random sample of White and Hispanic workers within the United States. Their findings were that those workers who reported elevated levels of individualism, a preference for independence and prioritising individual goals and

norms above those of the group contributed more to work-family conflict than those with lower levels of individualism.

Hispanics are a diverse ethnic group from South American countries, including Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Spanish cultures, with shared cultural and structural elements binding them. It also includes a collectivist approach towards family life and traditional gender ideology (Jones and Sanchez, 2015). Familism is common in collectivist cultures, a cultural value that involves people strongly identifying with and attaching to their nuclear and extended families and a strong feeling of loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity among members of the same family (Falzarano, Moxley, Pillemer & Czaja, 2022: 1270).

Work and family are inevitably conceptualised in developed societies as interconnected and mutually affected domains (Allen, Cho & Meier, 2014; Ashforth & Clark, 2015). In group collectivist societies, members are highly interdependent on the group, distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups. Collectivistic cultures emphasise group needs over those of individuals and foster a definition of 'self' that derives from group membership and collectivism. The inclination is that women from collectivistic cultures view their roles as more integrated, thus experiencing difficulty meeting work and family demands.

Lyness and Kopf (2018) asserted that there is a relationship between gender egalitarianism and work-family conflict derived from a social support perspective. In high gender-egalitarian countries, support from the male partner is more likely than in low gender-egalitarian countries. Each couple member receives support from the other and the country, helping them balance work and family domains. From a social support perspective, gender egalitarianism reduces work-family conflict. It has been noted that there is a difference in work-family conflict among European countries, such as the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, with a lower level of work-family conflict on average.

2.6.4.4 Gender in the workplace

Allen (2014) and Greenhaus (2015) stated that despite an abundance of educated and qualified women in the workforce, they continue to face challenges related to gender-based discrimination. More so concerning family and caring responsibilities. Barriers are still embedded in organisational structures and functions, sometimes rendering

them invisible. Women still experience gender-based leadership barriers within most organisations, which must be addressed across personal and professional levels. Organisational change can positively impact society for change to happen at home.

2.6.4.5 Representation in the workplace

Ali, Metz and Kulik (2018), Kalysh (2019) and Orbach (2019) stated that organisational pressure to grow women into leadership positions is increasing, yet women continue to be underrepresented in organisational leadership. The underrepresentation of women may be perpetuated when men and women experience unique differences regarding leadership development and performance. Hammer (2018) and Figdor and Drabek (2018) highlighted that due to the expectation that women are mothers or caregivers, they are discouraged from pursuing careers. Therefore, few women still enter leadership positions, even though women earn more educational degrees than men. Research findings also indicated that across ten sectors, women represent an average of only 18% of top leadership positions and 24.5% of positional leaders in academia, while only 10% of US religious organisations employed female senior pastors (Hammer, 2018; Figdor & Drabek, 2018). Although there is a channel for educated and experienced women in the US workforce, their ability to ascend to top leadership is limited.

Even though organisations have made significant efforts to incorporate more women into leadership positions since the Equal Pay Act of 1963, flexi-time, family leave policies, conversations about mentoring and sponsoring women, and other interventions to assist women in the professional workforce, representation is still low at management levels (Devillard, Sancier & Werner, 2018; Lafreniere & Longman, 2018; Maller & Kossoff, 2019). Much more must be achieved to create a conducive environment for aspiring women leaders. It is encouraging that in some countries, such as South Africa, attention has been paid to organisational affirmative action and harassment policies.

Recent leadership research has presented women struggling with WFB in gender-biased cultures and the beliefs that women should assume status quo leadership approaches. Women can better develop their unique leadership identity and successfully address their leadership role requirements when they learn from and experience supportive environments offering opportunities to balance their diverse

obligations. Organisations that use gender-inclusive leadership and WLB interventions report a multitude of benefits, including improved performance, organisational branding, and perceptions regarding organisational appeal by internal and external stakeholders (Bruce & Bruce, 2018; Edwards & Sanders, 2018; Kalysh et al., 2018; Olsen, Parson, Martins & Ivanaj, 2016; Orbach, 2019).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) indicated that even though progress contains increasing efforts to develop a leadership pipeline for women in the UK, the numbers of Black women working at senior UK organisational levels remain distressingly low. The gender pay gap data has shown a significant increase in white women in senior roles across sectors. Meanwhile, the ethnicity pay gap has indicated the opposite concerning the progress of Black women in leadership roles. The main reason is that Black women are included in two marginalised groups (black and female) and experience greater discrimination, a 'double jeopardy,' compared to the discrimination faced by individuals with one marginalised identity (white women and black men).

Adegoke and Uviebinene (2018), Close the Gap (2019), Miller and Callender (2019) and Morgan (2018) highlighted that many UK organisations are repleted with studies on diversity. Still, studies are limited to gender without examining the intersection of race and gender. The increase of white women leaders has created a slanted view of the progress in positioning all women in leadership. For this reason, individuals who deviate in any way from the ideal White men and women are perceived as 'outsiders' when they aspire to or attain leadership roles. The stereotypical notion of who occupies leadership roles has consequences for the outsider, in this context, Black women. Notwithstanding, studies have shown that many Black women aspire to be leaders but encounter barriers and challenges during their journey quite different from those experienced by White women and Black men (Morgan, 2018).

Barriers and challenges include gender and racial stereotypes, macroaggressions, double standards, and bias. Black women are the most likely to experience workplace harassment among all groups. They are often held to a much higher standard than their White and Black male peers and presumed to be less qualified despite their credentials. Approximately 49% of Black women felt overlooked for leadership

development opportunities because of racism, discrimination, racial prejudice and bias, rising to 61% of those working in the public sector (Close the Gap, 2019).

2.6.4.6 South African studies on women leadership

The global understanding of the status of women leaders, empowerment and family life provided more perspective on the status of women in South Africa. Hence, this section focuses on the South African context. Addai (2014) and Van Zyl (2017) indicated that even though organisations are paying increased attention to fostering well-being at work, it is still difficult to help employees cope with work as demands at work and home become more complex. Personal differences and societal and cultural expectations further complicate the situation. Therefore, the authors proposed that it may benefit organisations, managers and employees if differences based on demographics and background are acknowledged and understood (Addai, 2014).

Canham (2014) stressed the non-conformity in organisational life related to Black female managers in South Africa, where Black women constitute the majority. Therefore, there is a need to understand and reverse their status as a minority in management and social life. Even though there is an entire body of feminist research on Black women in South Africa (Canham, 2014), there is a dearth of research into Black women in the workplace (Canham, 2014). This study further contributes to unpacking the definition of Black women in South Africa, informed by intersectional definitions of race, gender, and class in the workplace. The study focused on the lived experiences of these women, considering their different identities and social backgrounds and how these perceptions have developed over the years.

Historically, the anti-apartheid struggle was primarily a fight against racism, blocking the Black feminist movement. Kimble and Unterhalter (1982: 209) cited that Mavis Nhlapo of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) lamented that "in our society, women have never made a call for the recognition of their rights as women, but always put the aspirations of the whole African and other oppressed people of our country."

Canham (2014) and Nyakudya, Simba and Herrington (2017) argued that in South Africa, racism and apartheid, coupled with economic exploitation, have degraded African women more than any male prejudices. However, the existence of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) itself suggests that women understood

their unique position on the intersection between race and gender and felt the need for a parallel structure to assume their course within the broader movement. Apartheid and patriarchy ensured that Black women's lives in South Africa have historically been considered the most affected.

Since the end of apartheid, even though South Africa has the most liberal policy framework in the world, Black women constitute the highest group of unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Those employed are located on the lowest rank of the employment hierarchy (EEC, 2012), constituting all domestic workers in South Africa. Those in management positions experience the highest resistance and number of barriers (EEC, 2012).

According to a study conducted by the Commission for Gender Equality (2017), the goal of gender equality at the leadership level remains elusive in the South African private sector. Even though South Africa has a framework of gender-friendly legislation and policies, women continue to face serious gender-related constraints. This is the case in private and public sectors, particularly through restricted or unequal opportunities for leadership positions.

Motaung Bussin and Joseph (2017) highlighted that family and organisational support are two major elements that play a pivotal role in women's career progression into leadership and top management roles, especially those who are part of the dual-career couple. Many current work practices do not facilitate gender equality, one of the values upheld by the South African Constitution and the Employment Equity Act (Labour Relations Act, 1998b; RSA Constitution, 1996). Their study showed how taking maternity and paternity leave influences the career progression of Black African women in middle to top leadership compared to men. The study also identified core barriers concerning maternity and paternity leave that contribute negatively to the career progression of Black African women in dual-career couples.

Women leaders do not seem to experience adequate organisational support in the consulting environment's volatile, high-pressure emotional context (Mitonga-Monga & Flotman, 2016). Empirical findings indicated that these women leaders enjoy little WLB, accepted as customary practice in this industry. Their emotional well-being is adversely affected, manifesting guilt, loneliness, loss of identity, alienation, shame, and experiencing emotional exhaustion. An employee's emotional display is no longer

considered a personal and private experience. The pervasive nature and volatility of emotions, coupled with increasing turbulence and ambivalence in the modern world of work, have made the display of affective behaviour by leaders an explicit requirement. Leaders are expected to set the emotional tone, particularly in the human services professions. The implicit expectation might be that women leaders should be able to manage emotionally laden situations better than their male counterparts (Houben & Wustner, 2014; Van Gelderen, Konijn & Barker, 2017).

2.7 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

This section discusses concepts found in WLB literature concerning its origin, evolution, and impact on women leaders.

2.7.1 Origin

Work-life balance (WLB) includes social concepts like work, life, family, home, balance, harmony, equilibrium, conflict, enrichment and integrations (Braun & Peus, 2018). However, at its centre, WLB embraces two distinct constructs of balance and conflict (Kalysch, 2016) and focuses on the relationship between work and non-work roles (Carlson, Gryzwacz & Zivnuska, 2009; Gregory & Milner, 2009; Karkoulian, Srour & Sinan, 2016).

Work-life balance research forms part of sociology, which began around the 1950s when Caplow (1954) defined it as a working relationship with the determination of individual prestige in allocating social prestige (Caplow 1954, cited in Nizam & Kam, 2018) termed it occupation and prestige accorded to social status. Kahn (1964), cited in Poulose and Sudarsan (2014: 203), defined WLB as a “form of conflict in which the inter-role pressures from work and family domains are incompatible”. Current literature has described WLB as a structure of inter-relationships between work and family (Zheng, 2015, cited in Nizam & Kam, 2018).

The first WLB literature appeared around the 1960s when women started entering the workforce, and the focus turned to Anglo and Western countries after the Industrial Revolution (Cookson, 2016). It gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s when men and women started prioritising work over family life. In the 1980s, WLB research increased in response to work-family conflict, turning to organisational efforts to

implement work-family policies instead of separating them (Kossek, 2013; Nizam, 2018).

Boone, Houran and Veller (2018), and Spenser and Bean (2018) established that both women and men underscore self-imposed barriers, with many barriers for women stemming from the personal front, managing the home and having the desire to spend more time and be involved in their children's lives. It was further stressed that the lack of women in leadership and supervisory roles was due to family responsibilities. Women themselves did not want to accept working roles due to the long hours, less time with the family, and the working environment which did not nurture or show compassion, especially in the hospitality industry with excessively long working hours (Burke, 2012; Freifel, 2013; Fleming, 2015; Ho, 2015).

2.7.2 Work-life balance and Cultural practices

There are embedded cultural practices that influence the WLB phenomenon. In China, long working hours, overtime, shift systems, and insufficient support from work have been major contributions to women's work-family culture (Li, 2018). Deeply embedded Chinese cultural values and weak social awareness of gender equality have increased women's work-family conflict (WFC)(Cong, 2014; Cooke, 2015; Wei, 2018). These studies further indicated that if Chinese women follow the Western notion of balancing work and family life, it could give them more opportunities for promotion.

Masterson and Hoobler (2015) suggested that family and work should not be considered a zero-sum game. Instead, the salient family identity must drive behaviour and motivation in the workplace. Masterson and Hoobler (2015) further suggested that care-based family identities are more likely defined in terms of emotionally and physically tending to family members' needs. That career-based family identities are defined in terms of breadwinning and professional role modelling. From a trait-based perspective, care and career-based family identities may be formed in the early years based on parents' modelling of career achievement or parents' economic necessity. Cultural values and beliefs, including the differences in individualism or collectivism, also play a critical role in constructing and maintaining self-definition of what it means to be a good family member.

Pioneering authors such as Hofstede (1980) argued that one of the most important ways societies differ is the roles prescribed for women and men. Emrich, Denmark and Den Hartog (2015) opined that the concept is captured in the cultural dimension termed “gender egalitarianism”, which is defined as “beliefs about whether members’ biological sex should determine the roles that they play in their homes, business organisations and communities.” Low-gender egalitarian cultures are characterised by beliefs in the traditional gendered division of labour, such that men are viewed as breadwinners and women are viewed as caretakers and mothers. On the other hand, in highly egalitarian cultures, there is less adherence to these traditional gender roles and more similarity in women’s and men’s involvement in work and non-work domains (Emrich et al., 2015).

Baral and Ravindran (2017) highlighted the increased participation of women in all sectors of the labour market in India. Unfortunately, the career paths of Indian women have not been permanent as women continue to quit their jobs. Those women who re-enter the workforce find it difficult to regain their career momentum due to the demands they face at work and home. The study found that organisational factors relate to policy support, diversity climate, work-family culture, and organisational justice. However, reasons for women's career interruptions differ across countries, and these situations are not unique to India.

Scandinavia has often been viewed as a best practice model for WLB because the support provided for families is unparalleled by other countries, including high quality, affordable childcare and generous, paid paternal leave (Seierstad & Kirton, 2017). These policies are also viewed as promoting gender equality and enabling women to combine work and family. Though there is a positive picture of the WLB environment in Scandinavian countries, the picture in Norway is more complex in that vertical segregation remains resilient as a key indicator of women’s employment and political participation. Therefore, the Scandinavian countries are not necessarily the perfect picture of WLB as parenting remains a female responsibility and problem.

This case study further highlighted the continuous challenge of the competing and sometimes contradictory Scandinavian policies, practices and discourses at multiple levels surrounding WLB, gender social expectations, and women ‘having it all’ (Seierstad & Kirton, 2017). It is important to study different cases from other countries

as it might offer valuable lessons about the relationship between national policy and organisational practices, as well as the cultural attitudes that underpin both (Seierstad & Kirton, 2017; Madero-Gómez, Olivas-Lujan & Zwerg-Villegas, 2017).

Work-family research has received little attention in African countries, particularly Nigeria. In the Nigerian patriarchal society, employed women are diligent individuals who characteristically combine paid and unpaid work (Adisa, Mordi & Mordi, 2017). The findings made it more critical to research other African countries that are equally patriarchal, where women are expected to work and be caregivers. Work-family policies are unavailable in Nigeria. HRM practices and policies Nigerian hospitals are still far behind in the era of globalisation. In contrast, hospitals in Western and Asian countries have already developed and are still improving their practices and policies (Adisa, Mordi & Mordi, 2017).

2.7.3 Work-life balance and Gender

Kirton and Seierstad (2017) argued that although in recent literature, WLB emerged as a contested term recently recognised as referring to men and women, the focus on women and women's WLB remains pertinent. First, there is a greater likelihood of women taking the primary responsibility for home and family in addition to paid work and career advancement. Second, it has become evident that gendered cultural norms and assumptions underpin work-family coherence. Third, women remain underrepresented in high-level positions in many areas of the economy and society in many countries, partly because management jobs are difficult to combine with family responsibilities World Economic Forum (WEF), 2017).

Seierstad et al. (2017) further stated that WLB is a fascinating issue in Norway, which, like Scandinavian countries, ranks among the most gender-equal countries and has one of the world's best family and woman-friendly welfare regimes supported by the WEF (2017). Therefore, in theory, Norway offers a highly enabling environment for women to combine career and family, making it important for this study to note the shift between state, family, and social policies and employer WLB policies. The Norwegian case study has also indicated that WLB is complex and demands various sources of support at the national, workplace and private (family and friends) levels.

At the national level, policies such as subsidised childcare, nurseries, and parental leave and benefits support WLB. At the workplace level, organisations can implement formal policies such as flexible working arrangements and, most importantly, a supportive work-family culture should be established (Galea, Houkes & De Rijk, 2018). There is a positive relationship between national gender equality policies and culture and perceived organisational WLB support in the form of supportive work-family culture and availability of family work arrangements. At the private level, dominant beliefs about gender-appropriate roles differ among countries. Hence, the broader national gender equality culture is relevant as it influences the support for WLB.

2.7.4 Work-life Balance and Organisational policies

Research by Daverth (2016) distinguished between structural and cultural dimensions. Structural WLB dimensions include any formal HR policy or practice that provides an employee with the flexibility to better combine workplace demands with personal life (flexitime or onsite childcare) and cultural dimensions, which are informal elements that often operate below the surface of the organisational context, such as managerial support and co-worker support. Cultural dimensions can also create informal forms of flexibility (ad-hoc or short-term adjustment to working practice) (Daverth, 2016).

According to Alok, Raveendran and Shaheen (2015), one of the biggest challenges related to WLB for HR practices is to change the long-hour culture and make it compatible with social and family life. If family responsibilities do not interfere, men and women can compete on an even plane. However, senior management culture has been designed and developed for men, which can harm female manager careers. In low egalitarian countries, female managers' WLB ratings were significantly lower than their male counterparts. WLB is incredibly complicated for women whose husbands have followed the 'breadwinner' model by assigning all family and caring activities to women (Alok et al., 2015).

At the organisational level, an effective organisational culture can be cultivated by implementing family-friendly policies. Timms et al. (2015) stressed the importance of managerial support and endorsement at the individual level for policies to be effective. Further, they recommended linking them to other job aspects such as work hours, job security, compensation, and promotion. The authors emphasised that family-friendly

interventions, for example, flexible work arrangements, must consider employees' opinions about the consequences of using such policies.

Implementing a workplace flexibility culture is sometimes difficult as it might seem subjective due to different personal circumstances. Kossek, Thompson and Lautsch (2015) discussed three confines that can emerge when implementing workplace flexibility: i) altered work-life dynamics, ii) reduced fairness perceptions, and iii) weakened organisational culture. Managers must understand the variation in flexibility practices to align an implementation culture within the workforce and organisational context.

Workplace flexibility is a productivity tool managers can use to align employee and organisational interests and goals (Kossek et al., 2015). Employers can reduce common concerns about these initiatives by identifying roles and expectations. Furthermore, workplace flexibility initiatives are increasingly viewed as a critical component of a purposeful workplace. Many organisations recognise that flexibility can be used to meet their business objectives and facilitate employee effectiveness on and off the job.

Adisa et al.(2014) also investigated the challenges and realities of WFB among Nigerian female doctors and nurses in their work and family obligations. Most female doctors and nurses who participated in the research described their understanding of WFB as engaging in their daily work and having ample time to deal with numerous family responsibilities. The researchers indicated that most respondents reported that their work demands negatively impacted their family lives.

Furthermore, the participants shared their experiences concerning stress and burnout from demanding medical jobs and how these factors negatively influenced their family lives (Adisa et al., 2014). Most of the married participants with children voiced their concerns about the impact of their family duties on their work lives. They found the stress of family duties such as child rearing, caring for their husbands and other family members, and entertaining social calls from their extended families and friends agonising and debilitating their general work life (Adisa et al., 2014).

2.7.5 Work-life balance and Intergenerational dynamics

A generation is a group of individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context and who experience the same formative and development unifying commonalities (Joshi, Dencker & Franz, 2011: 117; Pilcher, 1994). Schuman and Scott (1989) stated that each generation's location in history typically narrows down its members to a specific range of opportunities and experiences, providing them with collective memories that serve as a basis for future attitudes and behaviours. Although every generation is subject to the developmental processes of the human life course, each experiences a unique historical context that shapes the unfolding of that life course.

Mannheim et al. (1952) are not specifically concerned with the impact of generation on individual attitudes and behaviours but rather the dynamic interaction of generations as a mechanism for social change. They argued that new generations make "fresh contact" with cultural norms, creating sense within their unique social and historical context. Each generation faces pre-existing norms about appropriate behaviour and responds to those norms with either acceptance or defiance.

Successive generations increasingly prioritise WLB, both attitudinally and behaviourally (Gursoy, 2013; Lynos, 2012; Sullivan, Forret, Carraher & Mainiero, 2009; Lub, 2012). WLB in Baby Boomers and Generation X was more important than in Millennials and later generations.

2.7.6 Intersectionality and Work-life balance

Few local studies investigated more than one social identity, though working women still struggle to maintain productivity at work and manage their personal lives simultaneously. Scholars have indicated that it is important to investigate if current gendered WLB arrangements and policies are problematic to women (Adame, Clark & Baltes 2018; Hofmeyer & Mzobe 2018; Kossek 2015; Nkomo & Okeke-Uzodie 2012 & María-José Miquel 2019).

Several gaps were identified in WLB and intersectionality by Grabham, Cooper, Krishnadas and Herman (2018). Dombeck (2019) focused on ethnic, gender, and class intersections in British women's leadership experiences. An intersectional

framework was used to simultaneously consider socio-demographic identities with challenging gender and ethnic leadership assumptions. The findings showed a low representation of people from ethnic minorities at senior levels in companies across the UK. Ethnic families experienced higher levels of WLB conflict than those from continental European countries because of better structural support for childcare. In addition, non-work-related responsibilities differ along racial and ethnic lines in that, in the UK and Caribbean, Black women are more likely to bring up children alone. At the same time, Asian households are more likely to be multigenerational, with grandparents providing childcare assistance (Kossek, 2015).

2.7.7 Work-life balance and women leadership- South African context

In today's fast paced world, with a significant number of women entering the workplace, several factors now influence the way WLB is attained. The current South African workforce comprises diverse individuals with their historical challenges. Therefore, achieving a WLB is difficult for most employees, however, women from diverse backgrounds face multifaceted challenges because of their roles as mothers, carers, housewives and so forth (Maharaj & Munyeka, 2022).

Adisa, Mordi and Osabutey (2017) confirm that Organisational culture influences WLB. In that WLB was created through a robust organisational support system, developed through organisational culture. Overall the success of WLB initiatives depends on the nature of an organisation's prevailing culture (Adisa et al., 2017).

Within South African business environment, women leaders are acknowledged for their resonance, building leadership styles, adaptive communication skills and qualities of cooperation, mentoring and collaboration, traits that are becoming increasingly important to leadership in contemporary organisations (Heydenrych & Van Wyk, 2014). If women are sufficiently competent to serve as leaders, why have so few reached the top of the ladder (Heydenrych & Van Wyk, 2014).

Gender based stereotypes influenced by the cultural value dimensions of society are seen as the major barriers to women advancement. Despite enabling legislation in South Africa, there is dwingling of opportunities as women reach the upper echelons of management. Reported structural barriers in organisations including networking,

glass ceilings and glass cliffs (Heydenrych & Van Wyk, 2014; Maharaj & Munyeka, 2022).

2.7.7 The New Work-life balance

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the world to adopt a ‘new normal’, with many employees working from home. Choudhury (2020) highlighted the benefits of working from anywhere forced by COVID-19. Most organisations had to strategically move towards remote employment, with less than 50% of company employees co-located in physical offices. When exploring the benefits for individuals, a remarkable finding was how significantly workers benefitted from these arrangements. They could live and work from anywhere in the world, and for those in dual career situations, it eased the pain of looking for two jobs in a specific location (Junker, Baumeister, Straub & Greenhouse, 2021).

The flexibility of remote working has improved the quality of life, allowing children to see their grandparents more often and play with their cousins. It also improved the proximity to medical care for children and parents' accommodation. This new phenomenon enhanced female employment, where their careers were previously limited by cultural taboos against travelling to remote places or delegating housework. The ability to work from anywhere makes WLB more attainable (Choudhury, 2020; Junker et al., 2021).

Ample benefits were also uncovered for organisations with employees working from anywhere (WFA). For example, they increased employee engagement, a significant success metric for any company. In general, workers are not only happier but also more productive. Other gains generated by WFA include fewer employees at work, resulting in fewer space requirements and reduced real estate costs. WFA has expanded the organisation’s potential talent pool to include remote workers with the required skills, no matter where they are, described as ‘talent on the cloud’ (Choudhury, 2020).

According to Thomason and Williams (2020), the COVID-19 crisis combined work and home life under the same roof for many families, while the battle to manage it all became visible to peers and bosses. As people became aware of how the pandemic changed work-life in different countries, there was a major shift from the destructive

assumption that a 24/7 work culture would be significant for all, presuming a full-time caretaker in the background. It has always been an unrealistic archetype, while today, over two-thirds of American families are headed by single parents or two working parents.

Various calls have been made to restructure work, including questioning the value of the eight-hour (or more) workday. It was time for companies to step back and reexamine what traditional ways of working exist because of convention, not necessity. Executives and managers can choose quality of work over quantity of work hours. They can value creative ideas that emerge after a midday hike or meditation session rather than putting in face time at the office. The consequence was that during the pandemic, employers noticed that workers function more effectively when also accommodating their family responsibilities (Thomason & Williams, 2020).

2.8 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP COACHING

Gender differences in leadership and issues around the differential progression of male and female leaders have received more attention in human resource and leadership development studies. However, little is known about how interventions designed to support female leaders are experienced within the real-world context of global organisations (Bonnywell, Gray & Haan, 2019). There is limited research and discussion on how such interventions are experienced at an organisational level. This study aimed to contribute to such a women leadership coaching framework at this very level.

Women are much less likely to achieve senior management positions, with only 24% in senior roles globally in 2018 (Bonnywell et al., 2019). It is no surprise that this phenomenon has been termed either an opaque steel ceiling or, in neoliberal, competitive work cultures, a glass ceiling, where the next level is visible with advancement dependent on working long hours, committing to continuous employment for the career life span and meeting excessive work demands, relocating, organising life around work and tolerating crisis-oriented and chaotic work patterns (Brumley, 2019).

Schein (2018:152) asserted that most studies strongly support the view that “think-manager – think male” is a global phenomenon, especially among males, fostering bias against women in managerial position selection, promotion, and training. Attempts to address this gender gap at the leadership level have been initiated by developing executive leadership coaching programmes within organisations designed to promote women leaders' career advancement.

Leadership-based coaching for women has been widely adopted over recent years by organisations in both the private and public sectors (Aridi, Burrel & Ramsey, 2021). It was found that focusing on appropriate combinations of key factors, such as applying coaching in work relationships and effectively employing a women leadership development programme, can facilitate women's leadership (Aridi et al., 2021). Executive coaching has become a growing educational trend for corporate leaders to build organisational capacity through skills assessment, development, and career mapping (Belding, 2019).

Thus, leadership coaching is about developing high-potential performers in today’s complex and rapidly changing workplace environment. A paradigm shift and focus on specialised women leadership coaching programmes is needed (Belding, 2019).

2.8.1 Strength-based coaching programmes

Strength-based coaching stems from the acceptance that individuals can gain far more when they apply effort to build on their best talents than when spending a comparable amount of effort to remediate weaknesses (Petrone et al., 2023). The guiding principles of strengths-based education are that coaches provide i) an assessment of strengths, ii) individualisation and a tailored programme according to participant needs and interests, iii) networking with colleagues and professionals to affirm strengths, iv) deliberate application of strengths outside the coaching programme, and v) intentionally develop strengths through novel experiences or focused practices (Lopez & Louis, 2009).

Consequently, strength-based coaching has emerged as a leadership development approach to help individuals identify, harness, and leverage their strengths to realise professional and personal goals (Linley, 2018). In this context, strength is defined as a pre-existing capacity for behaving, thinking and feeling authentic and stimulating to

the user and an instrument that enables optimal functioning, development and performance (Zamaro, 2020).

Strength-based coaching effectively develops transformational leadership skills in the workplace (Lockman et al., 2023). The overarching vision of a strength-based coaching programme is to extend a strength-based culture and community within women's leadership. The intent is for members to understand their talents and strategically apply them meaningfully towards organisational and career goals (Lopez & Louis, 2009).

2.8.2 Narrative coaching and Leader identity development

Narrative coaching is focused on an integrative approach to being with people and working with their stories (Drake, 2018). It is uniquely suited to identify work in a way distinctively different from goal and performance-oriented coaching approaches. Whereas goal and performance-oriented coaching models focus on progress towards a clear objective or performance outcome, narrative coaching takes a psychodynamic and social constructionist approach (Stelter, 2014) to leader development. It involves greater relationality, emphasising and constructing a leader's identity.

Winnicott (1965) first developed the concept of a holding environment to describe relational processes that support development in caregiving relationships and a reliably empathetic presence. The theory extended to research on organisations and supportive adult relationships (Ghosh, Haynes & Kram, 2019). When new leaders undergo identity transitions at work, they experience higher anxiety and uncertainty (Nicholson & Carrol, 2013; Kahn, 2011). These changes and corresponding emotions could result in optimal outcomes of self-awareness and development or, on the other hand, maladaptive outcomes of identity loss. For new leaders in transition, a healthy holding environment keeps them secure while equilibrium is regained (Kahn, 2011).

2.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter focused on areas of leadership in different spheres to understand and appreciate broad leadership issues using an intersectionality lens, especially where women leaders are concerned. Issues on WLB and the impact on conflict between work and family for women, especially in leadership positions, were presented. The

conclusion was that an integrated WLB coaching framework was needed for women leaders to manage the stressful intersectional concepts presented in this chapter.

The following chapter will discuss positive psychology and psychological capital as the theoretical paradigm for deriving a preliminary conceptual women's leadership coaching framework.

CHAPTER 3: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living – Peterson (2008).

This chapter discusses the history of positive psychology (PP) and psychological capital (PsyCap) that developed from social and human studies to foster the idea of a life worth living. Psychological capital concepts and their role in supporting the lived intersectional experiences of women leaders' work and family life are explored to derive a preliminary conceptual women's leadership framework for further development.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to address two theoretical objectives as formulated in Chapter 1.7.

TO2: *To describe selected concepts from positive psychology as the theoretical paradigm of the study.*

TO3: *To formulate propositions and a preliminary conceptual framework based on the theoretical paradigm*.

3.2 THE EMERGENCE OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive Psychology (PP) emerged as an important subdomain of psychology and a field of inquiry into human life worth living (Shrestha, 2019, 2021). The significant development of PP is due to an overwhelming response from scholars to the call of Martin Seligman in 1992, who, after realising that post-war psychology was focused on "the diagnosis treatment and scientific study of mental illness" (Gantt & Thayne, 2017: 5), made a call to focus the attention on the positive features of human existence. The contemporary PP movement has grown remarkably in recent decades (Waters & Loton, 2019).

Gruman, Lumley and Morales (2018), Seligman (1999) and Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) revealed that, towards the end of the last century, PP has

developed into a science and profession focused on better understanding what gives life meaning. The goal of PP is to redress traditional psychology's overemphasis on the negative side of life. Gruman et al. (2018: 54) noted that "PP aims to catalyse a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities". However, the introduction of PP did not achieve the redress it was intended to produce. Instead, PP was criticised for, among other things, fostering a psychology overly focused on the positive. PP's primary challenge and opportunity have been to address these critiques to understand why making people believe life is worth living is necessary for positive lived experiences.

During the initial years of development, there was a lack of understanding among the scholarly community of what PP represents. For many, it sounded like a cure-all for many modern ailments (Linley, Joseph, Harrington & Wood, 2018). As PP drew the broader attention of the scholarly community, many definitions of PP appeared in the literature. Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005: 410) defined PP as "an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits and enabling institutions". In accord, Sheldon and King (2018) viewed PP as the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues, stating that the aim is to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive.

3.2.1 Characteristics of Positive Psychology

Consequently, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2001) regarded PP at the subjective level with experiences, such as well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past), flow and happiness (in the present) and hope and optimism (for the future). At the individual level, it is about positive traits, the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skills, perseverance, forgiveness, future-mindedness, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, civic virtues and institutions move individuals toward better citizenship, responsibility, nurture, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although these definitions have consistencies in their core themes, they are found to have differences in their emphasis and interpretation (Linley et al., 2018). Nevertheless, PP has generally been understood as the study of positive psychological qualities and states, providing a different lens for examining human behaviours in various work and non-work aspects across the entire human lifespan (Donaldson & Heshmati, 2021).

3.2.2 Moving from Weakness to Strength

After World War II, a range of changes in the psychological landscape appeared when the focus shifted towards disorders and improving human conditions and, somehow, neglected to nurture high talent (Lopez et al., 2016,2020). However, during the early 20th century, PP research changed history, supporting scholars like William James (1902), who focused on healthy-mindedness devoted to optimal human functioning (Lopez et al., 2020). During the second half of the 20th century, significant works were published on the positive aspects of human life, such as Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs.

The term "positive psychology" was first used by Maslow (1954) in his book *Motivation and Personality* (Lopez et al., 2016). However, the emergence of PP as a new study discipline occurred only after Seligman's presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1998, followed by the publication of *The American Psychologist* in 2000, devoted to PP and guest-edited by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi. Research on social psychology, health psychology and cognitive psychology indicated that though there had been ground-breaking studies in these fields, all related to the negative side of human lives, for example, adverse outcomes arising from low self-esteem, detrimental effects of environmental stressors, and intricate biases and errors (Seligman, 2019). The scholarly community responded to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) call to transfer psychology's focus from repairing the worst things in life to building positive qualities. Thus, neglected areas of human strength and virtues received wider attention from scholars, resulting in the PP movement.

3.2.3 Positive Psychology and Its Critics

Fernandez-Rios and Vilarno (2016) and Gruman et al. (2018) established that PP is the empirical study of optimal human functioning at three levels.

i) At the subjective level, the "positive" encompasses valued experiences such as well-being and contentment.
ii) The individual level includes positive traits such as perseverance and courage.

iii) At the group level, institutions are studied in how they promote civic virtues such as civility and altruism.

Therefore, the critique was that PP cannot be simplified to a psychology of positive emotions only.

As discussed earlier, psychology traditionally overemphasised dysfunction and the remediation of pathology in distressed individuals, whereas PP focuses on the average and typical individual, addressing questions such as 'What works, What is right, What is improving, and What is the nature of effective functioning human beings?" PP was not intended to replace or devalue but to introduce balance into psychology's customary focus on negative states, conditions, and experiences.

3.3 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY COACHING

Positive psychology coaching (PPC) naturally applies PP concepts in its coaching approaches (Oades & Passmore, 2014). Many attempts have been made to implement scientific findings from mainstream and second-wave PP theories in coaching programmes (Sims, 2017). However, most of these attempts relied on implementing singular components of PP, such as a strength-based coaching model or encouraging PP interventions (PPI) and PP measures (Roche & Hefferon, 2013; Passmore & Oades, 2015; 2016;2019). Therefore, there is a need for an integral PP coaching framework to address women leaders' intersectional and WLB challenges.

PPC is an integrated approach to coaching, embedded in the strong foundations of the theory and research on PP, strength-based coaching models, and evidence-based practices that lead to the clients' optimal human functioning.

3.3.1 Knowledge

An in-depth knowledge of positive and coaching psychology is obligatory, with the required education as a prerequisite for PP coaching practice, specifically in membership tiers and coaching organisations. Particular PP topics have been thoroughly researched, offering practitioners a substantial knowledge base for application (Yi-Ling & McDowall, 2014).

Proper positive psychology education can change practitioners' perceptions, thinking, feelings, and behaviour (Norrish, 2015). Awareness is a precondition for ultimate change, in-depth PP knowledge, and observing temporary or stable client characteristics (optimism, hopefulness, and grit or resilience). Moreover, it can help the coach identify a person's emotional state for appropriate action, such as asking relevant questions to support the coaching process. Different elements may stay undetected without accurate knowledge, and PPC practice might not reach its potential (Norrish, 2015). Therefore, being a PPC practitioner involves acquiring extensive knowledge of PP to become more observant about positive traits in clients.

3.3.2 Strength-Based Models

Models, such as Grow/Regrow, are used in coaching to guide clients through a discovery process, leading to a successful outcome. However, the proposed model and its journey are not inherently focused on people's strengths (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). PP focuses on an individual's positive traits, predictable human strengths and virtues, and how to achieve optimal human functioning. Therefore, an integral part of the PPC process focuses on the individual's strong points and how these can be applied to reach the ultimate goal. In a study by Littman-Ovadia, Lazarus-Butbul and Benjamin (2014), a strength-based approach to career coaching practice was suggested to improve clients' likelihood of achieving their goals by 20% with their coaching assessment and experience.

3.3.3 Positive Diagnosis

Generally, human beings pay more attention to the negative than the positive. Though not only negatively biased, their negative experiences impact them more than positive events (Stelter, 2014). The evolutionary and developmental value of negativity could explain reasons for bias. On the one hand, negativity bias could allow individuals to notice, act and adapt faster to changed circumstances and motivate them to grow. Adaptation and growth are fundamental to coaching, and a positive diagnosis involves identifying and using information about a client's peak performance (Stelter, 2014). In other words, it is an assessment or a diagnosis of what is going well in the client's life, what resources they have, what behaviours they display or what habits they have already developed to achieve their goals (Linley, 2020).

3.3.4 Optimally Functioning Goals

Goals are an integral part of the coaching process, suggesting that discussing goals makes individuals more likely to commit to them. The type of goals individuals set up and how they monitor them impact their success. Thus, optimal-functioning goals cause humans to function optimally. However, goals must be intrinsic, authentic, approach-oriented, harmonious, flexible, and appropriate to improve well-being and enhance optimal human functioning. The most effective ones could be activity goals such as joining a group or community (Lyubomirsky, Layous, Chancellor & Nelson, 2015, 2019).

3.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a theory founded in PP and organisational behaviour focusing on an individual's positive psychological resources and how these can be developed to enhance well-being and performance. The first-order PP assets of PsyCap include hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (HERO) (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017: 1). These PsyCap concepts are discussed as follows.

3.4.1 Hope

The concept of hope is central to PP and provides a perspective on human strength. Its meaning has a long history, figuring in Judeo-Christian discourse as one of the leading theological virtues, along with faith and love (Kim, Perrewe & Kim, 2017). Understanding existing theories on hope is necessary to explore the experiences of women leaders and their journey in balancing work and family life. In their study, Snyder and Lopez (2002) indicated that participants had repeatedly mentioned the need for pathways to reach their goals and the motivation to use those pathways. Hopeful thoughts reflect the belief that people can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use these pathways.

Hope has captured the attention of philosophers, poets, artists, and scholars throughout the ages. In the late 20th century, numerous social scientists focused on employing hope and, in the process, generated more than 26 theories and definitions (Lopez, 2003). There is consistency in the core themes underpinning these theories, namely, that hope is a human strength that enables individuals to draw on resources

in their environment to support pathways toward healthy development and achievement. Most theories practically define hope as a unidimensional construct grounded in positive expectations (Callina, Snow & Murray, 2018). However, Snyder's (1991) two-factor model of hope has dominated the psychological literature over the past 30 years and is viewed as a key theory underpinning the development of PP. The hope theory comprises three main concepts: goals, pathways thinking, and agency thinking (Snyder & Lopez, 2002: 258).

3.4.1.1 Goal-directed behaviour

The target of mental action sequences provides the cognitive component anchoring hope theory. Targets may be short or long-term, must be attainable and contain some uncertainty. Hope flourishes under probabilities of intermediate goal attainment (Snyder & Lopez, 2002)

3.4.1.2 Pathways thinking

To reach their goals, people must view themselves capable of generating workable routes, called pathways thinking or focused thoughts (develop strategies in advance). High-hope persons effectively produce alternative routes when encountering obstacles (Snyder et al., 2015).

3.4.1.3 Agency thinking

The motivational component in hope theory is the perceived capacity to use a person's pathways to reach the desired goals (motivated to make an effort required to reach these goals) and to reflect self-referential thoughts about starting to move along the pathway and continuing to progress along that way (Snyder, Rand & Sigmon, 2002).

Consequently, Cameron and Spreitzer (2012) presented a new view of hope in four sustaining qualities discussed as follows.

3.4.1.4 Hope is relational

Experiences of hope are intensely relational and may prosper when people place themselves in service to others. It could be a binding force in a community or society. Close relationships and social support are positively related to improved performance and achievements, coping skills, and physical and psychological wellness (Henning, 2015; Hellman, Paresh, 2021).

3.4.1.5 Hope is generative

Hope is a source of positive effects and actions, impacts people's feelings and behaviour, and is the engine of all human creativity and cultural development (Pleeging, Exel & Burger, 2022). It is most generative when it invites open dialogue to expand people's horizons (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012: 292).

3.4.1.6 Hope is open-ended

Hope assumes a certainty that the future is open-ended, becoming, and can be influenced (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012: 292). Rather than being set on specific goals alone, it presupposes dynamic and spontaneous imagination that anticipates a coherent image of the future. Open-mindedness is the willingness to verify a person's favoured beliefs, plans, and goals. Knowledge must evolve to keep the system alive and growing, as old habits can become debilitating (Henning, 2009: 248).

3.4.1.7 Moral dialogue sustains hope

Hope is a source of moral vision that suggests possibilities for human betterment and dialogue that, in turn, sustains hope and high human ideals (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012; Hellman & Paresh, 2021).

3.4.2 Optimism

Optimism is a PsyCap concept aligned with hope. Optimism refers to an emotional and psychological perspective on life. It is a positive mindset in which a person expects the best outcome for any situation (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009: 467). Various definitions of optimism were found in the literature, from which it could be derived that optimism is a learned reaction and the generalised expectancy of positive outcomes across situations and domains. It is the tendency to expect good things, hope, a positive view of life, and believe that the future will turn out well (Rothmann & Cooper, 2015; Seligman, 2011). If available knowledge is used effectively, optimism can improve undesirable situations by viewing setbacks as temporary and positive results as permanent (Seligman, 2006). Optimism could be hereditary but is influenced by health and environmental factors. Twin studies suggested that optimism is influenced by a combination of genetic influences, environmental influences, and their interplay (Plomin, Defries, Knopik, Neiderhiser, 2016).

Synthesis:

Women leaders in a collectivist society tend to have more hope and optimistic aspirations due to family and community support (Cameron et al., 2012; Snyders et al., 2015). Therefore, some women leaders are inclined to assume that the group is highly interdependent. People belonging to collectivist cultures emphasise group well-being over their personal needs. It could also give women hope to optimistically meet demands within the work and family domain when they have hope because of other support.

3.4.3 Resilience

Resilience is the power or ability to return to the original form and position after being bent, compressed, or stretched. Psychological resilience is an individual's ability to adapt well to stress and adversity (Elliot, Kaliski, Burrus & Roberts, 2013: 199). Resilience is increasingly recognised as a relevant factor in shaping psychological responses to environmental disasters. Southwick et al. (2014, online) refer to resilience as something intrinsic to the individual, while others refer to it more holistically as people containing the competency and capacity to function positively in the face of difficulty (Elliot et al., 2013).

Consequently, resilience theory is rooted in the study of adversity and an interest in how adverse life experiences could influence people (Eliot et al., 2013). The authors established a direct path between positive and emotional coping styles of resilience. Moreover, resilience directly mediates post-traumatic stress symptoms and partially mediates the impact of coping styles. Resilience, therefore, operates as a protective factor for developing stress symptoms. During a problem, focused coping interventions such as resilience buffer the stressors and guide the individual towards more successful outcomes (Stratta et al., 2015).

Southwick et al. (2014, online) further described resilience as an outcome that includes a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event. Individuals who adapt to extraordinary circumstances achieve positive and unexpected outcomes in the face of adversity. Therefore, resilience is a state of being resilient and an outcome and product of resilience.

Having recognised these differences in outcomes while confronting adversity, researchers began asking the 'why' question to understand what distinguishes those with better outcomes from those with poorer ones. (Nyamathi,1993) referred to it as the 'salutogenic' question concerning the origins of health or psychosocial functioning. Such a salutogenic or resilience question can be phrased as "Why, when people are exposed to the same stress which causes some to become ill, do some remain healthy?" (Van Breda, 2001: 14). When asking the question, researchers recognised that other processes mediate (that feeling between) adversity and negative outcomes.

Van Breda (2017: 227) perceived resilience both as a process and an outcome operating in an integrated fashion. The process-outcome debate in resilience theory is valid but creates a supernatural split between process and outcome. Thus, resilience research involves three components: adversity, outcome, and mediating factors. The problem with the resilience outcome definition is that it merely declares the observation of positive outcomes in the face of adversity but does not explain them, which might create limited use. Therefore, Van Breda's (2017: 227) definition of resilience is preferred, indicating that resilience is a process that leads to an outcome, and the central focus of resilience research is on mediating processes. On the other hand, a person's resilience or social system supports relationships, optimism, and hope.

3.4.3.1 Adversity and outcomes

Van Breda's (2017) definition of resilience is a multilevel process in which systems obtain excellent outcomes in facing adversity. Multilevel implies that resilience processes occur across multiple domains or levels of the social ecology rather than only in the individual. 'Systems' refers to scaling across different-sized systems, such as cells, individuals, families, organisations and communities, and non-human systems, such as the climate or economy (Hall & Fagan, 2017: 81).

Patterns of adversity can be divided into two categories: chronic and acute (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013: 378). It is important to recognise these patterns because they suggest different resilience pathways and may differ in prevalence in different people and communities (Van Breda, 2018). Chronic adversity develops substantially and may impact a person's entire life.

Acute and proximal-onset adversities designate resilience as a ‘bouncing back’ to a previous (pre-trauma) level of functioning. Thus, resilience to acute adversity involves recovering from adversity (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013). On the other hand, resilience to distal-onset chronic adversity cannot bounce back since there is no ‘before,’ and patterns of sustained coping or stress resistance may be more likely (Van Breda, 2018). With chronic adversity, resilience involves coping with adversity while it continues (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013; Van Breda, 2018).

3.4.3.2 Resilience processes

Van Breda (2001) argued that the heart of resilience research is the mediating processes (also called resilience processes or protective resources), which enable people to achieve better-than-expected outcomes when facing adversity. Much of the earlier research on resilience was focused on identifying individual factors, typically intrapsychic factors, which distinguished those exceeding expectations from those with expected or poor outcomes. Constructs included hardiness (Kobasa, 2013), a sense of coherence (Nyamathi,1993), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982) and grit (Lausten & Petersen, 2017). These classic constructs have been supplemented with other individualised variables: intelligence, problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, motivation to succeed, faith, and hope (Yates, Tyrell, Masten, 2015).

Titova, Werner and Sheldon (2018) stated that longitudinal studies have consistently shown the importance of early caregiving relationships on developmental outcomes from childhood into adulthood. Research findings indicated that people in their midlife showed better-than-expected outcomes when relying on family and community support that increased their competence and efficacy, decreased stressful life events they encountered and opened new opportunities for them. The indication is that early childhood relationships and current life relationships, including adult life, are essential mediating factors when facing adversity (De Gouveia & Ebersohn, 2019; Van den Berg et al., 2013).

Individual resilience processes, such as sustained self-esteem, are more relational than intrapsychic. Relationship-centred resilience relates to African ubuntu values, emphasising social connections as vital. Some authors use ‘interdependence’ or ‘interconnectedness’ as Western synonyms for ubuntu. Ubuntu and a broader

connectedness with a person's cultural heritage are thus important sources of resilience (Theron & Phasha, 2014).

Synthesis:

It became evident that resilience is a crucial factor in surviving adverse environments. Women leaders need resilience to accomplish successful careers and family lives (Ebersohn, 2013; Werner, 2013). While there is a relationship between resilience and women leaders' success, they still face caregiving challenges and unfavourable workplace environments (Van der Berg et al., 2013). The conclusion is that individuals require family, society, and structural support to survive adversities (Hartling, 2008). Persistent challenges often cause women to find it impossible to balance work and family life and to choose between these two significant factors in their lives. Therefore, circumstances force women to rely on family and society for resilience and to fight prejudices.

Structural factors such as policies and work practices create barriers for women. Cultural issues, such as beliefs, stereotypes and values, result in biased perceptions about women's ability to work and manage life effectively. These prejudices lead to many women developing different resilience tactics to survive and thrive.

3.4.3.3 Adaptability

Adaptability allows a person to adjust their reactions to changing external drivers and internal processes, allowing for development through adjusting to the current situation (Darnhofer, 2021, online). Research has shown that adaptability requires individuals to stay calm, motivated, and persistent when dealing with change (Jundt, Shoss & Huang, 2015). According to career construction theory, continuously adapting to the work environment is crucial for achieving work and career success (Savickas, 2013). The construct of adaptability relates to positive emotions that support goal-directed behaviour functioning as motivational energy to proactively deal with stressful events (Ohme & Zacher, 2015). Therefore, women leaders must maintain positive feelings about themselves, their careers, and family responsibilities.

Synthesis:

The adaptability of women in management positions depends on various interventions at work and home, such as interdependence, society, and organisational structures, building resilience, optimism, and hope (Savickas, 2013). Women leaders who experience social support initiatives have acknowledged improved relationships, enhanced job satisfaction and organisational adaptability through resilience and hope, and enhanced productivity.

3.4.4 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy or self-esteem is people's understanding of their value based on emotions and beliefs about how they fit into or perform in any situation (Maddux, 2016: 41). Self-efficacy is appealing as a social psychological construct because researchers have conceptualised it as an influential interpreter of outcomes. It defines an individual's overall evaluation of and confidence in their self-worth, capabilities, and competencies (Rothmann & Cooper, 2015; Seligman, 2006).

The higher the self-efficacy, the higher the person's capacity to cope with the conflicting demands of work and family roles. Therefore, self-esteem improves the quality of life and enhances performance and productivity (Frone, 2003; Rashida, 2018). Research by Bleidorn et al. (2018) and Van der Linde (2019) discussed age and gender differences in self-efficacy. Their findings were that self-efficacy increases from late adolescence to middle adulthood. Furthermore, male participants consistently reported higher self-esteem than females. Overall, it was found that childhood, society, social media, beliefs, friends and family, romantic involvements, work environment, and health can influence self-esteem (Van der Linde, 2019).

Research has also indicated that self-esteem is related to goal achievement, where competence is the standard to determine whether an individual is doing well (Liu & Xin, 2015; Liu, Wu & Ming, 2015; Schreiber, Agomate & Oddi, 2017). Goal achievement has also become a parameter for how women develop their abilities. Therefore, self-efficacy reflects a woman's feelings and assessment of themselves, such as feeling fulfilled and confident compared to other women.

Self-efficacy is thus an important psychological reflection for women in living their daily lives, including work and family. It has the potential to determine success in achieving their goals or failure if they do not have it (Cheng & Law, 2015, 2021). People with

elevated levels of self-efficacy are more fulfilled and satisfied with their abilities (Karaday & Ilker, 2018). Conversely, low self-esteem is associated with adverse outcomes, such as increased substance abuse and offending behaviour, which tends to produce depression and other mental weaknesses for women leaders (Rubeli, Oswald, Conzelmann, Schmid, Valkanover & Schmidt, 2020).

Synthesis:

Women's leadership experiences and WLB challenges cut across ethnic, gender, and class intersections and affect their self-esteem and potential. Regardless of socio-demographic identities, all barriers should be considered concurrently to challenge gender and ethnic leadership assumptions (Rothmann et al., 2015; Seligman, 2006; Rashida, 2012). Non-work-related responsibilities differ along racial and ethnic lines, depending on women's social background, ability to balance work and family life, social settings and family structure, and whether they can manage their challenges through self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2015; Schreiber et al., 2017).

3.4.5 Happiness

As indicated in 1.4.1.5, happiness is not part of psychological capital. However, it is still relevant for this study as there is a clear link between happiness and PsyCap and its components: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, contributing to an individual's overall well-being and contentment.

Pollock, Noser, Holden and Hill (2019) stated that happiness motivates people's choices and actions. The United Nations (UN) also recognised the pursuit of happiness as an important human goal and a public endeavour (Paiva, 2016). (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Happiness is an attitudinal phenomenon implying that perceptions and beliefs influence the experience of happiness (Veenhoven, 2017; 2021).

Happiness is also the hallmark of positive affect, which entails experiencing positive emotions and perceiving life as virtuous, meaningful, and worthwhile (Berkland, Werneburg & Jenkins, 201). Happiness at work is associated with increased productivity, support, and consistency; however, cultural differences exist in the perception of happiness (Otken & Erben, 2013; Seligman, 2011). In positive

psychology, happiness is viewed as a positive emotion deeper than a good temporary mood (Seligman, 2011; Sheldon, Kashdan & Steger, 2012; 2019).

Furthermore, Bandura (1993) agreed that gender, income, marital status, educational level, job satisfaction, health-promoting education, and increased knowledge are key drivers of individual happiness. Additionally, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schakade (2005) found that happiness is influenced by three variables, namely, i) happiness-relevant life circumstances, such as marriage and employment status, ii) a genetically determined set point for happiness, and iii) the extent to which an individual engages in activities that increase happiness.

Berkland et al. (2017) opined that happiness is at the core of every individual's life. It re-confirms that life is worth living, which depends on cultural values and beliefs critical for women leaders in managing work and family life. This view was supported by Lyubomirsky (2005), who stated that happiness is influenced by structural dimensions, including policies and practices that provide conducive environments for women leaders to thrive in all spheres of their lives.

3.5 RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Theoretical discussions on psychological capital concepts, including hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy or self-esteem, contributed to a preliminary coaching framework for women leaders to manage intersectionality in the organisational structure positively and WLB in their daily routines successfully.

The following propositions resulted from the theoretical discussions to guide the research methodology and address the empirical objectives outlined in Chapter 1.7.

P1: *Psychological capital (hope, optimism, and resilience) contributes to women leaders' work-life balance*.

P2: *Structural factors influence the relationship between WLB and effective women leadership*.

P3: *Self-esteem enhances effective women leadership*.

A conceptual framework was developed from the theoretical discussions and research propositions to guide the empirical research explained in Chapter 5 towards the research findings discussed in Chapter 6.

3.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The discussion on intersectionality concepts from the literature, positive psychology as the theoretical paradigm, and psychological capital assets, hope, self-esteem, resilience and happiness led to the formation of research propositions founded on intersectionality theory and concepts related to WLB for women in the workplace. Women managers' organisational structure and policies, marital status, family structure, and society are influenced by racial-ethnicity, gender, class, generational and workplace culture, traditional and cultural practices, societal perceptions and expectations, and work-family conflict.

The propositions and positive psychological theory clarified that women need a leadership framework for sustainable gender transformation to coach them towards managing their intersectional social identity and work-life balance, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

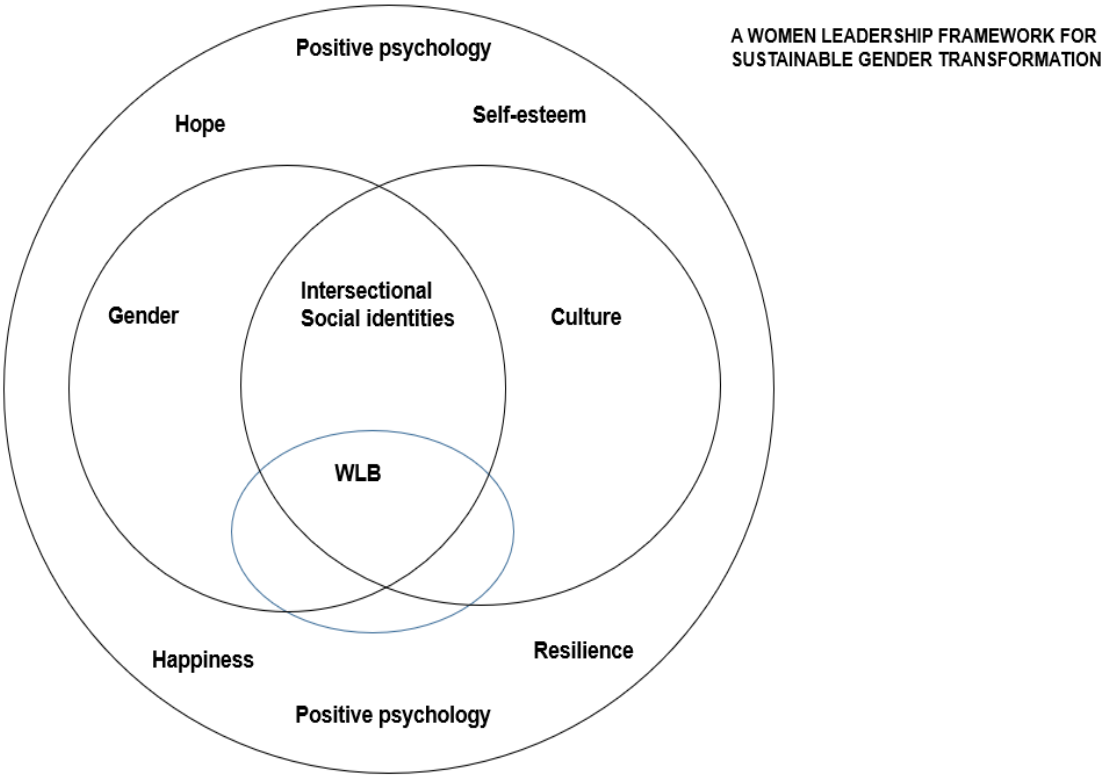

Figure 3. 1 Conceptual Propositional Framework

Source: Own compilation

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on personal psychology as the theoretical underpinning of psychological capital. Psychological capital concepts were identified as significantly and positively influencing women leaders' coping with adverse environments, especially for those still facing societal stereotyping in the home and work environment. There was a need for a leadership coaching framework based on psychological capital to create a positive women leadership framework for sustainable gender transformation for women leaders towards overcoming barriers of intersectionality.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology provide a structured approach to conducting the research, guiding the researcher in formulating the research questions and objectives, selecting appropriate methods, collecting and analysing data, and drawing meaningful conclusions for application (Hennink, Hutler & Bailey, 2020: 29). A well-designed study contributes to the credibility and usefulness of the research findings in practice (Coleman, 2022).

This chapter explains the research methodology and design adopted for this study. The research design will include the sampling, the sample frame, and the data collection and analysis methods.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology and design adopted for collecting and analysing the data are grounded in feminist theory and a qualitative phenomenological approach for investigating women leaders' experiences for deeper insights into the participants' lived experiences through their real-life stories.

This research methodology chapter focuses on five major sections: a discussion on the philosophical stance, the research design, and the data collection and analysis techniques and processes. Next, it addresses the trustworthiness and credibility of the study to ensure research rigour and concludes with ethical considerations.

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE

The researcher adopted phenomenology as the philosophical stance and method of inquiry. Phenomenological psychology is a sub-discipline of psychology and is the scientific study of subjective experiences (Giorgi, 2009; Wertz, 2010: 269). Therefore, it was not limited to an approach to knowing but an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning-making to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level (Qutoshi, 2018). Furthermore, the philosophical stance was in line with Husserl's (1999) perspective of phenomenology, which was that it is a science of

understanding human beings at a deeper level by observing the phenomenon. The various aspects of the philosophical paradigm were discussed in Chapter 1.9.

Phenomenology provided a philosophical guideline for understanding phenomena at the level of subjective reality. Subjective ontological reality played a key role in understanding the participants' perceptions regarding a particular event or phenomenon. Thus, the researcher performed interviews and a mini focus group discussion as data collection strategies within a phenomenological philosophy and a qualitative method of inquiry.

Furthermore, phenomenological relativist interpretivism is a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific 'real-world' settings, and thus, the researcher did not attempt to manipulate the facts (Patton, 2001). Humans were viewed as central to the research process rather than isolated units and were not studied but participated to benefit from the research and findings (Alaranta, 2006; Creswell, 1994; Gephart, 1999; Kim, 2003; Thorne, 2000).

Interpretivism supports constructivism (socially constructed) positioned within relativism with the view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and from context to context. In addition, interpretivism believes that human senses mediate reality. Individuals with varied backgrounds, assumptions, and experiences contribute to constructing reality in the broader social context through social interaction. Because these human perspectives and experiences are subjective, social reality may change and cover multiple perspectives (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

Epistemologically, interpretivists prefer to understand the social world from the experiences and subjective meanings people attach to it. They interact and have a dialogue with research participants through narratives. The qualitative data provide detailed descriptions of social constructs instead of post-positivist generalisation. Consequently, interpretivism uses a narrative form of data collection and analysis to describe specific and highly detailed accounts of a particular social reality, termed the idiographic approach of thick descriptions and detail (Neuman, 2011) (see 1.9.2).

Regarding axiology, the researcher, as an interpretivist, took an insider perspective, which means that social reality was studied from her perspective, while the

experiences and values of the participants influenced the data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hallebone & Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Female leaders' experiences and perceptions of WLB and intersectionality were explored, given their different social backgrounds and realities. The interpretivist paradigm assisted in understanding WLB among women leaders and the realities of the world at the level of individual, organisational and social practises embedded in intersectionality.

Inductive reasoning formed the core of the qualitative research method and decision-making process to develop data and concepts from available data within a frame of reference beyond the existing information for trustworthy conclusions (Cramer-Petersen et al., 2019). Having chosen to apply interpretivism as the paradigm, the next stage was to identify the appropriate design and methods of data collection and analysis for this study.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative sequential multi-method research design was used to collect and analyse the data. To understand social reality, the research needed to be framed within the context of a dynamic social structure that created the observable within a socially biased world, cultural experiences, and upbringing (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hallebone & Priest, 2009; Neuman, 2011).

The sequential multi-method research design contained two methods to collect the relevant data.

Phase 1 included 12 female leaders as participants with experience at the management and executive level and were either married, divorced, or single women from different age groups between 30 to 55 years. They were assigned pseudonyms in the form of numbers from P1 to P12 to protect their privacy. A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was designed from the theory to enable the female participants to narrate their experiences without being restricted.

Phase 2 consisted of a mini focus group discussion containing five participants. The female participants were five subject matter experts between 40 to 60 years old and had extensive work experience as specialists in the business environment. Their

perceptions about intersectionality and WLB were combined as one voice and indicated under the pseudonym FG when the findings were presented (see Chapter 5). For the Phase 2 focus group discussions, some open questions in the interview guide were more targeted to confirm and authenticate findings from the in-depth interviews.

4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population is the totality or a complete set of events, people or things to which the research findings are to be applied. At the same time, the sample is a group of units drawn from the population to represent the population and studied to acquire knowledge about the entire population (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

4.4.1 Population

The target population was women leaders from private and state-owned enterprises in South Africa who might have or might be experiencing intersectionality and WLB challenges in their lives.

4.4.2 Sample

The sample comprised women leaders from diverse racial (African, Coloured, Indian, and White) groups aged between 30 to 55 years. The women were at middle, senior management and executive levels from various private and public organisations in South Africa and had an average of three to five years minimum leadership or management experience. In Phase 1, the sample for the in-depth interviews consisted of 12 female participants with experience at the management and executive levels. They were assigned numbers from P1 to P12 to protect their privacy. The participants' demographic profile diversification ensured that intergenerational experiences were captured.

4.4.2.1 Inclusion criteria

The candidates had to be women leaders with at least three years of work experience in middle, senior and executive management positions because inexperienced people could not provide the rich and relevant information required for the research. Women

in senior positions were included whether they had children or not and whether they were married or not.

4.4.2.2 Exclusion criteria

All men and women with less than three years in leadership positions were excluded for the above reasons. Foreign nationals were also excluded in the sample frame.

4.4.2.3 Sampling method

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) asserted that the research sample must be selected depending on the research problem to be addressed and the question(s) to be answered. A nonprobability or non-random sampling technique, purposive sampling, was applied to identify and select a population subset of information-rich cases related to the research phenomenon (Valliant, Dever & Kreuter, 2018). In this case, specific characteristics, such as gender and work experience, served as the criterion. Non-random sampling in qualitative research may not necessarily represent the target population in general, as the researcher purposefully selected cases depending on convenience and subjective judgment (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Another non-probability sampling technique, snowball sampling, was used to ensure that relevant and suitable participants were interviewed. Berg (2006) stated that snowball sampling is performed through a series of referrals from a circle of people who know more relevant participants, while according to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), snowball sampling is a method that yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share and know of others with similar characteristics and interest. The researcher located one woman leader from a women's leadership conference (one of the guest speakers). This woman then helped her locate another one by recommending other participants of relevance to the research. The researcher then used the recommended candidates to select the next participant to be interviewed. After each interview, the participants would make their recommendation(s).

The researcher, however, considered the possibility of bias likely because the potential participant suggested by someone in the sample was likely to share similar characteristics to the participant making the recommendation(s). Therefore, purposive sampling also played a prominent role.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering data that enables the researcher to address research objectives, answer research questions, clarify propositions, and evaluate outcomes. In qualitative research, methods of collecting data include observations, interviews, focus groups, company reports, and documents (Barbour, 2013: 162).

4.5.1 Demographics

The study used purposive and snowball sampling to select 12 women leaders as participants for the in-depth interviews and five subject experts for the mini focus group discussion. The demographic profile of the participants for the in-depth interviews is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1 Demographic Profile of Participants for In-depth Interviews

Participant	Position	Management experience	Race	Education
1	Director: Business in Africa	26 years	White	Civil engineering
2	Executive: Corporate Services (Manufacturing)	16 years	African	MBA
3	Executive: Projects: Aerospace	17 years	African	Masters (Engineering)
4	GM: Talent Management (SOE)	28 years	African	MBA
5	Executive: Engineering	10 years	African	MBA
6	Transformation Leader	20 years	White	MBA

7	Entrepreneur	30 years	White	Masters (Organisational Psychology)
9	Executive Head: Maritime Education	20 years	Coloured	Masters
8	Executive: Enterprise Development (Banking)	17 years	Indian	MBA, PhD
10	Senior management in Talent and performance management (Govt)	6 years	African	Masters (Industrial Psychology)
11	Director: Financial sector	10 years	White	BCom
12	Chief Communications Officer and CEO (Engineering)	32 Years	White	MBA

Source: Own composition

Table 4.1 indicates that five White, five Black, one Indian and one Coloured women leader(s) were selected for the in-depth interviews. The five White women leaders selected and referred for the interviews had significantly more leadership and management experience (118 years) than the five African leaders (77 years) selected and referred for the interviews. The two Coloured and Indian counterparts had 20 years and 17 years of experience, respectively.

The mini-focus group comprised five women participants from different races and age groups (40 to 60 years). The women were subject matter experts with extensive specialist work experience to provide more insight into the research phenomenon.

4.5.2 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The research used a qualitative semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions (see Appendix C) to elicit the women leaders' perceptions and narratives on intersectionality and WLB. The instrument offered the merit of using a list of predetermined themes and questions as in a structured interview while keeping enough flexibility to enable the interviewee to talk freely about any topic raised during the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews to understand how the women negotiated intersections between race, gender, and culture. It was important to establish how they established an identity while balancing work with home and family life.

The interview procedures included designing the semi-structured interview guide with relevant open questions to address the research problem and objectives. The theory discussed in the previous chapters supported developing questions on critical aspects concerning the challenges women leaders face regarding WLB issues at individual, organisational and societal levels. Intersectionality was used as a lens through which to observe positive psychology (PP) and psychological capital (PsyCap) concepts to address the problem. The questions sought to unpack how race, gender and class intersect, resulting in privileges and disadvantages as participants shared their beliefs and perspectives about the facts, feelings, motives, and present and past behaviours.

The use of open-ended interviews yielded a great deal of useful information. However, it is important to remember that when participants recall past events, behaviours and perspectives, they must rely on their memories. Human memory is rarely as accurate as initially recorded on tape or video.

Once the transcribed data from the 12 women leaders were analysed, the same interview guide (see Appendix C) was used with the subject matter experts in the focus group, concentrating more on the outcomes to confirm the research findings and assess the face validity of the preliminary framework.

The research scope included interpreting the participants' perceptions with notes during the interviews, writing memos, and coding the data (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). The advantage of a qualitative multi-method approach was that data collection,

analysis, and theorising could be extended until data saturation was reached (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is obtained, and the research process is halted once no new data can be collected and analysed. Moreover, no new themes would radically change the data properties and categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saunders et al*.,* 2019).

The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. Next, the data sets were combined for analysis, focusing on a multiple understanding of the phenomenon across the entire sample rather than on the characteristics of individual participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Data from the transcriptions were extracted, collapsed, compared, and examined for similarities and differences using inductive reasoning (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2017).

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is a flexible, ongoing activity to analyse, code and interpret the research data. It provides order, structure, and meaning to the body of raw data and perspective to the research design. It also develops an organised, detailed, plausible, and transparent account and meaning of the data (Groenewald, 2019; Larkin and Thompson, 2012). Data is converted into information to explore the relationship between concepts and to provide answers and solutions to the research questions (Babbie, 2013).

This study used data analysis to draw inferences from the data or verbatim collected through a qualitative sequential multi-method inquiry process. The central task during data analysis was identifying categories and themes from the transcribed narratives and focus group data (Creswell, 1998). The data analysis included dismantling, segmenting and reassembling data to form meaningful conclusions (Boeije, 2010). The translation process from raw data to new information requires interpreting and reconstructing the empirical data (Burns & Grove, 2003).

A common approach to interpreting meanings from textual (transcriptions) data is using content analysis. Qualitative thematic content analysis (TCA) identifies codes and themes through patterns running through the data (Boeije, 2010) and enciphering and combing codes. Descriptive codes are used as a data labelling method (Saldaña,

2021). A code is a container for a single topic, while a theme captures dimensions or meanings across multiple codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 77). Data were manually transcribed and coded by reading and identifying patterns of meaning grouped into categories and themes.

4.6.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 77). It is a set of theme-building procedures that includes deductive and inductive processes as a loosely defined practice with many varied applications across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun, 2017). Within an interpretivist constructivist paradigm, themes could be developed to capture social structures, such as deriving a positive leadership formation framework for women leaders within a psychological capital framework to overcome barriers of intersectionality.

This study followed an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative research design. Interviews were conducted with women in leadership positions from different organisations. The interviews were accurately transcribed to capture the full meaning of the participants’ perceptions and narratives. After transcribing the data, the interviews were meticulously reviewed, and any mistakes were methodically removed.

4.6.2 Thematic Content Analysis Process

The thematic content analysis (TCA) method was used to analyse the findings from the twelve interviewees and mini focus group discussion following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis process. TCA is regarded as a rigorous and inductive predictable process designed to identify and examine themes from word-based data or verbatim in a translucent and dependable way (Guest MacQueen & Namey, 2011: 15).

After transcribing the interviews, the data were organised, coded, and grouped, and themes were constructed, refined and finalised. Table 4.2 outlines the six steps or phases for cleaning and coding the data as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006: 77). These are i) becoming accustomed to the raw data, ii) generating initial codes, iii)

searching for themes amongst the codes, iv) reviewing the themes, v) identifying and naming the themes and, vi) interpreting the meaning of the themes.

Table 4. 2 Thematic Content Analysis

Phase	**Description of the process**
1. Becoming familiar with the raw (verbatim) data.	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the transcripts, and noting initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes.	Systematically coding relevant features of the data across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes amongst the codes.	Collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each theme.
4. Reviewing themes.	Checking if the themes apply to the coded extracts and if the entire data set generates a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Identifying and naming themes.	Refining and labelling the themes and their properties to develop new knowledge and theory.
6. Interpreting the meaning of the themes and writing the report:	Selecting vivid, convincing examples, the final analysis of extracts relating to the research question and literature and producing a research report or analytical narrative.

Source: Adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006: 77-101)

4.6.2.1 Cleaning and becoming familiarised with the data

The cleaning process and preparation of the coding of the interviews included a detailed examination of the transcripts. The preliminary reading highlighted the relevant paragraphs to reduce data and improve the data analysis process (Creswell 2013: 205). The Atlas ti. 9 software program supported data analysis through lexical queries such as word frequency and text search queries, enhancing the coding**.**

4.6.2.2 Generating codes

The initial coding comprised a lower abstraction level by breaking down the raw data and collating concepts to compare codes. This process relates to ‘data reduction,’ a systematic breakdown of data (Haberman, 2014). It comprised free or open coding of the verbatim data to reflect on the participants’ perceptions and narratives and condense the text into more descriptive meaning. Generating codes implies coding the data for as many topics as possible and relating the code to contextual parts, not only phrases (Mihas, 2023).

The coding thus involved jumping back and forth between the six thematic analysis phases until data saturation was reached. Such an iterative process ensured that the initial or open codes were based on actual statements or terms abstracted from the data (Saldaña, 2015).

4.6.2.3 Searching for themes among the codes

Generating themes implied sorting and grouping the codes into higher-level topics (Mihas, 2023). The next step was to examine the abstracted data and preliminary codes for repetitive concepts emerging from the text. Similar codes were condensed to discover potential themes (Saldaña, 2015). The process focused on further coding, reducing and collating the codes into broader categories to search for patterns and understand ‘why’ those patterns yielded the emergent themes (Groenewald, 2019).

Themes differ from codes in that themes are phrases identifying the meaning of data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Themes emerged due to the researcher’s analytic reflection during the coding process of combining, reducing, and rejecting codes, also called axial coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). The reflection and theorising process involved continuous decisions about the overall meaning of each theme. The researcher used memos to help classify and interpret the data. Memos are short phrases, ideas or key concepts captured during the interviews or coding process. This phase ended with themes and subthemes from the codes.

4.6.2.4 Reviewing the themes

The possible themes and subthemes were interrogated by revisiting the data and themes to determine if the data sufficiently supported the themes or whether there was too much variation across the text segments to justify the theme (Mihas, 2023). This

phase included segregating, grouping, regrouping, and relinking the relevant themes to consolidate the data's meaning or connotation, also called selective coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). Categories could be constructed during this phase (Saldaña, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2013). The combination of themes and the frequency with which they appeared in the data created a strong relationship between the themes and their properties (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher could obtain a good idea of what the categories with themes were and how they fit together. The interpretation of the overarching themes created a new theory or narrative, which will be presented in Chapter 6.

4.6.2.5 Identifying and labelling the themes

The names of the overarching themes were refined and verified to determine whether the findings could produce a convincing analytical narrative (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Themes were compared and discussed under the heading of each objective to construct meaning. The final analysis assisted the researcher in developing a theory, considering what data to add under each heading and explaining how each theme fits the research by identifying and labelling the core themes (Williams & Moser, 2019).

4.6.2.6 Interpreting the meaning of the themes and writing the report

Writing the analytical narrative or report implied telling the intricate story developed from the themes, describing the meaning within each theme with illustrative examples (verbatim). In addition, the researcher contextualised the story by merging the empirical findings with the literature review findings. The overarching themes had to contribute meaningfully towards a “thick description” of the research findings and increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012).

The analysis process started at a lower level of abstraction, where coding stayed close to the text to manifest the content. Coding then progressed through different phases up to a higher level of abstraction to reflect the interpretation and meaning of the responses. The researcher observed and coded common expressions women leaders (participants) used to identify what they expected from their daily structural and social relations. The last step involved searching for themes to consider how these women could be coached to create a positive identity to manage intersectionality in the organisational structure while sustaining a WLB.

Themes emerged from the women's childhood experiences, socio-political and historical context, cultural, family, and community influencing their tertiary education, adult lives, and workplace experiences. Therefore, the final focus was identifying common themes in addressing women leadership issues and how they can be coached to manage challenges.

To minimise the effect of potential bias, the researcher employed the following:

1. The researcher asked the participants whether her (researcher) interpretations were representative of their beliefs.
2. The researcher considered whether there were other reasons why the kind of data was obtained or ruled out or accounted for alternative explanations, which made her interpretations stronger.
3. The researcher asked experts in the field to review her conclusions. Experts and supervisors can, for example, see things that have been overlooked. They can also identify gaps in arguments that need to be addressed. Furthermore, given the data, they can affirm that the conclusions are sound and reasonable.
4. Other methods involved research supervision meetings, including one-on-one and group sessions where the researcher debriefed and shared fieldwork experiences and emergent findings. She also invited her supervisor and peers to reflect on her findings to guard against bias.

4.7 RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research seeks to produce credible knowledge on organisational and management data, emphasising uniqueness and contexts. However, qualitative research has been criticised for lacking generalisability by its quantitative mainstream counterpart (Boeije, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Quantitative traditions include measuring concepts and collecting data in numbers, through which research reliability and validity are demonstrated. However, reliability and validity do not fit the qualitative research landscape (Parker, 2012), as qualitative researchers operate in different domains with different missions and agendas.

4.7.1 Trustworthiness of the Study

This study followed a phenomenological interpretivist approach that, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), requires applying alternative terms to sensitise reliability and validity to the specific nature of qualitative research. Amongst others, four criteria for ensuring and evaluating research trustworthiness were developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1989), widely cited in social science research and supported by Kalof, Dan and Dietz (2008), as discussed below.

4.7.1.1 Credibility

Credibility signifies the believability and reasonability of the research approach and the extent to which the findings agree with natural laws, phenomena, standards, and observations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher kept an audit trail throughout the research process to document the emerging patterns of meanings in Phase 1 and Phase 2. To ensure the accuracy of the information shared by participants, the interviewer asked questions linked to participants' lived experiences and perceptions of intersectionality because all participants were women leaders with proven track records as leaders in their respective fields.

4.7.1.2 Transferability

Transferability signifies to what extent other researchers could use the research methodology and design to explore different contexts regarding gender, race, social class, and geographical and organisational structures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher committed herself to devising a women's leadership coaching framework within an intersectional and WLB perspective within psychological capital. The framework may be assessed in other contexts, for example, foreign countries on the African continent where similar challenges for women leaders exist.

4.7.1.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the incidence of confirmation of themes and experiences throughout the research process. Phase 1 and Phase 2 aligned and confirmed the themes to be integrated into the final framework. The researcher's bias was accounted for by conducting personal in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion, which were recorded, transcribed and interpreted along with the findings from the literature review fully reported in this study.

4.7.1.4 Dependability

Dependability requires the researcher to thoroughly explain the research processes and the main instruments used to gather empirical data (Bryman & Bell, 2015), for example, constructing the semi-structured interview guide for the in-depth interviews and mini focus group discussion. The data collection and analysis process was described in detail. All data and records will be stored safely for three years if required for audit or inquiry purposes.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations include potential moral concerns around the research process, the role and values of the researcher and the rights and obligations of the participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Ethical standards help to determine differences between acceptable and unacceptable research practices. For this study, ethics were observed as the core concerning participant invitation and consent (Appendix B), for which a research information package was provided by email beforehand and discussed at the introduction of the meeting. The researcher started the interviews by briefly explaining the aim of the study and the interview and emphasising the participants' confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, from which they could resign at any stage. Only participants who signed the consent forms participated in the interviews.

Permission was requested to record the interviews for a trustworthy record of the narratives. Discussions were afterwards transcribed to ensure the credibility of the data collection and analysis methods. Participants were assured that information would only be used for study purposes and not disclosed to others. After each interview, a debriefing was performed, during which the participants were allowed to ask questions, make comments, or add information that was not discussed during the interview. The researcher respected the participants' views, and communication concerning the research occurred honestly and transparently.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The research methodology and design covered the data collection and analysis processes. A phenomenological interpretivist approach containing a qualitative sequential multi-method research design was followed. The sampling techniques

included purposive and snowball sampling. Data was collected via in-depth interviews and a mini focus group discussion. Research data were analysed and interpreted according to the thematic content analysis approach. Research rigour and trustworthiness were confirmed according to the study's credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Finally, the ethics of the research process was considered.

Chapter 5 will present the empirical and secondary research findings for theorising new knowledge and creating a preliminary women's leadership framework.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the empirical research findings obtained according to the research design and methodology described in Chapter 4, supported by the secondary research findings from Chapters 2 and 3.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The business problem was formulated in Chapter 1.5 as follows:

Despite introducing intersectional and family-friendly policies in organisations, women leaders still struggle with intersectionality and family and work-life balance while not being supported in achieving the desired work-life balance.

The theoretical problem was formulated in Chapter 1.5 as follows:

Despite extant research focusing on intersectionality, women leaders and work-life balance, there is still a need for scholarly discourse and research on women leadership, intersectionality and work and family life. Furthermore, no women's leadership coaching framework could be identified integrating psychological capital concepts with women leadership, work-life balance, and intersectionality.

The primary research question derived from the research problems was:

> *How can a leadership coaching framework that integrates intersectionality, women leadership, work-life balance and psychological capital be conceptualised?*

Research findings presented in this chapter address the empirical objectives of the study as listed in Chapter 1.7.

- EO1: To explore how the intersection of gender, race and class influences the experiences of women leaders in managing their work and family life.
- EO2: To explore women leaders' experiences of managing and overcoming challenges of leadership and intersectionality.
- EO3: To explore the sociocultural practices that influence the experiences of women leaders in South Africa.

- EO4: To explore the behaviours women leaders use to overcome the barriers they experience in progressing as leaders within the impact of psychological capital.

The research adopted a qualitative sequential multi-method design in which an in-depth interview and mini-focus group narrative approach was followed (Sools, 2020; Nasheeda, Abdullah, Krauss & Ahmed, 2019) to collect the data. A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C) with open-ended questions was constructed for the interviews.

Phase 1 involved personal, in-depth interviews with 12 South African women leaders (see Figure 4.1 and Appendix C), exploring their lived experiences regarding women leadership, intersectionality and WLB.

Phase 2 comprised a mini-focus group discussion with five Industrial Psychology subject matter experts. The purpose was to gain additional insights into the lived experiences of women leaders and confirm the findings from the in-depth interviews. The findings from Phase 1 and Phase 2 were combined and subjected to thematic content analysis to ensure the trustworthiness and rigour of the research and to construct a women's leadership coaching framework.

The personal in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were recorded using Microsoft Teams videoconferencing software. Note-taking supplemented the conversations for cross-referencing and confirmation of data. Subsequently, the interview and focus group recordings were transcribed for data coding. The analysis method included two layers of interpretation. First, the research participants interpreted their lives and work experiences through their perceptions and stories (Sools, 2020; Nasheeda et al., 2019). Secondly, thematic analysis was used to interpret and code the data into categories and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2011). The Atlas.ti software version 22, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool, was applied to facilitate the data coding for developing themes and subthemes (Saldaňa, 2009).

In line with recommendations by Tomaszewski, Zarestky and Gonzalez (2020), the research findings in this chapter are discussed in the same order as the research objectives, with specific reference to the empirical objectives. Consequently, the

categories, themes and verbatim are depicted in combination with the literature under each corresponding empirical research objective.

The following sections present a combination of the empirical research findings and participants' verbatim supported by extracts from the secondary research findings. Insights from the findings will be theorised into an analytical narrative in Chapter 6 to address empirical objective 5 (EO5).

5.2 FINDINGS

The findings are presented in six main categories, consisting of descriptive themes aligned with the respective categories. These categories were coded as first-level meaningful patterns from the data, each with second-level themes presented below.

5.2.1 Category 1: Gender- Societal Perceptions and Their Influence on Women Leadership

Interview question*: Kindly share your childhood background, family structure, how it was growing up there, and how it influenced your personality and career choices.*

The personal in-depth interviews commenced with open questions on the women's childhood background and the influence it had on their personality and leadership. They reflected on their career choices, social class (status) shaping career and personal life, and what influence gender, race, and social class had on their management style and WLB.

Consequently, the participants' descriptions of family background and societal perceptions were coded under this category. Four themes emerged: i) supportive family relationships during childhood, ii) lack of gender equality, iii) societal stereotyping, and iv) equal education opportunities.

Figure 5.1 illustrates Category 1: Gender societal perceptions and their influence on women leadership, including C1T1: Supportive family relationships during childhood years, aligning with C1T2: Gender inequality, C1T3: Societal stereotyping, and C1T4: Equal education opportunities that most frequently emerged as factors influencing WLB. Work-life balance emerged as a dependent theme being influenced by an independent theme, intersectionality.

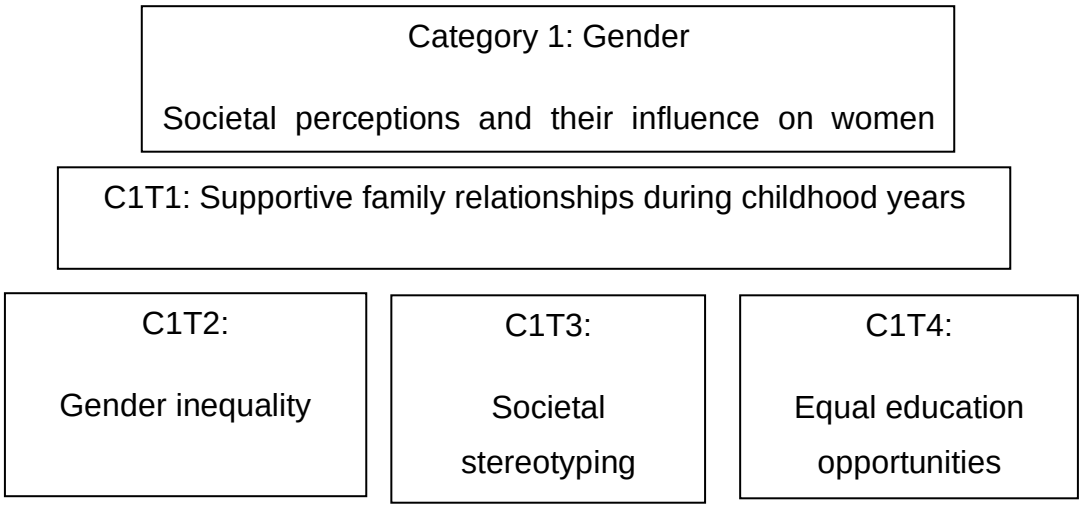

Figure 5. 1 Gender: Societal Perceptions and Their Influence on Women Leadership

Source: Own compilation

5.2.1.1 Theme C1T1: Supportive family relationships during childhood

Participants' perceptions of the importance and influence of family early in life were categorised under this theme.

Participant 4 mentioned that although she was raised by a single parent, having a family as big as her mother's allowed her to feel like she had many siblings, even though they were all aunts and uncles.

> *Alright, I was born in Mafikeng. I was the only child of my mother; my mother has been a single parent for about 14 years. She got married when I was 15, and I had a sibling at the time, so the age gap between my sister and me is 15 years. So yes, I grew up in that kind of environment where it was single parenting, but I didn't quite feel like the only child because my mother's family was large, and she was the second eldest of the family and the only educated at the time, she had to look after all her siblings, including myself. So, sometimes they think I'm their siblings, although they are my aunts and uncles* (P4).

Participant 3 also mentioned that she grew up in a family where they lived with an extended family.

> *So, I grew up with both parents and siblings. I'm the last of four kids. And growing up, we all lived at home, not just us, but also an extended family. And our household was just very busy* (P3).

It seemed prevalent that in some households, parents delegated chores equally, and tasks were not limited to some children only. Children were, therefore, always treated similarly, as in the case of Participant 3.

> *We were the kind of people that, before going to school, needed to clean the house in the morning, so we'll share the rooms. I would do the kitchen and the bathroom. My brother would do the passage and the lounge, and then later, my mom can do the bedrooms when we were gone to school. So it was that kind of household. We never slept with dirty dishes in the sink. That was like a taboo* (P3).

Some households experienced excellent communication between parents and children, and the father would listen to all the kids' complaints.

> *And then, growing up, in our days, it was that these chores were reserved for boys. These chores are reserved for girls. At first, it was like that, and I guess I don't know; maybe I contributed in changing things around because I used to refuse. Coming back from school and washing my shirt and my brother's shirt, he doesn't get to wash mine. It ended up to a point where my dad said, "When you come back from school, your shirts need to be checked, shirts or socks or whatever. If they need to be washed, each one washes their own* (P2).

It also became evident that when the father made decisions for the household, he would involve all his children to have a say. It could play a role in the type of leader a child would become because, from an early age, they could perceive how things should be done.

> *…democratic leader, I should say. Because most of the time, I find that if he said he wants to build, be it a hut or a zozo in the yard, he would sit us down and be like "I'm thinking of building 1, 2, 3 and 4," so that we all voice our opinions. Okay fine, he would make the final decision anyway.*

But he's the kind of person who takes everyone's opinion before he does something (P3).

A focus group (FG) member confirmed that a woman's personality and resilience are shaped in her early years by how much she can fight the typical gender stereotypes and turn gender issues around to suit her. As a result, she can balance her work and life, progress, and fight for gender equality and equal payment.

Although Crenshaw (1989: 139) used the term intersectionality to define women who were often disadvantaged by race, social class, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs, this study focused on exploring intersectional areas on gender, race, and social class and how it affected women leaders' WLB, interpreting it through a PP perspective.

5.2.1.2 Theme C1T2: Gender inequality

Gender and equality are intricately linked and an issue that will still be globally addressed for many years. Equality emerged frequently from gender discussions and confirmed a severe obstacle in literature (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

Participants narrated gender as a barrier to women leaders' career advancement, reflected in this section. In contrast to the empirical and literature findings, four of the seventeen women indicated they were treated as equals during their childhood, which supported their resilience, self-esteem, career choices and growth into leaders. Three examples follow, two reflecting on the women's upbringing and one on what a leader had experienced in South Africa.

And from a young age, I saw my dad working on cars, mechanic-type work, and I would always help him and hand him tools and stuff like that. So, in our household, there was nothing like this is for boys, that's for girls. So, we were just treated as equals. And I think that is also how I ended up in the kind of male-dominated industry that I have (FG).

I wanted to be an engineer, and I went to university to become an engineer; never ever did my mother suggest that engineering was for boys and not for girls never. My mother was a feminist… (P6).

> *I think currently, there's been a lot of work, especially when I look at the position that I'm holding right. When I look at the opportunities I have as a black female in this country. We are treated equally at work, especially because our DGDG is female. She expects an equal return* (P11).

Literature on gender discrimination and gender statements has proclaimed that women are viewed as less efficient and inferior to men (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018). However, recent research on changing labour market trends indicated that women could alter gender segregation in the workplace through legal and economic policies protecting women and social structures offering them education, economic mobility and equal rights (Rees, 2022; Hardacre & Subašić, 2018). Additionally, changing trends have shown that women compete effectively at all phases, such as in the financial and other male-dominated sectors, including mathematics, engineering, technology, and science. However, developing countries, including South Africa, with male-dominated societies, tend to limit boundaries for females to work and live to their fullest. The reality is that, currently, gender inequality still affects the female image negatively (O'Connor, 2020).

Gender as a social category is not viewed in isolation because it intersects and interacts with other social classes, generating unique and different experiences for different employee groups (Salin, 2021; Lamer & Weisbuch, 2019; Heilman & Caleo, 2018). Therefore, gender is fundamentally an ordering principle in society and organisations adopted by men and women in power and those with expectations of appropriate gender behaviour (Salin, 2021; Attell, Brown & Treiber, 2017). As indicated above, the empirical research found that the family can significantly influence women's well-being and resilience from an early age to face future gender discrimination.

Equity policy implementation, such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in South Africa, has increased women's opportunities to advance as leaders and contributed to equal treatment in the workplace.

5.2.1.3 Theme C1T3: Societal stereotyping

Participants narrated about societal expectations regarding women's roles in the family. The research findings indicated that becoming a successful female leader and displaying self-esteem and resilience does not depend on stereotyped gender traits.

For example, Participant 6 talked about her typical masculine way of management while two other participants narrated their empathetic way of management, as indicated below.

> *My life was very much shaped by the fact that I didn't have a father figure, and my mother was very much a feminine woman…my friend described her the other day as girly. So, I took on quite a male role in the house, but becoming a leader was never really in my plans. I just fell into it because it turned out that I was good at it. My mother was, as I said, very senior, but she was quite in her own way shy, and I think that also shaped me because I realised that you could get further if you stand your authority. So, I suppose I'm quite male in my outlook, which has helped me get further* (P6).
>
> … And [I wanted] *to be like my mother who had this, this real servant leader quality to her even though she-- we didn't call it that back then* (FG).
>
> *I am that kind of person. I don't change because I'm leading. I'm still the same person. I don't stop caring when I walk in with my briefcase or whatever. I still remain a community worker. And because I believe that everybody's going through something. People put on masks at work, but then they break down in my office* (P9).

For Participant 10, there was no instilment of leadership skills at an early age. Being raised in a Black family meant that certain cultural events contributed to her disadvantage simply because they required her to behave in a way that influenced her current leadership style.

> *Yah, I think it wasn't one of the greatest ones because I think as a black child you are you are taught to keep quiet when the elders are talking, you are taught to hold your views and stuff like that. So it what that does is it teaches you to be introverted even if you are not; it teaches you to keep quiet if you would like to voice something out. So, I think it wasn't a good experience; when I reflect back, I think society, my parents, or my aunts and grandmothers could have done better. Hence, you know, right now then, one needs to adopt kids or a child or girls to mentor them so*

> *that they can understand that leadership doesn't necessarily start when you are thirty; you know, it starts at a very young age and for as much as we, for some of us it's a self-taught sort of skill or competence it's something that can start being built from a very young age so yeah, it's a bit of a, we can sit here and debate the whole day about that one* (P10).

In contrast, Participant 5 indicated that she was taught independence early on. It played a significant role in the type of leader she turned out to be due to her mother always being there to make sure she did her best. To date, she is still doing her best in the things that matter to her by being independent and as efficient as possible.

> *Yep, OK, I think childhood experience, I grew up with two parents, and my dad has been the one channelling what a woman needs to be independent you need to work, you know, so at the very early age, that was instilled in me that I need to work towards being independent. I work towards achieving a lot in my academics, so I think that is the seed planted at a very early age, and my mother has always been a working mom. OK, my aunts were not, but I think, yeah, when I think back, that was the foundation that was laid by my dad. Yeah, OK, I don't know if those are the answers you are looking for* (P5).

The inference is that women's management styles also differ according to how these women were reared and treated and what characteristics they developed through the years.

Literature has indicated that when observing societal-gender stereotypes, leadership and organisational barriers, socio-economical prejudices, and gender stereotypes, the lack of legal compliance monitoring was emphasised (Dover, Kaiser & Major, 2020). Furthermore, cultural values and stereotypes contributing to the low rate of women in senior management and leadership positions were highlighted (Fazal, Serfraz, Saleem, Mehta & Naqvi, 2020; Grant Thorton-IBR, 2020).

Stereotyping might also cause women to adapt (resilience) and become successful leaders, showing characteristics typically allocated to men. For example, individualism includes "leadership ability, competitiveness, self-confidence, objectivity, aggressiveness, forcefulness, ambition and desire for responsibility" (Tabassum &

Nayak, 2021: 193). Typically, women are associated with the sympathetic treatment of others, kindness, helpfulness, friendliness, gentleness, and interpersonal sensitivity.

5.2.1.4 Theme C1T4: Equal education opportunities

Participants lamented the impediments brought by the lack of funding to further female skills. However, opportunities for Participant 9 came from her father's workplace, which awarded their employees' family members mathematics and science bursaries to further their studies.

> *My dad worked for Transnet. Hence, there were opportunities for the family members of Transnet employees, they still do it, who have Maths and Science at a Matric level, to apply for bursaries. I applied for a bursary at the time, for maritime didn't know what it was* (P9).

Participant 6 chose her career based on being a feminist who owned her rights and fought for those rights supported by her mother.

> *I wanted to be an engineer, and I went to university to become an engineer; never ever did my mother suggest that engineering was for boys and not for girls never. My mother was a feminist. I'm a feminist that just says I have rights, and they're the same as everybody else is, and you have to give me those same rights. So, yes, it definitely shaped my career choice* (P6).

Some participants were not influenced by their parents and could make their own career choices as long as they gained an education, as in the case of Participant 1.

> *So, as I grew, I would research and find out what I wanted to do. But you can call it like doing these things on the economic side. But because it is like an umbrella of things, I would be the one who would tell them that, okay, then there is this and this and this that I want to do. And then, because my mom believed so much in education, even though she was not educated herself, but she believed so much in education, she encouraged me to do whatever I wanted to do. And she would tell me that I could be whatever I wanted to do* (P1).

The inference is that gender, including equality and stereotype, did not prevent these participants from progressing. On the contrary, education supported them in gaining resilience and self-esteem, unlike many other women without these opportunities.

Although educational funding is available for both genders in South Africa, women continue to face challenges linked to being female (Mkhize, 2022). Conversely, women increasingly occupy the South African political sphere, and their presence is undeniable but typically often confronted (Stromquist, 2019). Females remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Mkhize, 2022). The research findings indicated that there were exceptions where women could make their own choices.

5.2.2 Category 2: Racial bias and its influence on women leadership

Interview question: *To what extent does your background (intersection) of different social identities (race, gender, class) influence your work-life balance experiences? Are there any different expectations due to these social identities?*

Perceptions of prejudice based on gender and race were coded under this category as narrated by the participants. Four themes were included under this category in Figure 5.2. These were i) Stuck below the glass ceiling, ii) Unfair discriminative practices, iii) Lack of recognition of skills and capabilities, and iv) Race and WLB challenges.

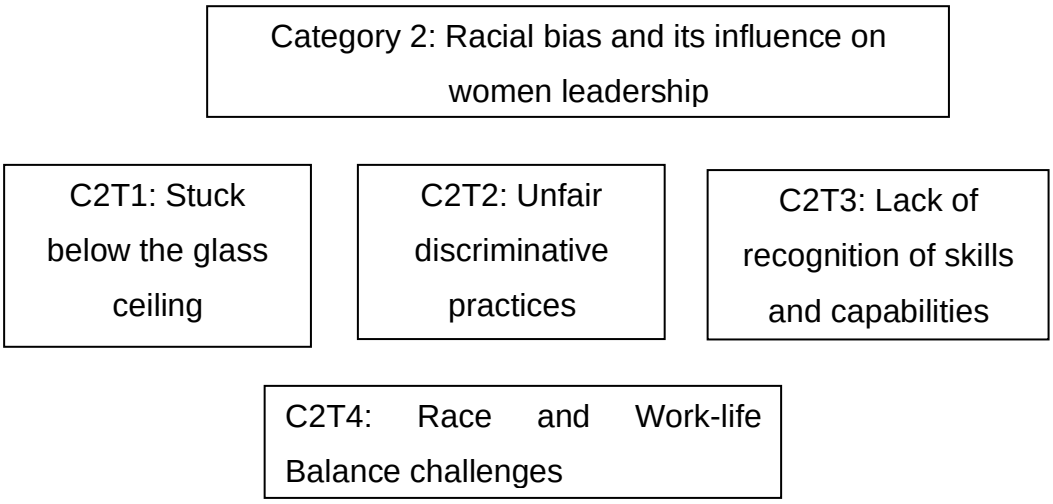

Figure 5. 2 Racial bias and its influence on women leadership

Source: Own compilation

Intersectionality experience, race and racial bias became burning issues during the interviews as women of colour perceived discrimination not only based on their gender but also being marginalised and undervalued compared to white females.

5.2.2.1 Theme C2T1: Stuck below the glass ceiling

Participants described the limitations and barriers to being appointed a C-level executive in charge of an entire department or business. As a result of strong relationships and favours among men at the top level, women leaders perceived their advancement as hitting a glass ceiling. They stated that breaking through that ceiling and combating prevailing preconceptions about females in their organisations remained challenging and disabling.

> *I think my experience with the boys' club or the glass ceiling is sharing of information that has not been considered* [by them] *worthy enough to be a preview of important information that can actually grow you or take you to contribute to the work that you're going to produce, some certain information only being shared in the in the guy's bathrooms or the boy's corridor … then coming to a point where if this information is apparently being available to everyone. Still, it just never reached you, so you know I think it's disabling* (P10).

Participant 4 focused on the vulnerability of women, especially if they are from a younger generation. She introduced an element of motivation to mitigate feelings of uncertainty in the workspace as follows.

> *I've got two daughters, and they're really not boxed in so, but they have a strong mother, but my experience of the young ladies in our businesses is that they're all much more assertive, but it is so easy to break their spirits. It is still a very vulnerable position that they are in, so they all you speak up, they ask questions, but it's so easy to put them down that's all I'm saying. What we do for them is nurture them and make sure that they keep going. It's very easy to get them in a space with us believing in themselves cause my boss is an asshole. Instead, just understand that it's your boss`s problem. It's not you. But I think that is true for young males and females* (P4).

In addition to the prior stated, the participants vehemently claimed that women do not drag each other down intentionally and that there is usually a root cause. Participant 4 asserted the following.

> *But I generally question in a professional environment if women deliberately take other women down. That's my exception. I'm not saying it doesn't exist. I've seen it, but it didn't happen to me, mainly because I was the first woman. We encourage. I mean, we've got female mentors, and I've got a lot of informal mentorships because I don't like this formal program that we had, but don't quote me on that. But I encourage them to reach out to me and ask questions and just consider me as confident, so often, women do not understand the land of play, for example, in the company. Just who`s who, who is the difficult guy, who do I really need to play up to whatever. I found women are great at that, and men don`t see it coming at all. So, I think that women are mature and can play both sides* (P4).

Literature has indicated that South Africa has progressed in gender and race since apartheid and the segregation of sectors in society (Rao & Rodny-Gumede, 2020). However, the glass ceiling still exists, described earlier as "a metaphor illustrating the barriers women experience as they advance through organisational hierarchies" (Kulik & Rae, 2019, online). Thus, the intersecting stereotypes of gender and race contain discriminatory factors that inhibit the effectiveness of individual-level advancement strategies for women (Kulik & Rae, 2019; Holder, Jackson & Ponteretto, 2015).

5.2.2.2 Theme C2T2: Unfair discriminative practices

Participants' stories signalled the prejudice women still face in the workplace. For example, two females (P9 and P11) confirmed that women are still believed only to be capable of caring for children and performing housework. As a result, women are typically not considered qualified for leadership positions, and advancement opportunities are denied. Furthermore, even though these women had achieved leadership positions, they complained that they were still confronted with discrimination.

> *In other situations, because I'm a woman working with African crew African sailors, they would say, "No, but your place is not here; you should*

be in the kitchen. You should be getting married; you should be having babies." So, it was interesting across whether white or black, but different opinions existing people in the sector had about that. I come from myself quite a disadvantaged background. I don't think that has necessarily inhibited me; I think I just mentally may be more focused (P9).

We are still living in societies that still expect women to be at home, not prosper (P11).

Race discrimination in the past had impeded women's career advancement and, in turn, gave rise to another kind of prescriptive discrimination (Heilman & Caleo, 2018). Descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes have caused women to be ill-prepared to succeed in traditional male positions.

5.2.2.3 Theme C2T3: Lack of recognition of skills and capabilities

Participants abhorred a lack of recognition of their skills and capabilities in organisational structures. Though Participant 10 showed confidence in herself and her capabilities, she still had periods of self-doubt after being offered considerable opportunities.

I do have a lot of confidence, and I believe in what I do and the value I contribute. So, every time I was given a different role which, I deliberately winked and sought out. So, I was fortunate in that when I was given a lot of opportunities, but there is the moment where you come home when you think, you know, what if they discover I'm not really that good… I had a manager way back in 2008 to 2009, and I said to him just after the global merger, so then I was 45/46. I'm really thankful for this position, but I'm not sure I can do this. And he just looked at me and said, "Do not ever say that to anyone else again" (P10).

Furthermore, two participants reflected on their unique abilities that appealed to their organisations. The way they applied these capabilities served towards their promotion and aided in building strength (resilience) and performing exceptionally well in their positions.

I had certain skills that nobody else had either. And instead of hoarding those skills, I shared them and got very much into mentorship (P1).

> *So, I was clueless, and I had to learn, but because of my strength in proposal writing, I was taken into setting up the tender team. I think they valued the fact that I had different outlooks, and they appreciated it, and I was able to bring new ideas. But in the beginning, I was very much conforming, and then I felt it wasn't working for me. So, as I would listen, and whether I liked it or not, I would be roped into places and organisations and travel, and into positions of limelight almost. So, I became more aware and aligned myself as I listened* (P8).

The inference is that capacity building is important for women advancing towards senior positions and other women in the work environment to ensure they build capacity and are informed and experienced in their jobs.

People's abilities are interrelated accomplishments of "being and doing" that have value in assessing gender capabilities (Cortés Pascual, Muñoz & Robres, 2019). Moreover, capability displays the interaction between available resources and a person's ability to interpret these resources into respected achievements (Gale & Mola, 2015). Yet, globally, patriarchal structures constrain women's capabilities relative to men's and cause feelings of incompetence (Shinbrot, Wilkins, Gretzel & Bowser, 2019). Subsequently, these women constantly seek self-validation.

5.2.2.4 Theme C2T4: Race and work-life balance challenges

The impact of race on managing work and family life is included under this theme. The research findings illuminated that gender, race and social class still contribute to an imbalance in women's work and personal lives, as narrated by Participant 12.

> *I don't think most women are in the position where they have that support at home, so culturally, coming from an Afrikaans environment where I think it's still very similar in a lot of Afrikaans communities and Black communities for women, they just supposed to do all the hard work and take the brunt of raising the children. … It's very difficult for a company to address that (WLB) if it's not addressed at home, and I think that as a society, that is a big problem, and then I think corporations can do a lot to support women* (P12).

The literature further highlighted the intersection of gender, race and social class and its influence on WLB based on the understanding that “WLB signifies low levels of conflict between work and family or non-work activity demands” (Wayne, Buts, Casper & Allen, 2016:168). However, it could also signify how women manage multiple roles that do not necessarily balance out (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

Intricately linked to intersectionality and WLB, the next objective was to explore how sociocultural practices influence women’s WLB perceptions.

5.2.3 Category 3: Social Class and its influence on women leadership

Interview question: *Do you believe organisations and society have different expectations and standards for working women, especially in leadership positions? What kind of influence do sociocultural practices have on your current WLB experiences?*

Participants’ narratives about societal norms and customs towards women in the workplace were coded under this category. Four themes were included in this category: i) leadership barriers informed by societal bias, ii) patriarchal practices entrenched in organisations, iii) organisational inequality and iv) women's parenting when building a career. Therefore, when exploring the experiences of women leaders, it seemed important to focus on how social class had affected their advancement and how they managed to remain in leadership roles. The fact is that Participant 9 progressed up the ladder without being affected by her social class.

> *Class, as I mentioned, I come from myself quite a disadvantaged background. I don’t think that has necessarily inhibited me. I think that I was just mentally, maybe more focused* (P 9).

With unemployment increasing constantly, there is often a decline in the family's financial standing. When one parent loses a job, the other is left to cover the family's bills. It became apparent in the case of Participant 1 and her family in the following two quotations.

> *So, the long and the short of it is it’s not so much the divorce as my father as a person. He became unemployable because he was just so hard to*

> *work with. So, he was not earning money. My mother tried to try to make up the difference, but she was very concerned about money.*
>
> *She was really scared about her retirement and the financial implications, so this affected my upbringing and my choices in life* (P1).

Participant 4 mentioned that she was raised by a single parent, which affected their financial position and forced them to stay with her mother's large family. The advantage was that it allowed her to feel safe with several siblings, even though they were all her aunts and uncles. However, it might have impeded her education.

> *So yes, I grew up in that kind of environment where it was single parenting, which meant single income. We had to move in with my mother's family, which was large. And she was the second eldest of the family and the only educated at the time, she had to look after all her siblings, including myself. So, sometimes they think I'm their sibling, although they are my aunts and uncles. Sharing was compulsory; sometimes, I wondered if things were different and if I had only stayed with my mother, I could have had a better education* (P4).

As indicated before, Participant 3 acknowledged that she also grew up in a family where she lived with an extended family and had to share the little resources available.

> *And growing up, we all lived at home, not just us, but also extended family. And our household was just very busy, and we were forced to share little resources* (P3).

The inference is that gender, race, and social class could seriously impact a woman leader's personal and work environment if these challenges are not addressed early enough. The secondary findings indicated that self-esteem, resilience and capacity-building support women's job advancement.

Likewise, the literature has indicated that social prejudice and gender discrimination negatively impact women leaders in the workplace (Lamer & Weisbuch, 2019). Adisa et al. (2020) expressed concern that several organisations still reflect patriarchal ideas when trying to create and produce gender conformity. The stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity place men in power and women in support roles, with

women still considered less capable, powerful, or efficient than men (Adisa et al., 2020; Koenig, 2018).

Intersectional encounters of social class and education are intricately linked, as are social class and its influence on women's WLB. Less substantial education is associated with lower economic status and less significant and flexible work capabilities (Brough et al., 2020; Cortés et al., 2019). Deeply entrenched gendered social status in the workplace and women's prolonged advancement to senior positions compromise their success (Seo, Huang & Han, 2017).

The interview guide included questions on the challenges these South African women leaders face concerning self-assurance in their roles and exerting authority and support from male and female counterparts. After coding the transcriptions, the overarching category emerged as social class and its influence on women's leadership, as illustrated in Figure 5.3, comprising i) Leadership barriers informed by societal bias, ii) Patriarchal practices entrenched in organisations, iii) Organisational inequality, and iv) Women parenting when building a career.

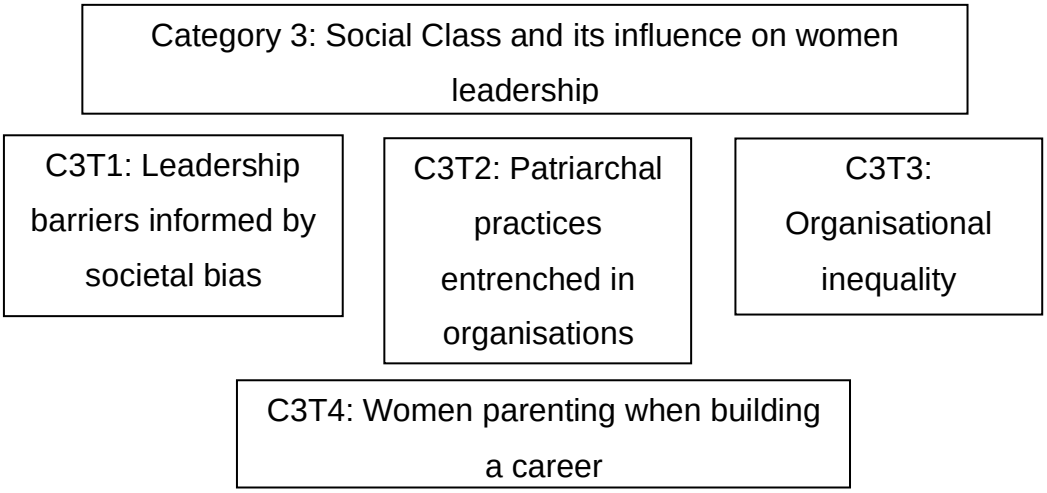

Figure 5. 3 Influence of sociocultural practices on Work-life Balance

Source: Own compilation

5.2.3.1 Theme C3T1: Leadership barriers informed by societal bias

Participants' perceptions concerning barriers to becoming and being leaders were categorised under this theme. For example, Participant 10 reflected on being raised in

a Black family with sociocultural practices that created barriers during her work and advancement towards leadership.

> *I think as a black girl child, you are taught to keep quiet when the elders are talking, you are taught to hold your views and stuff like that, and so it teaches you to be introverted even if you are not. It teaches you to keep quiet if you would like to voice something out. So, I think it wasn't a good experience when I reflect back* (P10).

On the question of whether gender was an issue in leadership development, Participant 2 answered:

> *Yeah, obviously, one was raised in a patriarchal society, where there are different roles for girls and boys growing up. And I grew up using or following typical women roles, fetching the water, the wood and cooking, which were more female roles. So, all I knew was about helping people, and all I wanted was to help people* (P2).

Although these leaders demonstrated breaking these barriers by building self-esteem and resilience, it did not come naturally to them.

5.2.3.2 Theme C3T2: Patriarchal practices entrenched in organisations

Participants described how societal practices influence organisational culture on women leaders. In line with Heilman and Caleo's (2018) debate on gender discrimination in the workplace, Participant 9 narrated how descriptive gender stereotypes in a male-dominated workplace affect women. Stereotypes depict how men think women should behave and encourage gender-prejudiced behaviour.

Furthermore, gender discriminatory behaviour creates leadership barriers, disapproval, and social consequences for women who do not behave in a female-stereotyped way, especially being successful in roles considered to be male-dominated (Heilman & Caleo, 2018).

Gender bias in a patriarchal society discriminates against women by denying them similar opportunities. For example, job vacancies are exclusively reserved for men due to the perception that men are more capable than women as leaders (Moreau, 2020).

And at that point, I think an opportunity arose for a position in South Africa. The company was opening an office in South Africa. I raised my hand, but they said, "No, no, we want a senior businessman" (P1).

So, there is the belief that men are better leaders than females. Apparently, we are emotional. Also, people like us who have parental responsibilities we are not reliable, and we need to be accommodated, whereas men are more flexible than us. That's the perception (P5).

5.2.3.3 Theme C3T3: Organisational inequality

Participants responded to the question about the organisation's role in creating a conducive and enabling environment. They complained that although policies were in place, there was a lack of implementation. Company resistance was high towards increasing the number of women to achieve gender equality in the workplace, as Participants 11 and 12 verbalised.

I would say the biggest problem is the organisation that doesn't want to transform, in terms of equity balances, they don't have maybe proper equity scales, or they are not looking properly into that in terms of how many females are on the management, how many must they still promote, how many must they still appoint (P11).

But I think there are a lot of policies, and I also perceive that there's a lot of showcasing those policies. So, I don't think everything is practised as the fancy policies that we have. I mean, we've got great legislation at the moment that does not necessarily apply (P12).

Participant 2 reflected on her experience working in a male-dominated, demeaning atmosphere. Women must work twice as hard to prove they deserve their leadership roles. As a result, women lose their WLB during excessively long work hours, having to prove themselves and adapting to a male-dominated environment.

And sometimes you find that now let's say you have given birth. Now you must try to please your boss and make sure that there are no complaints because if they complain, it's because of the baby. Or it's because you're pregnant or because of this or that. …I worked until the last day (P2).

Literature on equality in organisations has stated that globally, strategic planning and implementation of equity policies are needed to confront issues of inequity and injustice (Brownson, Kumanyika, Kreuter & Haire-Joshu, 2021).

5.2.3.4 Theme C3T4: Women parenting when building a career

The discussion contains the participants' perceptions and narratives on the impact of organisational structures on women as mothers. Unfortunately, most work environments are still unsuitable for women building careers and caring for their families. Due to consistent challenges balancing a career and family life, many women are forced to choose between the two. Therefore, women are underrepresented in the workplace despite many women being suitably qualified and competent. In this regard, Participants 4 and 5 reflected the following.

> *You had to think like a man, act like a man, live like a man, which is not simple, and you get, at the time, my husband was also at the peak of his career, so he was travelling. I have two sons, so I must look after them some days* (P4).

> *So, having to teach people that I can't do seven o'clock meetings sometimes it is viewed, depending, I mean, women to women they sort of getting it, but when it's not a female, especially these guys that are in top positions they've got, and this is an assumption they've got housewives so they come and go as. When, so you tell him you can't do seven o'clock meetings because I have to pick up my son OR I can't do five o'clock sometimes impacts your career progress in your organisation. You are viewed as not serious in your role, and you are viewed as a difficult person to work with, so you need to tiptoe around her personal issues. And I am not apologetic when it comes to my kids or my responsibilities as a mother that come first. Work will always come second, especially when it's things that are non-negotiable for me. If my child is not well, I will work from home. Those things they do impact your progress within the organisation. Your progression gets impacted, especially if you are working in a male-dominated organisation* (P5).

The inference is that sociocultural practices and patriarchal expectations mixed with inequity and discrimination create workplace barriers that are not resolved without

implementing equity policies. As a result, suitably qualified and competent women are forced to choose between career advancement and family care due to the lack of workplace support and WLB. Over the years, several scholarly contributions have drawn attention to the challenges women face with parenting while needing to perform at work (Harris, Myers & Ravenswood, 2019; Sallee, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016).

Social class and gender stereotypes could manifest in low self-esteem, lack of support, low confidence and the cultural perception that women's careers must not interrupt their family roles (Wadesango, Malatji, Chabaya, 2020). It causes women to be reluctant to consider higher positions even though they have the required education and experience (Roscigno, 2019).

Globally, women's empowerment is a key concern when dealing with economic, sociocultural (family and interpersonal issues), legal, political, and psychological (self-help group) domains (Choudhry, Abdul Mutalib & Ismail, 2019). Empowerment was explained by Mathur and Agarwal (2017:838) as "the delegation of power to a marginalised group like women; however, its ultimate purpose is to deal with issues about the subordinate status of women, namely disparity and inequality."

5.2.4 Category 4: Intergenerational Dynamics

Interview question: *With all these experiences as a woman leader, have you lost courage, or do you still believe things will improve for the next generation, especially with young women leaders emerging? Do you think expectations are different?*

Participants' experiences of different generations of women leaders were coded under this category. Three themes were included in this category: i) Generational differences, ii) Lack of female role models between generations, and iii) Need for leadership mentoring.

The younger generation of women believed in and required flexible work hours to increase production. They stated they were hardworking and wanted to grow faster than those around them (Rather, 2018).

> *I feel being an African female, let alone being a female, you work much harder. We joke about it. I've got two African female managers in my team, and I always say when we have a girls' talk, in my next life, I'm not*

> *coming back as a black person. It's tough. So, you work harder than the others to prove your competencies, and you rely on relationships more than the other people to deliver what you need to deliver, you are questioned* (P5).

Many ethnic and racial Millennials and younger generations include people operating as typical workers, supervisors, frontline managers and major decision-makers. Therefore, organisations were advised to prepare and adjust their human resource policies and practices to adapt to a new generation of employees. In addition, these workers have new ways of thinking, higher career aspirations, different workplace attitudes, and superior knowledge of technology compared to previous generations (Dimock, 2018; Radulescu, Ghinea & Cantaragiu, 2018).

Additionally, the findings indicated that female leaders, much more than their male equivalents, are anticipated to be warm-hearted and pleasant because society predictably expects it of them. On the other hand, they are also expected to be competent and tough, which is typically noticed in traditional male leaders (Ingersoll, Glass, Cook & Olsen, 2019; O'Connor, 2020).

The three themes that emerged from Category 4: Intergenerational dynamics in women leaders' WLB experiences, are i) Generational differences, ii) Role models, and iii) Mentoring, illustrated in Figure 5.4.

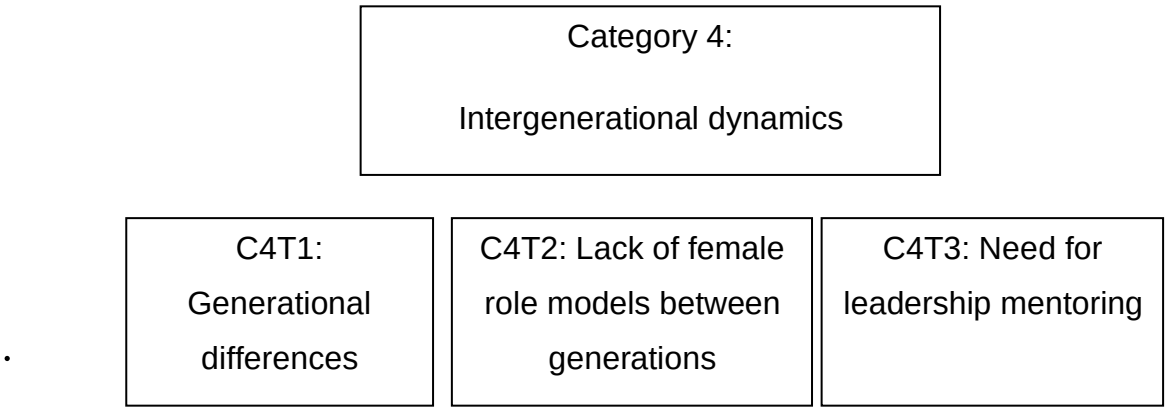

Figure 5. 4 Intergenerational dynamics and Work-life experiences

Source: Own compilation

5.2.4.1 Theme C4T1: Generational differences

Participants described how different generations experience work and family life. However, one common desire was to progress and become their own person. The empirical findings indicated instances where older women leaders fought existing organisational stereotypes to allow emerging women leaders a conducive environment for growth. On the other hand, when Participant 11 referred to racial and gender stereotypes in the workplace, she also stereotyped older woman leaders.

> *Actually, the ones before us were still a bit traditional. I would say we are pushing, and the ones coming after us will be on top of things, yes* (P11).

Furthermore, younger participants reflected on older female leaders' conformity to male mindsets and expectations. The younger women preferred to act more like themselves and allowed no pressure to emulate male leadership styles. Instead, they wanted to bring flexibility, kindness and femininity to the work environment.

> *So today's emerging women, a narrative says you can just be yourself. So, my expectation for women is to be like women, bring their softness and kindness, and not be bullies. A woman is wearing a skirt and makeup. In the previous generation, you wore a man's suit; you looked like a man; you talked like a man; there was that very, very strongly. To succeed and sit at the table, you must be a man basically* (P9).

In addition, Participant 9 opined that previous generation woman leaders did not value mentorship, coaching, and mental health as important because they were expected and assumed to act like men when appointed into management positions.

Notwithstanding the complaints about older leaders, the older female participants believed they should work harder to eliminate workplace stereotypes for the younger generation.

> *I think the lesson learned is that we just need to work ten times harder for the girls still coming behind and the people sitting right next to us. I think it's also our responsibility to ensure that there are people that we take with us* (P10).

Literature findings indicated that generational cohorts define the importance of their jobs differently (Weeks & Schaffert, 2019; Buddhapriya, 2017). Most participants belonged to an older generation than the Millennials and felt obligated to act as role models for up-and-coming young leaders of all races and ethnicities. Millennials and their younger counterparts are the upcoming leaders advocating for organisational culture changes according to their different habits and attitudes (Barhate & Dirani, 2021). Other topics that triggered generational disputes were flexible work schedules (WLB), communication between team members, regular access to their managers and leaders, socialising, gaining knowledge, and applying the latest digital devices for knowledge building (Vogels, 2019; Rather, 2018).

5.2.4.2 Theme C4T2: Lack of female role models between generations

Participants highlighted the lack of female role models within institutions, contributing to a lack of WLB in a male-dominated environment. Although the younger women needed female mentors to teach and assist them in climbing the ladder, the number of women in leadership positions was still low. Those who made it had to overcome various obstacles, while other women leaders did not serve as good role models.

> *I hardly ever had a role model or someone you look up to say, oh, yeah, I, I saw a woman leader leading like this, so I'm going to lead like this* (P2).

Additionally, some participants experienced a lack of support from other women and perceived them as more supportive of men than men of women.

> *Women see other women as a problem; women are mean to other women. I support and encourage women, but in my own experience, I've never had a woman leader take me by the hand and say, "T…, I see potential in you; this is where I see you going* (P9).

Thus, younger women need to be considered and mentored in the workplace as their numbers grow and they project different attitudes and characteristics from the generations before them (Rather, 2017).

5.2.4.3 Theme C4T3: A need for leadership mentoring

Because younger women need leadership mentoring, they tend to respond better to managers acting as visible team leaders than domineering, micromanaging bosses.

> *I don't know when last I saw my boss, just a face-to-face meeting. So, there isn't that nurturing, encouraging environment. It's because she is leading like a man. And I'm telling you, it's not even like a man. It's just like a narcissist, a psychotic person. So, this is also not the behaviour of a man. So, you just see what you don't want to be, somebody pushing so much to be actually the CEO or the this of the organisation. And there is no caring in the recipe* (P9).

Participant 2 proclaimed that it is the responsibility of those women already in the system to bring hope to upcoming women in organisations.

> *I am going to describe it as how I have experienced it, to say for those who are already there, especially women, women who are already there who are higher up. They need to create hope for the upcoming women. So, once you have women at the top, those who are there need to give hope to the younger ones and put interventions in place* (P2)*.*

According to Buddhapriya (2017), mentoring is an ideal way to transfer knowledge, foster talent, and promote good workplace practices. The younger generations expect mentorship rather than instructions because they perceive themselves as hardworking as the older generation.

Women leadership coaching emerged from management changes during the closing decades of the 20th century. The goal was to raise performance through enhanced engagement and collaboration (Katz, 2021). Organisations discovered the power of

executive leadership coaching for women as either a complement to training or a separate function. Initially developed for senior management, it expanded to include younger, high-potential employees and middle managers, often focused on women. The goal remains to raise individual, team, and organisational performance (Katz, 2021).

The literature explored how younger women leaders were experiencing role conflict. Role conflict arises when a person has two or more roles to perform, and if one role is performed successfully, it negatively impacts the performance of the other role (Davis, Bendickson, Muldoon & McDowell, 2021). Women in leadership positions complained about work-related difficulties, such as working extra hours to fulfil deadlines and having to attend board meetings. Returning home, they must perform wife and motherly responsibilities (Buddhapriya, 2017). These role conflicts are important barriers that affect the career advancement of women professionals to leadership positions.

Participants agreed that an important attribute and skill for successful leadership is the preparedness to set boundaries for life balance. In agreement, Participant 3 confirmed how she set boundaries to ensure that she could carry out her responsibilities in the roles she embodied outside work.

> *So, from this time to this time, I'm not available. I need to attend to my life, my family, my kids and such that I can, okay, now COVID is preventing us from doing that* (P3).

With the COVID-19 pandemic that struck in 2020, most organisations strategically moved towards the majority of their people working remotely and fewer employees located in physical offices. The participants agreed that COVID-19 regulations brought a new way of WLB in organisational policies.

The literature and empirical research findings concurred that Millennials and younger generations respond better to freedom and flexible working hours because they operate differently. Moreover, they expect customisable, remote work and relaxed office rules to deliver their best in their own way (Buddhapriya, 2017; Dimock, 2018; Rather, 2018). Participant 4 reiterated that flexibility in organisational structure is necessary.

> *We were all thrown into flexibility, and I think the wonderful thing that COVID demonstrated was that my hardest workers were the ones with babies on their laps. So, it's just a fallacy that women with children get disrupted all the time and can't work because if they are dedicated and you value them, they will put in the hours to complete whatever they've been assigned to do* (P4).

The implication is that women's perceptions regarding WLB have changed dramatically since younger women started filling leadership roles. Furthermore, the epidemic fast-forwarded change in the WLB of all women and has forever impacted organisational policies. A statement from Participant 7, confirmed by the focus group (FC), indicated that the organisation has transformed into a hybrid work model where employees can choose to work from home or come into the office.

5.2.5 Category 5: Conquering intersectionality and work-life balance challenges

Interview question*: As a woman leader, what sustains and motivates you to progress and maintain both roles to manage and conquer the challenge of balancing work and family life?*

Narratives on how women leaders navigate between family care and career were coded under this category. The three themes in this category included: i) Positive experiences at work towards leadership development, ii) Learned resourcefulness, positive individual traits (sub-themes: hopefulness, resilience, self-efficacy, positive self-esteem, positive work ethic), and positive institutional practices (sub-themes: work-flexibility, enabling work environments, empowering management styles and favourable employment conditions). A psychological capital lens was adopted to explore how women leaders manage and overcome intersectionality, enhance social and emotional well-being, and attain WLB.

Though successful business leaders, Participants 1 and 6 reflected on how they paid dearly for their career successes due to high work demands, long working hours becoming the norm, and enduring sleep deprivation. The result was that they hardly ever experienced WLB.

> *I think I probably had a pretty lousy work-life balance. I worked hard—during my first ten years. I graduated as a civil engineer. And then, after a year of doing something entrepreneurial, I got a real job after getting married. Yeah, after getting married, not before, at a big engineering company. And for probably the first 9 or 10 years there, I worked a lot, really hard. But if I look back, I often feel quite selfish in how I handled work-life balance. I think I was far too focused on work and not focused enough on him* [husband] (P1).

> *I'm particularly conscious now that I pursued my career at the cost of friends, family, and everything, not what my mother did. My mother never ever brought work home. She worked long hours, never brought work home, and never worked nights. She never worked weekends. So, I think I've paid the price of work-life balance for achieving in my career* (P6).

The narratives of these two women and the discussions on a debilitating WLB and intersectionality created the need for a typology to direct women towards WLB while advancing in their careers and simultaneously experiencing happiness.

Although PP focuses on happiness and fulfilment, the reality is that women cannot totally push away negative emotions caused by intersectionality and work-life imbalance on their own (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Therefore, Chapter 3 covered psychological capital attributes, hope, self-esteem, and resilience to gain mental and emotional courage, stability, and strength. Most parents strive to instil these qualities and personal strengths in their children (Gillham & Seligman, 1999). Hence, a solution is needed to balance women leaders' work and personal and family challenges while managing and overcoming intersectionality in the workplace.

Additionally, Berkland et al. (2017) resolved that happiness is the core of human life and is based on cultural values and beliefs playing a role in women's work and family life. Happiness is influenced by structural dimensions, such as policies and practices, creating a conducive environment for women to thrive in all spheres of life (Walsh, Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2018). Moreover, Veenhoven (2017) and Bataineh (2019) opined that happiness is an attitudinal phenomenon, which, in this case, implies that women's subjective perceptions and beliefs about happiness influence their actual experiences of happiness at work and in their personal lives. Kossek and Lautsch

(2018:152) designated work-life management as a personality-related characteristic, denoting how individuals demarcate their work roles and family boundaries to reduce stress and create WLB.

Three themes emerged from the narratives: i) Positive experiences at work towards leadership development, ii) Learned resourcefulness: positive individual traits, and iii) Positive institutional practices. Figure 5.5 presents WLB with its subthemes while simultaneously positioning psychological resources such as hope, self-efficacy, and resilience within the context.

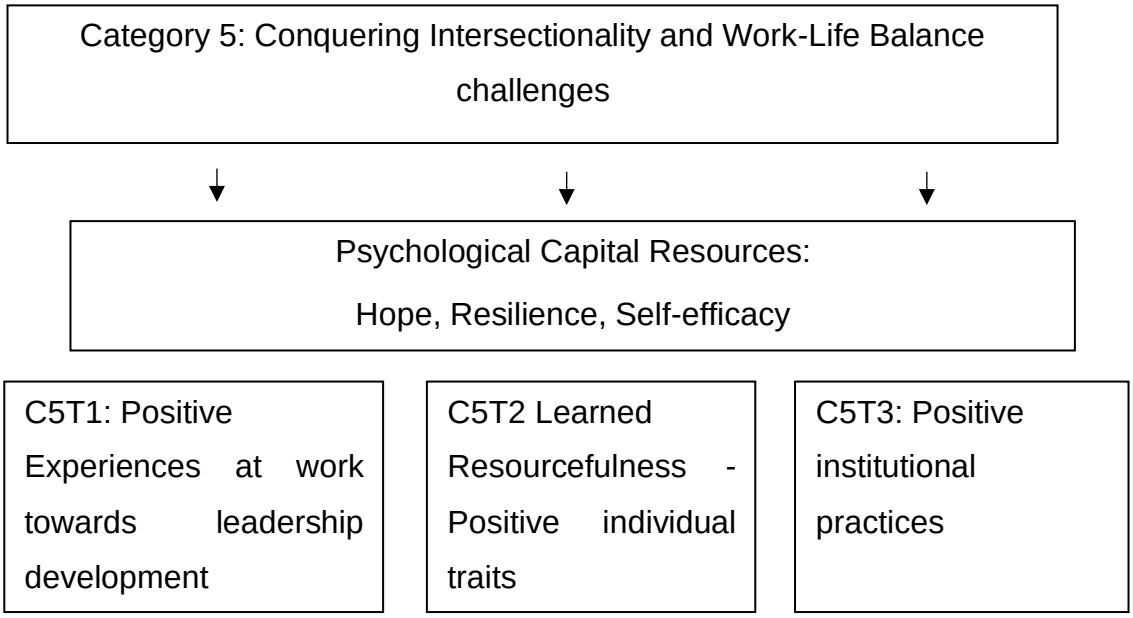

Figure 5. 5 Conquering intersectionality and Work-life balance challenges

Source: Own compilation

5.2.5.1 Theme C5T1: Positive experiences at work towards leadership development

Supervisor and co-worker support positively relates to work-life satisfaction (happiness) and career building (Huffman, Mills, Howes and Albritton, 2021). The research findings indicated that women leaders' positive experiences were linked to well-being, self-esteem, resilience, and feelings of hope. Participants 1 and 3 applauded their organisations for granting them responsibility for mentoring and creating mentorship programmes to develop women within their organisations.

Participant 2 was enthused about her resilience to fight gender inequity by forming allies with senior leaders displaying similar visions. As a result, her company was awarded for its progressive gender equity policies.

> *I did win at the end of it because the controls were there. And I had support from the CEO, and this plan was implemented. And this is the very same project which was difficult to implement but ended up with two awards. It was the employer; we got an award for the employer in the gender employment category* (P2).

The inference is that appreciated subjective experiences in the workplace could be linked to positive individual traits, such as, amongst others, character strength, tolerance (resilience), and work ethic.

5.2.5.2 Theme C5T2: Learned resourcefulness - Positive individual traits

Positivism and hope relate to women's well-being, happiness and work engagement focused on individual strengths (Rusu & Colomeischi, 2020; Dixson, 2019). Viewed within a PP context, self-esteem, resilience, and hope as aspects of happiness and, in this case, work ethic emerged as strong attributes for women in the workplace during the data analysis process.

- ***Sub-theme C5T2: 1 - Hopefulness***

A study by Pleeging, Burger and van Exel (2021) on hope and subjective well-being and happiness discussed hope as containing concepts such as emotion (anticipation and affect), cognition (expectation and satisfaction) and motivation. In correspondence, the empirical research produced narratives on feelings of hope linked to achieving a career path (P9) and women growing families without fearing stagnation of their careers. Participant 2 proclaimed that women leaders in the system are responsible for providing hope to upcoming females. Feelings of hope should be shared through conversations with other women (P9).

> *Yeah, hope, and maybe even fellowship with other women sharing stories, encouraging each other sharing experiences like you, and I have, you know, different work environments have different demands different cultures and how it plays out in their everyday life of women leaders. I think that contributes to hope* (P9).

- ***Sub-theme C5T2: 2 - Resilience***

Research by Jogulu and Franken (2022) focused on senior women managers and how they sustained and navigated their career paths despite workplace, gender, and sociocultural constraints. They reached their goal by utilising resilience, learning, and adaptability to maintain their WLB. Furthermore, Tonkin, Malinen, Näswall and Kuntz (2018) found that personal and employee resilience were related but regarded as diverse aspects of well-being. The empirical research findings indicated that the participants perceived resilience from both a personal and an employee position to ascertain well-being. Four participants (P1, P7, P9, and P10) viewed resilience as a personal commitment to the self.

> *…resilience also helps women to change course if they realise, wait for a second, this set of choices over priorities is actually not working for me and possibly for my broader community, my family, and my loved ones* (P1).
>
> *Resilience links it to commit to your self-improvement, growth, health, and mental health so that you can look after yourself* (P7*).*
>
> *Being resilient is critical to staying on your course because you get only to be resilient and shake off people's comments and gossip by having a sense of purpose. We overcome challenges. Because no matter what happens on the side, one just stays focused* (P9*).*
>
> *If you are not resilient enough to push back when people say you need to do this and this as a mother, you need to do this and that as the boss. If you don't push, you will end up living the lies that people want you to live and mess up in the life that you would have wanted to live or to lead* (P10).

Participant 5 focused on the work environment when she narrated how she conquered racism from both men and women through her resilience, self-esteem, and hard work.

Yes, it's not just the male counterparts, but you also have challenges with even your white female counterparts, and it's mainly the white female that you have to sort of work harder to prove yourself to prove a point because they still hold critical positions in the organisation so definitely and with self-esteem (P5).

- ***Sub-theme C5T2: 3 - Self-efficacy***

People's perceptions of their capabilities to perform, or self-efficacy, are a cognitive mechanism underlying behavioural change (Cervone, 2000). Since self-efficacious people believe they can achieve success and produce expected results, they regulate their efforts and persistence to reach their goals. In doing so, they are more persistent when faced with difficulties and stressful situations. That means that self-efficacy has motivational qualities in that it energises and directs efforts and promotes persistence, which sustains women in leadership roles (Borgogni, Tecco & Schaufeli, 2017).

Perceptions of self-efficacy generalise across situations and relate to schematic personal attributes. Induced negative mood does not influence perceived self-efficacy but raises performance standards, creating discrepancies in efficacy. Distinct aspects of self-efficacy appraisal can be constructed by distinguishing between perceived self-efficacy for executing strategies and attaining goals (Cervone, 2000).

Participant 12 concluded that her belief in her capabilities and worth is the reason she progressed in the manner she has in her career.

So, your opinion doesn't always count that much, but I think my personality conquered that today. I'm a valued member of the company I can take my stand against any individual, including the CEO. I don't budge for any of that, and I think what also made the difference is just the confidence, the fact that my husband was also an engineer and I came home to someone, you know, having conversations that also challenged me I think that also helped because the people I reported to were his peers and some of them actually went to school with him so it was easier for me to challenge probably, it's the same thing I have the husband at home and them so what is the difference (P12).

Participant 7 highlighted how self-efficacy has ensured that she absorbed some pressures better in the work environment.

> *I am quite an emotional person. I feel stressed quite easily. And I am quite vocal about it, which does help to attain support. But yeah, I would say I could maybe absorb some pressures better than what I am doing at the moment. But, the fact that I believe in my skills and abilities helps me cope better in stressful situations. I think EQ also plays a role, and emotional control is definitely a development area. It is just a very hard thing to develop* (P7).

Furthermore, self-efficacy helped her to believe in her capabilities and overcome challenges.

> *If you do not have strong self-assurance and confidence in your abilities, you will not overcome the challenges, hurdles, or barriers because you might not believe you can. So, if you are being told you are not ready for a role or if you feel you are facing challenges around certain biases or discrimination and you are not going to have the confidence and the inner depth to challenge it for yourself and others, then you will not get anywhere* (P7).

- ***Sub-theme C5T2: 4 - Positive self-esteem***

Healthy self-esteem is essential for people's subjective well-being, which may predict their employment status, professional status, income, and innovation (Ali, 2019). Participants 1 and 11 reflected on their strong self-esteem contributing to the women they are.

> *I come from a family where my mother created just a great environment for me to have great self-esteem. So, upbringing, of course, plays a vital role. But at some point, the person's identity and choices kick in* (P1).

> *Sometimes, you'll be doing the job and feel like you're failing, but if you have healthy self-esteem, it doesn't matter what the next person is doing or saying about you; you will conquer* (P11).

Her opinions did not always count at work, but Participant 9 concluded that her healthy self-esteem helped her to manage and overcome intersectionality. Furthermore, her personality and engagement in challenging conversations with her engineer husband boosted her self-confidence and career progress.

> *Today, I'm a different person both in my work and family life. I hold different roles in society and my organisation. I even chair some meetings at work. I can stand against all odds without cracking* (P9).

- ***Sub-theme C5T2: 5 - Positive work ethic***

Intricately linked to hope and motivation, an excellent work ethic is an enabling factor for women along their career path to becoming effective women leaders. Participant 1 shared insights on capitalising on a decent work ethic for career development.

> *Even if he asks you to take minutes, don't thief, write the best minutes and take control of the project. Write the proposal and the financial proposal and write yourself in as head of the project. Take the seat* (P1).

5.2.5.3 Theme C5T3: Positive institutional practices

Women's participation in the workplace is a global phenomenon forcing companies to change policies and offer more family-friendly workplace practices (Kelly et al., 2020; Bal & Rousseau, 2015). Such institutions facilitate success and promote positive environments, enabling people to prosper (McIntyre & Mercer, 2014). In the event, PP research assigns positive institutional qualities, such as institutional transformation, the whole being greater than the sum of the parts (systems thinking), and people empowerment for enhanced decision-making and well-being (Seligman, 1993, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Accordingly, White and Simon (2015) expanded these features to building leadership capabilities, defining and measuring well-being, enhancing resilience, developing a well-being strategy, building staff capability, and evaluating and developing models for positive change.

The following sections present the positive institutional practices as sub-themes to support women leaders in conquering intersectionality in the workplace and ensure WLB.

- ***Sub-theme C5T3: 1 - Work flexibility***

Work flexibility emerged from the interviews as a key factor for well-being, posing indicators such as working at home, taking time off, and changing work schedules (Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021). In addition, Participant 5 commented on flexibility as an enabler in her life for maintaining a healthy WLB. In agreement, a focus group (FC) member confirmed that work flexibility eases daily challenges in fulfilling her work obligations in combination with motherly duties.

> *For me, it is about flexibility. I'm not working from home but in the office; I need to drop off my son at school. I'm afforded that flexibility at work, where I'm able to do my personal life even during working hours* (P5).

> *Those with kids can arrange to fetch their kids from school or wherever. Also, we allow them to work from home if they need to work from home* (FG).

- ***Sub-theme C5T3: 2 - Enabling work environments***

Enabling work environments as part of the positive institutional focus positively affects WLB, supervisory support, and career advancement for executive women leaders. Findings from a study by Sahni (2020, online) suggested "that women who perceive their organisations and supervisors to be supportive have higher levels of job satisfaction."

Five participants acknowledged their enabling work environments for high performance. These women were positioned with leaders who encouraged an empowering management style, thus boosting their self-esteem and hope for building a stable career. Moreover, they received equal treatment at their workplaces per equity policy requirements, as stated by Participant 11.

> *"I think there's been a lot of work, especially when I look at the position I hold right. When I look at the opportunities I have as a black female in this country … So those kinds of things, I see it almost as a general gender-neutral environment." At work, we are being treated equally, especially because our DG is a female. She expects an equal return* (P11).

- ***Sub-theme C5T3: 3 - Empowering management styles***

Being in a senior position, Participant 1 remarked on her colleagues embracing her management style and how culture and patriarchy intersected to disregard gender, stereotype, and race discrepancies. Her management style differed from the previous command-and-control style and her culture. Likewise, Participant 9 confirmed her empathic leadership style guarding the mental health of her colleagues.

> *I've always treated subordinates with respect and have an empowering management style. And that was something that they weren't used to, but they appreciated* (P1).

> *I don't change because I'm leading. I'm still the same person. I don't stop caring when I walk in with my briefcase or whatever. I remain T, the community worker. And because I believe that everybody's going through something. People put on masks at work, but then they break down in my office* (P9).

Correspondingly, Participant 3 voiced that her mentoring was premised on the notion that women can add value to the organisation.

> *I try to mentor as much as I can here, such that I mean, sometimes it becomes a burden because now every child that comes here that's new, HR has to send them to me because, really, I believe that it gets lonely when it's just you. So, when there are others that you are uplifting to be like you, show them that they need to assert themselves and are also capable* (P3).

- ***Sub-theme C5T3: 4 - Favourable employment conditions***

Focus group (FC) members discussed their companies' favourable employment conditions to ensure employee performance. Other innovative policies were introduced besides allowing them maternity and family responsibility leave.

> *… they are actually trying to do this policy of allowing breastfeeding mothers to have that separate room where they can do the pumping. However, it is still new because once that policy approves, you can see*

that breastfeeding moms will be encouraged; you don't have to stop breastfeeding your child because you have to go back to work (FG).

- ***Sub-theme C5T3: 5 - Career advancement support***

Participants focused on women's executive support for career advancement and empowerment. In confirmation, the focus group (FC) emphasised how women in high positions could motivate their subordinates to become better versions of themselves when the leaders portray a "can do" attitude subject to the fact that one puts in the arduous work. Participant 4 and members from the focus group vividly expressed their sentiments.

> *So, for me, looking at her, it somehow motivates me. It mentors me as you are a woman leader. How can you manage those things, gender role or whatever. It does not intimidate her, even the other people that are, like the subordinates, they treat her well so because, for me, I am still new in this role. So, looking at her, it's possible, you can make it as a woman leader anyway* (P4).

> *There was one lady I worked with who was very good in organisational development and design, and I was working under her, so she was seconded to Company Z to go and transform them abroad…So, it was a great opportunity. I left with her. So, I went with her there and was headhunted by Company A to go and be their divisional head of HR, so that is how I grew in the HR space* (FG).

Men in executive positions allowing women to flourish within the workspace were not excluded from the discussions. Participant 3 expressed her gratitude for the support in her career advancement.

> *Our managing director is the type of person who allows a person to be creative within here and you to be able to explore various stuff* (P3).

She continued and further expressed her gratitude:

> *They're very supportive in such that, I mean, for me to be able to move from mission control to science engagement to programming and now project management. When you join the organisation, our managing*

director goes, "Do your thing. I'll stop you when I see that we are going astray now" (P3).

Furthermore, the participants acknowledged male executives who support women in their career advancement. For example, Participant 12 narrated how a male's assistance in a senior position could significantly change fellow men's attitudes towards women in the entire workspace.

> *What my CEO said last week was when we discussed female leaders in the business, and he said look, don't look at the females to pull themselves up. I am looking at all of you men to pull up the females, and that also makes a big hell of a difference in my own manager, so we call them minor champions of change to start taking responsibility in a mental role and literally pull the woman up you know, and say come on apply for this I know you can do it. Giving that confidence and giving that reassurance because I think they might give it to them, you know, whereas women, their numbers are just not enough, there are not enough females that can give him that reassurance to say come on apply for it obviously we will be able to make* (P12).

They denounced the notion that men constantly view women contemptuously within the workplace. Furthermore, they alluded to certain successes owed to the helping hand that men extended whenever they were capable. In light of this statement, Participant 8 shared her views.

> *I would really like that scene brought to the fore because it's the truth. You see, this a lot of things going around Women's Day and feminism. And I always say men are also getting abused. Men are getting abused. And this narrative going around "men are the enemy," I will say men are not the enemy. Not necessarily, men are not necessarily the enemy. One needs to be alert and self-aware to understand what is dealing with. Then, I can get this information; from that man, I can get that information* (P8).

The inference is that intersectionality and WLB challenges can be conquered through positive experiences at work towards leadership development, learned resourcefulness as positive individual traits and positive institutional practices.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the empirical research findings supported by theory concerning the research problem and empirical objectives. The five categories under which the themes were coded were gender, societal perceptions and their influence on women's leadership, racial bias and its influence on women's leadership, social class and its influence on women's leadership, intergenerational dynamics, and conquering intersectionality and work-life challenges. A discussion on psychological capital illustrated how women leaders applied the concepts to assist them in managing intersectionality and WLB.

Chapter 6 will use the theoretical and empirical findings to create a positive leadership identity formation framework for women leaders towards overcoming barriers of intersectionality.

CHAPTER 6: A POSITIVE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FORMATION FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the phenomenological research findings embedded in a positive psychology (PP) paradigm with psychological capital (PsyCap) concepts as a guideline for women leaders to conquer intersectionality and work-life balance (WLB). The framework and its components are discussed and explained in the following sections.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The number of women in leadership roles in South African organisations has increased, and affirmative action (AA) policies and black economic empowerment (BEE) programmes were implemented to strengthen racial, cultural and gender diversity in the workplace (Mayer, Tonelli, Oosthuizen & Surtee, 2018). However, it seems that many women leaders have introjected the roles of their mothers and female family members from their childhood and do not accept full authority and agency when in a leadership position (Mayer et al., 2018). It became imperative that women leaders be supported holistically in being mothers, caregivers and career women.

This study aimed to provide an instrument for structured leadership development and support to women leaders. Consequently, this chapter addresses empirical objective 5.

- E05: To construct a final positive leadership identity framework for women to support women leaders in overcoming the barriers of intersectionality and WLB.

The empirical research findings were coded into categories and themes in Chapter 5 and supported by verbatim from the participants and concepts from the literature review. The Phase 1 findings from the in-depth interviews suggested that participants experienced gendered organisations differently according to societal perceptions. Therefore, in Phase 2, a focus group session was held with subject matter experts to share their insights and possible root causes to confirm the lived experiences of women leaders and assess the preliminary propositional framework.

The business problem was that despite introducing intersectional and family-friendly policies in organisations, women leaders still struggle with intersectionality and family and work-life balance while not being supported in achieving the desired work-life balance. Triangulating the empirical source findings and theory constructed a final positive leadership identity formation framework for women and added rigour to the research. The different concepts are discussed in the following sections.

6.2 THE 3 C'S AND POSITIVE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FORMATION

The positive leadership identity formation framework consists of four main concepts: *Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Institutional Capital* working interdependently. The 4th concept in the framework reflects the intended outcome: Positive leadership identity formation. The interaction of aspects from Concept 1, Intrapersonal capital, Concept 2, Interpersonal capital, and Concept 3, Institutional capital, will accomplish Positive leadership identity formation for women leaders. Themes describe these four factors as they are conceptually grouped within the framework.

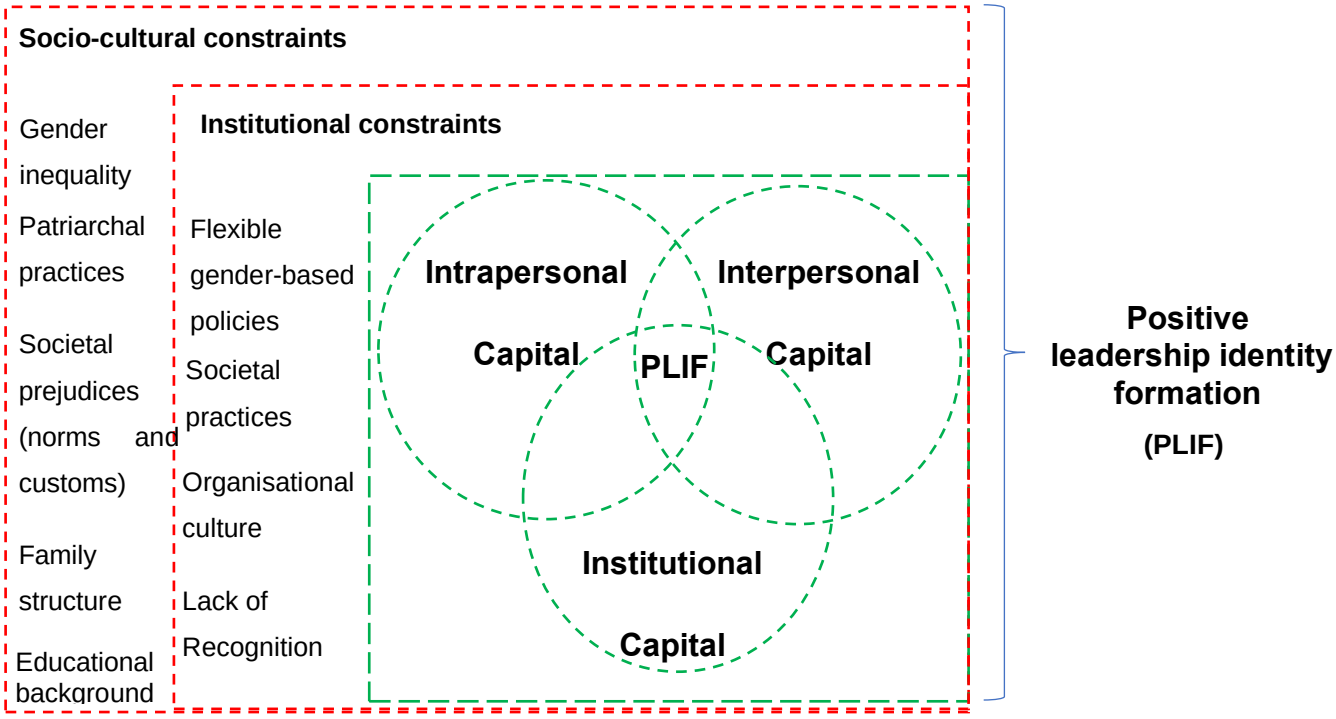

Figure 6. 1 The 3 C's Women Leadership Framework

Source: Own compilation

As reflected in the framework, women leaders work within socio-cultural and institutional constraints, which often prevent them from career and leadership progression. Based on the participants' lived experiences and the literature, the 3Cs were established as the foundation for positive leadership identity formation. These 3 Cs are interdependent: Intrapersonal capital, Interpersonal capital and Institutional capital and must be optimally integrated to create a conducive environment for women leaders to thrive and realise work-life balance.

Constructing a leadership framework for positive leadership identity formation could assist women in overcoming the intersectional career progression challenges they experience. In other words, despite the barriers preventing them from excelling as leaders in a traditionally male-dominated working environment, they build a positive leadership identity to face the challenges. The framework is, therefore, embedded in social, cultural and institutional constraints, which are depicted in the outer frames of Figure 6.1. The focus is not on the barriers but on the elements that drive positive leadership identity formation as the outcome. The three main concepts, Intrapersonal capital, Interpersonal capital and Institutional capital, are illustrated as three circles in the Venn diagram.

The interaction and integration of the 3C dimensions would optimally assist in being specific in improving the behaviour of women leaders and addressing the challenges they face. The underlying factors contributing to barriers and constraints were identified, and the 3Cs are aligned to these constraints to provide a tailored solution to women leaders in the form of a women leadership framework.

6.2.1 Intrapersonal Capital

The intrapersonal aspects of a leader's personality are crucial in that some obstacles are brought by what people hold as the state of the leader and their roles, which are stereotypically associated with the male gender role (such as being aggressive, dominant and self-confident) (Eagly, Koening, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011). Still, because women are expected to display more communal characteristics such as being kind, sympathetic and nurturant, they face incongruities between their gender and leadership role expectations (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987).

Mayer et al. (2018) highlighted that women leaders mainly rely on intrapersonal emotional quotient (EQ), followed by interpersonal EQ, adaptability, stress management and general mood. The most highly rated components of EQ are self-regard, empathy, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, and impulse control. These components are all internally based characteristics and come from within women leaders, which they must cultivate and build over time to resist and manage hostility in organisations.

Women leaders face gender inequality, societal practices that are a prejudicial and organisational culture that are not conducive for working women, especially in leadership. They invest in themselves, building their capabilities and capacity to be better leaders and to inspire confidence but, most importantly, survive the existing societal and patriarchal stereotyping (O'Connor & Evans, 2020).

The finding indicated that the research participants as leaders developed strong, resilient personalities to overcome socio-cultural and institutional barriers, as Van Breda and Theron (2017) earlier stated. They had to build self-efficacy to rely on their inner resilience and adaptive skills to survive and thrive in turbulent workplace environments and oppressive cultural customs. Participants confirmed that they had learned to build resilience and rely on their inner strength to navigate and stay the course due to the hostile environments they were exposed to over a long period. These women indicated they had cultivated courage and a positive work ethic, which enabled them to face any adversity from work or family life. Women leaders also learned resourcefulness and positive individual traits. These positive personal attributes mainly contributed to their leadership development and inspiration to younger generations.

6.2.1.1 Self-leadership

Self-leadership is an emerging intervention more relevant in this context to contribute to building and guiding women leaders to stay the course. Self-leadership is a self-influence perspective that pertains to one's ability to manage, lead and control personal behaviours and develop strategies to achieve desired goals for sustainable competitive advantages (Abid et al., 2021: 299). There is a positive association between self-leadership and positive individual and organisational outcomes.

Ramsey and Jones (2015) shared the importance of personal mastery in that most of the time, when researchers refer to leadership development, it is meant in the context of professional development. However, research has pointed out that it is tough to develop leadership abilities without changing personal aspects, such as behaviour, attitude and thought processes (Bailey & Weiner, 2021). Therefore, personal mastery is critical, if not one of the most crucial elements of leadership development and has to be supported by positive institutional practices.

6.2.1.2 Future-mindedness: Hope

A forward-looking perspective in the form of hope emerged as a theme under positive individual traits, where women admitted that they needed to be resourceful to conquer the demanding roles of being a mother and a leader. Kim (2022) emphasised the importance of hope in the workplace for women leaders as it cultivates diversity and inclusion. They opined that although organisations have initiated programmes to promote female participation and advancement, these initiatives have not yet borne remarkable fruit. However, despite this discouraging pattern, women have been optimistic about a positive changing environment and developed positive attitudes in the face of adversity.

Hope (see 3.3.1) is a human strength that enables individuals to draw on resources in their environment to support healthy development and achievement pathways. Hope is a unidimensional construct grounded in a positive expectation that goals can be met (Callina, 2018: 9). Furthermore, hope is a source of moral vision that points to possibilities for human betterment, and dialogue sustains hope and high human ideals (Duncan, Jaini & Hellman, 2021). Hope is thus a tendency that women develop to believe that the future will turn out positively (Rothmann & Cooper, 2015).

The research found hope remains the core pillar that sustains women leaders throughout. Women participants emphasised that they had to entrench the mindset of being hopeful even when it seems impossible to survive the hostility that comes with the responsibility of being a female leader in the workplace. Hope becomes the centre for women to overcome the stereotyping and prejudice of being a woman, as echoed by one of the participants.

Yeah, hope, and maybe even fellowship with other women sharing stories, encouraging each other sharing experiences like you, and I have, you know, different work environments have different demands different cultures and how it plays out in their everyday life of women leaders. I think that contributes to hope (P7)*.*

6.2.1.3 Positive self-esteem

Women leaders accredited positive self-esteem as another contributing factor to sustaining them striking a balance between work and family life. They indicated that self-esteem has to be built and instilled at a very young age. The issue of family background and childhood experience came to the fore, as these play a crucial role in building a foundation for women leaders.

Self-esteem has been linked to almost every aspect of people's lives, including leadership aspirations (Mason, Mason & Matthews, 2016). There is a relationship between self-esteem, gender and leadership aspirations influenced by patriarchal attitudes. Mason et al. (2016) further stated the importance of self-esteem in determining leadership aspirations. The impact of societal attitudes also differs by gender.

Female leadership with positive self-esteem shapes and strengthens a gender diversity and inclusion climate, ultimately enhancing employees' hopes about their work (Kim, 2022). In addition, the positive effect of a gender diversity and inclusion climate on employees' hopes is the same for all employees regardless of gender. The crucial role of female leadership and the underlying psychological mechanism through which female leadership influences employees' positive work attitudes is remarkable and beneficial for organisations and society (Kim, 2022).

6.2.1.4 Resilience

Resilience (see 3.3.3) is one of the themes of positive individual traits that women adopt to conquer challenges brought by intersectionality and work-life balance. Ungar (2012) confirmed that while resilience results from a combination of personal and environmental factors, resilience is just as dependent on the individual's physical capacity and social ecology to ensure positive development under stress as the capacity to exercise personal agency during recovery from risk exposure.

The research findings indicated that resilience is vital in surviving hostile environments. It indicates the flexibility required for women leaders to achieve career and family life (Ebersohn, 2013; Werner, 2012). There is a relationship between resilience and success for women leaders, as they still face challenges of caregiving while working (Van der Berg et al., 2013), and the workplace environment still not being conducive, as a research participant reiterated.

> *Being resilient is critical to staying on your course because you get only to be resilient and shake off people's comments and gossip by having a sense of purpose. We overcome challenges. Because no matter what happens on the side, one just stays focused* (P9).

Duchek and Foerster (2022) stated that resilience is a key factor for women in top leadership positions. There are three critical stages during which resilience is developed: i) in the early stages of life, women develop individual resilience resources; ii) in the early career phase, women develop contextual resilience resources; and iii) then, based on these resources, women can show resilience behaviours in upper leadership.

6.2.1.5 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy (see 3.3.4) is one of the traits women leaders indicated they needed to develop over time to manage and conquer hostility brought by workplace practices. Women are still moderately represented in leadership roles due to cultural stereotyping of men and women. Leaders influence followers' attitudes, judgements and decisions about women and the choices women make for themselves. Interventions are needed to counteract the impact of pervasive and easily activated stereotypes, conspiring in multiple ways to constrain women’s entry, persistence, and self-efficacy required for leadership (Isaac, Kaatz, Lee & Carnes, 2012).

Thus, self-efficacy refers to women leaders understanding their worth based on emotions and beliefs about how they fit into or perform in any situation (Maddux, 2016: 41). It has motivational qualities in that it energises and directs efforts and promotes persistence, sustaining women in leadership roles (El-Baoudi et al., 2017). Women’s self-efficacy largely influences their advancement in organisations, while self-efficacy

beliefs sustain and enable them to overcome challenges and obstacles encountered in their work environments (Jackson, 2012).

6.2.1.6 Positive work-ethic

At the helm of motivation, women leaders emphasised that a good work ethic is central to their career development and success. Preparing employees for success in today's workforce means more than just teaching them technical know-how. They must also be equipped to function effectively in the work environment, learn to be reliable, take the initiative, and perform well with their fellow employees. That means training employees for success also teaches them the importance of a positive work ethic (Predmore, 2005). Women leaders in this study undoubtedly encouraged inculcating the habits of responsibility and accountability from a young age.

It became apparent that there is a need for a comprehensive approach with the integration of intrapersonal capital—women working on themselves; interpersonal capital—where women build relationships, and institutional capital—thereby relying on organisational support to navigate and lead optimally.

6.2.2 Interpersonal Capital

Interpersonal capital includes elements of an individual's interaction with others, the need for organisations to adapt to constant change, and the team effectiveness of women leadership as it mediates employee trust (Bagienska, 2022).

6.2.2.1 Supportive supervisor and employee relationships

During the interviews, women participants emphasised the critical nature of relationships between workers and their supervisors, especially when females are involved in the relationships. Understanding the role of leadership aspiration and the under-representation of female leaders is vital because aspiration is a key predictor of hierarchical advancement (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Fritz and Van Knippenberg, 2020).

A neglected perspective in the relationship between gender and leadership aspirations is the gender of the individual's supervisor (see 1.2). Supervisors or managers can play an essential role in providing support and engendering a sense of control, as both support and control are precursors to leadership aspiration. Yet, supervisors may also act on gender biases discouraging women's leadership aspirations. There is an

interaction between supervisor and subordinate gender such that men experience relatively high levels of support and control regardless of supervisor gender. In contrast, women generally experience better support and control and display higher leadership aspirations with female supervisors (Fritz & Van Knippenberg, 2020).

Godkin and Valentine (2000) highlighted the importance of the relationship between supervisor gender and perceived job creation. The supervisor's gender influences subordinates' perceptions of their job, with the variance attributed to the different leadership styles men and women frequently apply in the workplace. Overall, subordinates under female supervisors perceived better interpersonal aspects of their jobs, while those with male supervisors perceived better structure (Godkin & Valentine, 2000). The theory supports the interview findings that having a female role model in the workplace is crucial, as women need someone with the same lived experiences in a leadership role. It makes it possible for women to aspire to be a leader.

It is important to note that the work and living (family) surroundings are intertwined. For women to reach and survive in leadership roles, there is an imperative need for a more supportive environment which includes healthy family relationships and female role models within the industry. Upbringing and childhood family values influence the building of women leaders and inform how they create meaningful relationships. Participants indicated that at the core of their development, family and societal values played a crucial role in shaping their leadership perspectives and having solid interpersonal skills. Despite having developed those relationship-building skills, supervisor and co-worker support is crucial for women leaders to entrench themselves in the organisation and perform optimally.

In this study, women leaders shared that family dynamics significantly impact well-being, both positively and negatively. A close-knit and supportive family provides emotional support and financial security and improves overall health. When family life is filled with stress and conflict, the health of all family members suffers. Notably, the support of male colleagues has been indicated by women leaders as equally critical to be accepted in social networks and to survive the hostile work environment.

6.2.2.2 Expansive social networks

Women leaders in this study confirmed the need for formal and informal social networks. They emphasised the importance of socialisation from a young age and the values instilled from family, which contribute to building confidence for women when they get to the workplace. Women often lack access to networks that facilitate leadership and career development. Professionals need to work in synergy to improve the connectedness of emerging women leaders worldwide (Lopez-Hernandez et al., 2022).

Therefore, leaders need social capital to function well within organisations and pursue individual development. Social capital theory emphasises the value of collaboration and knowledge sharing within social networks. Networks are webs of individuals linked by common interests that involve interaction for mutual benefit. They allow social and professional relationships to develop and foster benefits, including emotional support in friendships and trust, access to contacts who can provide new information, resources and opportunities and various other career advancements (Lopez-Hernandez et al., 2022).

During this study, participants shared the importance of receiving guidance from people around them in social circles at a young age, determining the type of leader they will become. Hence, social networks are imperative to success. They indicated how being a hard worker from a young age significantly determined their leadership styles. Parents can be role models and influence their children at a very young age, which is well expected considering children will always look up to their parents growing up. So, a child adopting a specific way of life could be attributed to how they were raised because parents indirectly influence the type of person they will be in the future.

Lopez-Hernandez et al. (2022) further stated that networks are an important aspect of social capital for life and career development and progression within the workplace or professional field. Developing interpersonal and professional capabilities crucial for effective leaders requires building successful network ties. Networks are essential for gaining upward mobility, facilitating personal and professional development, making connections and accomplishing tasks. Networks also help individuals cultivate information exchange, collaboration, alliance development, tacit knowledge acquisition, visibility and support (Lopez-Hernandez et al., 2022).

It has been noted that many women lack access to the social capital that networks provide to help facilitate leadership development and career success. That partially explains why women are still underrepresented in the top ranks of organisations (Lopez-Hernandez et al., 2022). Women-focused networking and training programmes enable women to aspire to leadership positions and lead more confidently, providing a sense of agency, expanded networks, skills development and self-awareness (Brue & Brue, 2016). Women derive a greater sense of psychological safety in women-only networking groups, which is vital for facilitating peer exchange and working collaboratively on solutions (Debebe, 2011).

6.2.2.3 Limited coaching and mentoring relationships

Participants in this study attributed women's slow progress in leadership roles to the lack of female role models in organisations. Because there are not enough women in leadership positions, it becomes difficult for them to relate and have aspirations.

Hill and Wheat (2017) emphasised the critical role of mentors and role models for women's professional advancement. There is a positive relationship between mentorship and the attainment of senior leadership positions. Women leaders face complexity in their identities and tend to be resourceful in seeking career guidance and social support from multiple sources, including male and female mentors, role models, colleagues, friends, and family members.

Over the years, studies have consistently pointed to the crucial role that mentoring and role models play in women's career advancement. Mentoring is vital for women at all levels, providing them with career role models, career development and advice, sponsorship and greater visibility, advice for successfully balancing work-family responsibilities and strategies for overcoming gendered barriers. Women need role models to show them how to advance despite existing barriers. There is a critical need for women to form leadership identities, negotiate barriers to their advancement, seek mentoring and role models, support one another and combat stereotyped attitudes towards women's leadership (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Kurtz-Costes, Helmke & Ulku-Steiner, 2006; Madsen, 2012). Participants shared the rarity of looking around and seeing people like you (women).

> *I hardly ever had a role model or someone you look up to say, oh, yeah, I saw a woman leader leading like this, so I'm going to lead like this* (P2*).*

However, participants also experienced a lack of support from other women. Women were said to be more supportive of men than men of women.

> *Women see other women as a problem; women are mean to other women. I support and encourage women, but in my own experience, I've never had a woman leader take me by the hand and say, "T…, I see potential in you; this is where I see you going"* (P9)*.*

Regarding mothers (female role models), focus group participants also spoke about how their mothers always motivated them to do their best; hence, they realised what kind of background a leader can contribute to people's potential. Fathers play a significant role in their daughters' lives, from teaching them responsibility to teaching them skills to reach out to others, which still prevails in their careers today.

Like any other employees, women leaders look up to their leaders for more guidance, accountability and skills development; hence, coaching and mentoring seem to be a way to enhance their workforce development (Stout-Rostron, 2014). Executive coaching has become a growing trend in building organisational capacity through skills assessment, development, and career mapping for corporate leaders (Ramsey et al., 2021).

Leadership coaching is about developing high-potential performers in today's complex and rapidly changing workplace environment. Although there is a void in recent peer-reviewed research that points to proven methods on how coaches define the scope of engagement and measure and report on progress, a coach often acts as a sounding board, using question frameworks and coaching models to help the corporate leader solve specific issues (Ramsey et al., 2021).

The consensus is that women need to be coached to navigate and make an impact in the work environment. The coach can provide an enabling perspective by supporting and stimulating sense-making processes such as the noticing and bracketing of underlying assumptions (Sutcliffe, Obstefeld & Weick, 2005). This principle involves coaching new leaders to make sense of their ongoing experiences. Metaphorically, it

involves helping leaders step off the dance floor and observe the dance from the balcony (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

With tailored coaching and mentoring, Stelter and Law (2010) opined that leaders can reframe, redesign, and re-author the leader's story once they are aware of their assumptions and societal perspectives. Re-authoring involves helping a person externalise a challenge they face as something independent from themselves. The process can help leaders step outside their experience and objectively see their story (Stelter & Law, 2010).

No concept can work in isolation (Seligman, 1993, 2011). In this context, women leaders' optimal functioning relies on the interdependence of the 3Cs: Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital, and Institutional Capital. As indicated, it has to start within the i) person: women building themselves, ii) relying on people around them and building relationships and networks, and iii) and lastly, Institutional Capital, which is crucial mainly as it becomes an enabler for women leaders to realise their potential and reach their dreams by building a dependable and favourable environment. Hence, family and organisational support is pivotal in women's career progression into leadership and top management roles.

6.2.3 Institutional Capital

Institutional capital refers to the organisational approach to achieving gender equity at the leadership level (Colander & Woos, 1997: 53). Current efforts are still limited and are mostly ineffective, especially for women leaders (Mousa et al., 2021).

6.2.3.1 Organisational support

Women leaders emphasised that attaining a senior position would be impossible without organisational support. Therefore, structural support is paramount in the form of organisational culture, policies, and practices.

People in general, leaders in particular, are influenced by organisational culture and vice versa. Organisational culture represents a determining factor regarding the display of leadership since these two processes create each other, adding value and consistency (Saseanu, Toma & Marinescu, 2014). Women have been through a series of changes related to education, rights and obligations. However, the number of

women leaders has always been much lower than that of male leaders. Certain personality traits are characteristic of women and others specific to men, leaving their mark on the leadership methods and styles adopted to survive the workplace environment (Saseanu et al., 2014).

Folch and Ion (2009) found that most organisations adopt a no-gender differences leadership style. Despite this approach, some cultural aspects relate to feminine or masculine leadership styles in organisations in that organisations led by women are more communicative and teamwork-oriented. Research has also found that women managers identify more with male gender paradigms and display male-type leadership behaviours. These findings confirmed that organisational environments are not yet conducive for women leaders; hence, they are expected to adjust their feminine behaviour to masculine to fit in and be respected. Organisational culture and support are critical for women to act as women, focusing on results and showing emotion and compassion.

Organisational culture impacts leadership styles (Syakur, Susilo, Wike & Ahmadi, 2020). Hierarchical, patriarchal and interdependent values are the underlying characteristics that underpin organisations, shaping the choice of leadership style in the management of those organisations. Formalised paternalism, relational approach and gendered reactions to leadership still influence leadership behaviours (Akanji et al., 2020).

The research has indicated that organisational structure is integral to female leadership. Women leaders strive to improve themselves personally to build their careers and survive in leadership roles. They work on establishing sound relationships to help nurture and grow their careers and family life. However, they need the organisation to create a fertile ground for women to thrive and be family caregivers. Institutional barriers still prevent women from pursuing leadership roles and being mothers. Therefore, most women are expected to choose between the roles because organisational circumstances and policies are not flexible enough to accommodate the needs of women. Unfair discriminative practices against women remain informed mainly by societal and patriarchal practices.

6.2.3.2 Positive institutional practices

The organisation’s role in creating an enabling environment is at the core of women's success in their leadership roles. Organisations draw on shared dispositions that give a sense of direction and shape of the future, guiding employees' actions through policies and prescriptions (Utoft, 2020). The centrality of strategic communication, leadership commitment and comprehensive evaluation to mobilise cultural narratives as support factors to gender equality work may also support gender equality programme planning and implementation (Utoft, 2020).

Women continue to aspire towards leadership positions and make up most of the workforce; however, much fewer in CEO roles (Valerio, 2022). Some women vying for top positions face balancing work and family strain when they tend to be more prominent in handling domestic responsibilities. The reason is that they cannot work long hours like their male counterparts. Also, many organisations are not flexible enough to accommodate women in top leadership positions (Faheem & Aparna, 2014; Grant Thorton-IBR, 2020). Hindered by domestic roles and other barriers, such as organisational culture, gender stereotypes, failure to capitalise on women’s talent, male chauvinism and differences in pay and political power between men and women, prevent women from rising to the top (Altman & Shortland, 2008).

The research participants agreed that developing a more flexible organisational structure and policies can ensure a conducive environment.

> *For me, it is about flexibility. I'm not working from home; I'm working in the office. I need to drop off my son at school. I'm afforded that flexibility at work where I'm able to do my personal life even during working hours then* (P5).

> *Those with kids can arrange to fetch their kids from school or wherever. Also, we allow them to work from home if there’s a need to work from home* (FG).

Howe-Walsh et al. (2014) reported on the growing concern regarding barriers for women to progress in their careers, the gendered nature of leadership in organisations, and women struggling to navigate their careers. The effect of organisational influences, such as temporary work arrangements, male-dominated

networks, intimidation and harassment and individual influences, such as lack of confidence, keep women from leadership jobs.

Therefore, there must be positive institutional practices whereby organisations have gender-based policies and flexible working conditions to allow women to be mothers. The entire organisational culture has to instil values of support to women leaders, and only organisational leadership can build such a supportive and enabling practice. Support structures such as coaching and mentoring programmes and talent development policies should be biased towards empowering women.

> *… they are trying to do this policy of allowing breastfeeding mothers to have that separate room where they can do the pumping…once that policy approves, you can see that the encouragement will be there for breastfeeding moms. You don't have to stop breastfeeding your child because you have to go back to work"* (FG).

Sotiriadou and De Haan (2019) underlined the role board members could play in advancing gender equity policies for organisational leadership positions. Board members should be equity champions of change, paving the way by challenging existing stereotypes and promoting strategies and equity policies encouraging women to engage in leadership roles. Such a display of willingness will enable women to feel valued in their leadership roles and further encourage and promote the acceptance of women at different organisational levels.

In their research, Gray, de Haan and Bonnywell (2019) observed that organisational support for women's career advancement is still inconsistent. According to them, external responsibilities were not the problem but a lack of sponsorship within organisations, particularly support from senior people and access to the right networks. There is a sense that career progression is limited unless women leaders are willing to be mobile, undertake overseas assignments, and take sideways steps to broaden their experience and knowledge in the organisation.

In contrast to some beliefs that see women as less than ideal workers due to structural constraints laid upon them (unable to work long hours and being less committed to work due to family responsibilities), women in this and other studies demonstrated agency and resourcefulness, constructing strategies for attempting a work-life

balance, including eliciting support from husbands and partners or parents and employing nannies. Though such support is essential, a formal support structure in coaching or a mentorship programme is pivotal (Benard & Correll, 2010; Glass, 2014).

6.2.3.3 Women's representation in leadership

Even though there has been progress concerning women's development in organisations and legislation to address the imbalance, there is still an under-representation of women in leadership roles. Participants confirmed the same during the empirical research.

Another organisational phenomenon is gender pay parity, where the participants perceived women earning less than their male counterparts. According to South African legislation, there must be equitable remuneration between men and women. An “equal pay for equal work” (Employment Equity Act, 1998) principle must apply to all organisations. The government has done much by introducing legislation that allows for improving working conditions to ensure equality across all genders in the workplace. Unfortunately, several organisations have not yet implemented those laws to create organisational equality.

Inequalities in organisations go beyond gender pay, causing low representation of women in leadership positions despite having the same qualifications and skills as their male counterparts. Diehl (2014) and Durand and Jourdan (2014) opined that women in leadership roles are continuously prejudiced in the workplace. Despite an abundance of educated, qualified women in the workplace, women continue to be underrepresented at the top of institutional leadership hierarchies. In the 1980s, women caught up with men in attaining bachelor’s and master’s degrees and have since surpassed men receiving bachelor’s and doctoral degrees (US Department of Education, 2018). Still, women remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematical positions.

Research participants also lamented that even though laws and measures have been implemented to address inequality and recognise women's rights, women still face barriers in organisations and societies. They further indicated that certain societal practices and rigid, oppressive organisational cultures still prejudice women. Women leaders shared that they are still being treated like subordinates of their male

counterparts. Although there are progressive policies aligned in the current working environment, there still exist subtle expectations from women leaders to behave and be available like men despite being pregnant and caregivers of their families. They insisted that the playing ground is not equally levelled.

Moreover, the findings indicated that women leaders still felt excluded from the boy's club because of male dominance in organisations. Males share knowledge outside formal hours and support each other during decision-making processes. Even though progress has been made, few women hold top leadership and management positions in organisations worldwide. Issues with structure, policies and work practices create a gender imbalance in the workplace. The corporate world is not doing enough to bridge the gender inequality gap (WEF, 2020).

Accordingly, Aman, Razali and Yusof (2018) stated that women have gained access to the leadership pipeline but still lack executive-level representation. Some reasons are self-limiting behaviours, such as work-life conflict and interpersonal relationships among women, contributing to the underrepresentation of women in top positions. Other factors are social perceptions of gender and leadership as well as role incongruence limiting women leaders' access to organisations. Women's family responsibilities and inherited tendencies to display fewer traits and motivation necessary to attain and succeed in top-level positions also contribute to the pipeline phenomenon (Aman, Yusof, Ismail & Razali, 2018).

There is a need to demystify the notion that women are perceived as inferior, fragile and not as capable as their male counterparts. It can be done by developing and implementing targeted coaching leadership frameworks to empower women to conquer barriers and be regarded as eligible for leadership roles, fully represented at the executive level.

6.2.3.4 Capacity building- Leadership development

Based on the research findings, it has become evident that organisations have to play a critical role in developing and advancing women's careers. Women leadership coaching and training programmes cause organisations to value women leaders as respected resources (Brue & Brue, 2016). These leadership programmes provide an opportunity for cognitive, effective behavioural growth and social capital development,

all crucial for leadership development and operational progress. Although organisations provide leadership training to high potentials, traditional leadership development has failed to meet women's distinctive needs (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011).

Many organisations use comprehensive leadership training models, including effective communication, conflict management, team building, decision making and employee engagement skills to cultivate leaders and proactively improve incumbent employees' calibre (Kim & Thompson, 2012). With the demand to increase competitiveness, diversify leadership and advance emergent leaders, organisations are increasingly developing women-only leadership development (WOLD) plans. These WOLD programmes promote women by allowing them to experience transformational learning in a supportive environment (Ely et al., 2011; UNSSC, 2022).

Additionally, there has to be a commitment from organisational leaders for financial investment in building women's skills (capacity and capability) focused on leadership development. Ramsey, Burrell and Aridi (2021) confirmed that executive leadership coaching positively impacts women's professional success in leadership positions. These programmes have enhanced women's leadership qualities and abilities.

There is an interrelationship between performance training and coaching, both organisational practices aimed to improve and increase productivity. Despite the prevalence of coaching as a method to enhance organisational productivity and its positive effect on performance and sustainability, empirical research on the effectiveness of coaching as an integrated leadership development method is limited, especially where women in coaching are concerned (Ramsey et al., 2021).

Women leaders in this study confirmed the positive outcomes of leadership coaching, such as providing a safe environment for women to feel vulnerable and work on challenging themes. Another important aspect of leadership coaching for women is that it often becomes a broad and open space for personal reflection, focusing on the self and family, and working out personal solutions. It prepares them for challenging workplace situations and helps them realise their strengths while building self-esteem. Furthermore, experts highlighted the importance and power of group sessions. Women spend time with other female leaders, benchmarking their experiences for valuable feedback vital to their daily work and family lives. These sessions also give

women a sense that everyone was struggling with the same things, including the (false) assumption that when they work hard, it would be recognised.

6.3 POSITIVE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FORMATION (PLIF)

Positive leadership identity formation depicts the outcome of the three C's discussed above and reflects the kind of leadership that would revolutionise traditional approaches to leadership and management. Extraordinarily high performance and positively deviant results significantly better than expected create remarkable vitality in the workplace due to positive leadership (Cameron, 2013).

Consequently, integrating and optimally synergising the 3Cs: Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital, and Institutional Capital will produce a conducive environment for women leaders, whereby all aspects are encompassed in building a positive leadership identity for women in leadership roles. Women's leadership can be all-embracing both at work and in family life.

Positive leadership identity formation embraces self-leadership, behavioural-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, constructive thought pattern strategies, improved work-life balance, and self-leadership in the African context discussed in the following sections.

6.3.1 Improved self Leadership competency

Self-leadership is the ability to self-influence to reach one's goals (Mustaffa & Ghani, 2019: 426). Organisations that invest in the social dimension of sustainable development, including self-leadership, have experienced robust growth by considering key human resource areas, such as self-development and employee resilience focused on performance quality, work-life balance, and work satisfaction (Abid, Arya, Ahmed and Farooqi, 2020). People at all organisational levels should change their belief systems to reach their goals and reap the trickling-down effect of sustainable development. Self-leadership helps members develop socially accepted behaviour for training and gaining improved thought patterns (Furtner, 2013).

Organisations must invest in nurturing women leaders at a personal level (intra-personal) to help them create meaningful relationships (interpersonal), notably by

establishing flexible policies. These efforts will benefit from producing a holistic woman leader with a positive leadership identity, whereby she can make sound decisions for both work and family. Women leaders will be more confident and reassured to socialise at all levels, relate better with their colleagues and be emotionally stable to support their families.

Information about building a positive leadership identity will benefit organisations and women, leading to improved self-leadership. Self-leadership primarily focuses on how individuals lead and manage themselves since a vital aspect of organisational behaviour is control over the self (Neck & Manz,1986). The concept suggests that an individual can act as a leader and follower. Self-leadership is a dominant and powerful self-influence perspective that deals with directing oneself towards intrinsically motivational tasks and managing one's attitude and behaviour to do what needs to be done to complete a task, even if one does not feel like doing it (Neck & Manz, 1986).

6.3.2 Behavioural-focused strategies

Research by Carmeli, Meitar and Weisberg (2006) investigated the relationship between self-leadership skills and innovative behaviour at work. The three-dimensional scale of self-leadership is positively associated with the self and supervisor's ratings of innovative behaviours. They further confirmed that income and job tenure are significantly related to innovative job behaviour. It confirms that an all-inclusive approach to women's leadership development should be followed, encompassing the aspects of the 3Cs as discussed above, being Intra-personal Capital, Inter-personal Capital and Institutional Capital, leading to a positive leadership identity beneficial for the self, organisation, society and family life.

Those organisations seeking ways to foster innovative behaviour must recognise the importance of building up self-leaders who can successfully meet the required expectations and standards of innovative behaviour. Furthermore, these organisations should enhance self-leadership and innovation through appropriate extrinsic rewards (Carmeli et al., 2006). Self-leadership strategies are applied to improve the effectiveness of self-regulatory processes, including behaviour-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, self-reprisal, and constructive thoughts. These strategies were designed to encourage positive, desirable behaviours that lead to successful outcomes (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Harunavamwe (2018) stated that self-leadership is integral to personal resources that facilitate positive behaviour, eventually translating to work engagement. Findings showed that self-leadership significantly affects work engagement and partially mediates the relationship between organisational justice and employees' work engagement (Van Alstyne, Parker & Choudary, 2016). Work engagement was further found to mediate the relationship between self-leadership and individual innovation (Gomes, Curral & Caetano, 2015). These results further confirm that leadership is a holistic approach, encompassing the 3Cs, Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital and Institutional Capital, for a positive leadership identity outcome essential to cultivating a culture of engagement.

Self-leadership emphasises the importance of internal rather than external factors to control a person's behaviour. Therefore, women leaders must be aware of their ability to lead themselves and monitor their engagement levels (Schultz & Fischer, 2017). The cognitive component of work engagement is often interchangeable with the absorption dimension, characterised by being fully focused and happily engrossed in one's work and a feeling that time flies when working. It relates to cognition (positive thought patterns) as part of self-leadership (Harunavamwe, 2018).

Behavioural strategies such as self-reward, self-reflection, self-observation, self-reprisal, self-goal setting, self-correcting feedback and practice should be encouraged to improve positive and desirable behaviour. Dedication is characterised by devoted involvement in one's work, resulting in positive feelings about work, such as pride and inspiration (Schultz, 2017).

6.3.3 Natural reward strategies

As employees adjust their behaviour for leadership roles, it is equally important to find ways to reward themselves as a way of self-motivation and inward inspiration. Natural reward strategies involve first seeking out working activities that are inherently enjoyable (Manz & Simms, 1991). These strategies include focusing on a given job or task's pleasant or gratifying aspects rather than the unpleasant or complex ones. Natural reward activities tend to foster feelings of increased competence, self-control and purpose (Norris, 2008). That aligns directly with the concept of Intrapersonal Capital, an important dimension for women leaders where everything begins with the

inner person. Consequently, women leaders must develop personality traits to stay the course as leaders and caregivers.

6.3.4 Constructive thought pattern strategies

Constructive thought pattern strategies involve creating and maintaining functional patterns of habitual thinking. Specific thought-orientated strategies include evaluating and challenging irrational beliefs and assumptions, mental imagery of successful future performance and positive self-talk (Neck & Manz, 1999). Behavioural changes and new patterns must be adopted for any change to happen. It will allow a new perception of women leadership and ensure women fit into organisations and are allowed to be leaders and mothers.

Positive leadership identity is thus the outcome of the women leadership coaching framework. Organisations can contribute to developing constructive thought strategies, positively impacting self-efficacy (Allameh & Salehzadeh, 2015). Self-leadership involves women leaders' self-influence through cognitive strategies focusing on individual self-dialogue, mental imagery, beliefs, assumptions, and thought patterns (Neck & Manz, 1999).

6.3.5 Improved Work-Life Balance

Kelloway, Weigand, Mckee and Das (2012) confirmed a relationship between positive leadership behaviours and employee well-being. They highlighted positive leadership as distinct from transformational leadership in that it predicts context-specific and context-free well-being. Positive leadership can improve perceptions of work-life balance and employee well-being, directly impacting women leaders' work and family lives more constructively. Hence, organisations must contribute towards the 3Cs (Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital and Institutional Capital).

6.3.6 Self-Leadership: African Context

Van Zyl (2012) highlights self-leadership for African leaders against the background of African history, where controversial issues, continuous changes, new directions and difficulties are typical life events every person in Africa needs to adapt to. Self-leadership among African leaders is a method of coping with difficult circumstances. It is still more relevant for women leaders who are expected to adjust to ever-changing,

demanding organisational structures. Van Zyl (2012) further stated that the self-leadership approach focuses on self-influencing in contrast to other leadership processes where more focus is placed on the leader. The work environment in which a self-leadership approach is applied is equivalent to those of high-achieving African organisations where self-leadership has the most favourable outcomes (particularly in the African living and working contexts). Consequently, the self-leadership approach is proposed and comprehensively discussed for leaders in the African context to lead in the future (Van Zyl, 2012).

Africa faces many challenges in a continually evolving world. One such challenge is globalisation, and African leaders in political, business and community sectors must compete with leaders worldwide (Mbigi, 2005). Employee and leadership aptitude is required to create an environment where the elite, the talented and the hard-working are willing to contribute to Africa's future. For this to occur, trust is a prerequisite, as is the belief that better is possible. That requires overcoming the voices of the past (Khoza, 2005).

Van Zyl (2009), Nirmala (2010) and Agumba and Fester (2010) argued that changes, difficulties, and new directions (e.g., adapting to Western ways of thinking and living, poverty, new legislation and affirmative action, inequalities, urbanisation and HIV/Aids) result in feelings of inferiority, anxiety, insecurity and fear. Serious and numerous incidents of corruption and crime and emigration of African individuals to different overseas destinations are also indications of self-neglect, self-dissociation and difficulty coping with circumstances.

Therefore, what is required is for individuals in Africa and African organisations to address disregard and self-dissociation to cope with difficult circumstances. Self-leadership among African leaders is one method of coping with these circumstances (Van Zyl, 2012).

Self-leadership should also incorporate typical African values and beliefs (Mbigi, 2005). All-inclusive self-leadership is one of the pillars required for a positive leadership identity tailored for women leaders in an African context to address African problems in organisations and family setups.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The outcome of the comprehensively integrated framework, which encompasses the 3Cs, namely, Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital and Institutional Capital, can lead to the formation of a positive leadership identity and improve women leaders' leadership skills. It includes sound decision-making and social and emotional skills to assist women in building sustainable, valuable relationships with their counterparts and within their organisations. Most importantly, women leaders will be better positioned to balance work and family life and be better skilled in managing conflict caused by intersectionality issues.

Chapter 7 will conclude the study by summarising the theoretical and practical contributions of the study.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

> *If you want to lift the performance of the organisation, you have to lift yourself…my message to my team was always meet the bar, and that bar will constantly be moved* — Indra Nooyi.

The final chapter provides an overview and conclusion to the research question:

How can a leadership coaching framework that integrates intersectionality, women leadership, work-life balance (WLB) and psychological capital be conceptualised?

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim was to develop a positive leadership identity formation (PLIF) framework for women leaders to overcome barriers caused by intersectionality and WLB. This chapter presents the concluding remarks and discusses the theoretical and empirical objectives for reaching the research aim and answering the research question.

Table 7.1 summarises the chapters and accompanying theoretical objectives (TOs) that served as the theoretical framework for developing the positive leadership identity formation framework for women leaders.

Table 7. 1 Chapters with accompanying Theoretical objectives

CHAPTERS	THEORETICAL OBJECTIVES
Chapter 1: Orientation to the research.	The research was contextualised within a phenomenological relativist paradigm. Subjective reality played a role in understanding the participant's perceptions regarding the phenomenon supported by an interpretive constructivist epistemology.
Chapter 2: Discussed literature concepts and theories on feminism, intersectionality, women leadership, and WLB.	TO1: To describe the concepts and theories of intersectionality, feminism and work-life balance as they relate to women's leadership.

Chapter 3: Explored selected concepts from positive psychology (PP), including psychological capital (PsyCap) theory that developed from social and human studies to foster an idea of a life worth living.	TO2: To describe selected concepts from positive psychology as the theoretical paradigm of the study. TO3: To formulate propositions and a preliminary conceptual framework based on the theoretical paradigm.

Table 7.2 offers an overview of the chapters and accompanying empirical objectives (EOs) that informed the construction of a positive leadership identity formation framework.

Table 7. 2 Chapters with accompanying Empirical objectives

CHAPTERS	EMPIRICAL OBJECTIVES
Chapter 4: Research design and methodology	A qualitative sequential multi-method research design was used to collect data via personal in-depth interviews and a mini focus group discussion. Research data were analysed and interpreted using thematic content analysis. The research was framed within a dynamic social structure that created the observable within a socially biased world, cultural experiences, and upbringing to understand social reality.
Chapter 5: Empirical research findings were coded into categories and themes. Five categories with their themes emerged: gender, societal perceptions and their influence on women leadership, racial bias and	EO1: To explore how the intersection of gender, race and class influences the experiences of women leaders in managing their work and family life.

its influence on women leadership, social class and its influence on women leadership, intergenerational dynamics, and conquering intersectionality and work-life challenges. A discussion on psychological capital illustrated how women leaders could apply these to assist them in managing intersectionality and WLB.	EO2: To explore women leaders' experiences of managing and overcoming challenges of leadership and intersectionality. EO3: To explore the sociocultural practices that influence the experiences of women leaders in South Africa. EO4: To explore the behaviours women leaders use to overcome the barriers they experience in progressing as leaders within the impact of psychological capital.
Chapter 6: Constructing a Positive Leadership Identity Formation Framework for women leaders towards overcoming barriers of intersectionality and WLB.	EO5: To construct a leadership framework that can be applied to support women leaders in overcoming the barriers of intersectionality and WLB.

7.2 DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL OBJECTIVES

The discussion in this section includes the theoretical background for developing the conceptual framework (Chapters 2 and 3).

The theoretical objectives (TOs) were formulated as follows.

TO1: *To describe concepts and theories of intersectionality, feminism and work-life balance as they relate to women's leadership*

Theories on feminism informing intersectionality, intersectional power, and social identity were discussed relating to women leadership, organisational culture and policy, and work-life balance. Literature on women leadership coaching, such as strength-based and narrative coaching, was studied to gain insight towards constructing a supportive coaching framework. Therefore, TO1 could be attained.

TO2: *To describe selected concepts from positive psychology as the theoretical paradigm of the study.*

A review of the history of positive psychology (PP), which developed from social and human studies, was conducted to reach the specific objective. PP aims to help individuals and communities discover what factors could make them thrive, fostering the idea of a life worth living. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) concepts and their role in supporting the lived intersectional experiences of women leaders and their work and family life were discussed, and the objective was reached.

TO3*: To formulate propositions and a preliminary conceptual framework based on the theoretical paradigm.*

A discussion of Psychological Capital concepts, hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy contributed to the formulation of three propositions:

P1: *Psychological capital (hope, optimism, and resilience) contributes to women leaders' work-life balance*.

P2: *Structural factors influence the relationship between WLB and effective women leadership*.

P3: *Self-esteem enhances effective women leadership*.

These propositions, the literature, and the theoretical paradigm contributed to developing a conceptual framework, as presented in Figure 3.1. Therefore, the theoretical objective was reached.

7.2.1 Theoretical contributions

The study's unique theoretical contribution is the integration of different theories of feminism, intersectionality, women leadership coaching, WLB and self-leadership within Positive Psychology and a Psychological Capital conceptual framework. In addition, the framework is customised within a geo-political African and social context. This framework interfaces work relationships and family life for women leaders and the impact of different social identities within an intersectional paradigm. The positive leadership framework contributes towards a theory of understanding the overcoming of barriers of intersectionality in the career progression of women.

Existing leadership studies have focused on one or two diverse theories, ignoring the effects of multiple intersecting traits and concepts. Specifically, self-leadership as a theoretical construct was introduced and integrated in a new framework. The study used multiple theories to explore the intersection of social and female leader identities in different contexts. The framework could be used by organisations or individual women leaders to traverse hostile environments, especially while women still face societal stereotyping in the home and work environment. The framework could also contribute towards addressing barriers of intersectionality and empowering women in all aspects of work and society.

This framework expands scholarly contributions in the research field, more specifically, contributing towards developing a women's leadership framework by:

- Enhancing insights into the lived experiences of women struggling to overcome intersectional barriers.
- Exposing the systematic marginalisation of women in organisations.
- Demonstrating the continuous societal prejudices and patriarchal practices still faced by women leaders.
- Conceptualising the dynamic interrelatedness, interdependence and holistic connectedness between women leadership, intersectionality and organisational culture.
- Expanding on feminists and psychological capital theories, specifically:
    - Feminist theories underpinning intersectionality and the experience of marginalisation preventing women leadership.
    - Reviewing the importance of gender-related dynamics using an intersectional lens.
    - Describing an individual's positive psychological resources and how they can be developed to enhance well-being and performance.
    - Discussing self-leadership within an African spirit.

7.2.2 Theoretical limitations

The literature review focused on women leaders, excluding male leaders from the study. Theories relating to organisational performance, job satisfaction and also appreciate inquiry were not included in this study.

7.2.3 Recommendations for future theoretical research

Although research on women's leadership has increased over the years, the integration of different theories has been relatively scarce. Therefore, there is still a need to expand on the dynamics of women's leadership, intersectionality and WLB. For example, leadership efficacy and how it can impact across a broad range of organisational contexts and domains of interest could be included.

Appreciative inquiry as a theoretical paradigm could be considered in future studies as it entails a positive approach towards change and overcoming barriers towards a person's life goals.

7.3 DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL OBJECTIVES

The empirical research mainly focused on constructing a positive leadership identity framework for women leaders to overcome the barriers of intersectionality and WLB (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

Empirical Objectives (EOs) and their research outcomes are discussed as follows.

EO*1: To explore how the intersection of gender, race, and class influences the experiences of women leaders in managing their work and family life*

The objective was met by interviewing women leaders from different racial groups at the management and executive levels. The research highlighted issues related to gender and societal perceptions and their influence on women leadership. The identified themes were supportive family relationships during childhood, gender inequality, societal stereotyping, and equal education opportunities.

EO2*: To explore women leaders' experiences of managing and overcoming challenges of leadership and intersectionality*

Interviews were conducted with women leaders, identifying themes of gender and racial prejudices such as being stuck below the glass ceiling, unfair discriminative practices, lack of recognition of skills and capabilities and race and work-life balance. Thus, the theoretical objective was met.

EO3*: To explore the sociocultural practices that influence the experiences of women leaders in South Africa*

To meet this objective, interviews were held with women of different socio-cultural backgrounds and the impact of social class and its influence on women leadership. Themes aligned to this objective were leadership barriers informed by societal bias, patriarchal practices entrenched in organisations, organisational inequality and women's parenting when building a career. The objective was reached.

EO4*: Explore the behaviours women leaders use to overcome the barriers they experience to progress as leaders within the impact of psychological capital*

Women leaders were interviewed about how they survive despite the barriers they face in advancing their careers and building a family life. They indicated they developed positive traits to sustain them. Those positive experiences were linked to resilience, self-esteem, feelings of hope and a good work ethic. Three themes emerged from the coded data: positive work experiences towards leadership development, learned resourcefulness—positive individual traits, and positive institutional practices. Therefore, the empirical objective was fulfilled.

EO5*: To construct a leadership framework that can be applied to support women leaders in overcoming the barriers of intersectionality and WLB.*

To achieve this objective, women leaders were interviewed in two phases; the first phase involved personal online interviews with 12 women leaders to understand their lived experiences and how they overcame the barriers posed by intersectionality and challenges of managing WLB.

The second phase included an online mini focus group interview with five subject matter experts in the industrial psychology field to confirm the Phase 1 findings and gain more insight into what solutions these experts recommend informing the final leadership framework. Findings from the two phases were integrated and triangulated to construct the final positive leadership identity framework embedded in the study’s theoretical paradigm and empirical research findings.

7.3.1 Empirical contributions

The Positive leadership identity formation (PLIF) framework is viewed as a unique contribution to scholarly research in the positive psychology field. It differs from existing scholarly work due to the inclusion of intersectionality, gender and work-life balance of women leaders and offering a solution to the business problem. The focus on overcoming the barriers of intersectionality and work-life balance challenges provided a new perspective for women leaders. It integrates theories and concepts of intersectionality, feminism, women leadership, WLB and self-leadership with the empirical findings to construct a positive leadership identity formation framework. Existing scholarly works have not integrated these theories into one framework to assist women leaders in overcoming the challenges brought by work and family life. Furthermore, the framework can not only develop women leaders but also provide them with a tool for overcoming barriers of intersectionality by integrating a new leader identity with other relevant valued identities.

Despite existing leadership frameworks, the PLIF framework is an approach for women leaders in their roles as caregivers and career women. This framework can be used as a consulting instrument to provide structured leadership development support for women leaders with a broad knowledge of integrated theories.

The contribution of the PLIF framework is evident in the fact that it integrates three main PP concepts, namely Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital and Institutional Capital (3Cs), as the foundation for developing women leaders' identities based on their lived experiences and theories. The framework is embedded in sociocultural and institutional constraints to empower women to overcome barriers that generally prevent them in a traditionally male-dominated working environment. The 3Cs are aligned with these constraints to provide women leaders with a fit-for-purpose leadership identity formation framework.

This study also discusses the concept of self-leadership linked to intrapersonal capital in the African context, acknowledging African leaders' unique challenges. With its controversial issues, continuous changes, and difficulties, African history remains a typical life event to which African people need to adapt (Van Zyl, 2012). Therefore, the framework integrates different concepts, including intersectionality, feminism, and

WLB encompassing self-leadership within an African perspective to embody intrapersonal and institutional capital concepts.

The PLIF framework presents a unique, practical method of coping with ever-changing, demanding organisations as it is customised to the lived challenges faced by women leaders. It provides a practical approach to overcoming barriers of intersectionality. Notably, women leaders confirmed that traits of self-leadership, including behavioural-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought strategies, underline the importance of self-leadership and innovative behaviour at work pivotal to empowering them to sustain their demanding career and family life.

The consensus is that an approach to women leadership development should be holistic, encompassing different aspects, namely, the 3Cs, Intrapersonal Capital, Interpersonal Capital and Institutional Capital, which led to the positive leadership identity formation framework. When applied in the work environment, it could result in high-achieving African organisations with the most favourable outcomes, particularly in African living and working conditions.

7.3.2 Empirical limitations

The study was based on personal online interviews and an online mini focus group interview with women leaders through an open-ended interview guide. After gaining more experience and knowledge, some questions could have been more structured and focused on collecting specific information regarding the research phenomenon. A quantitative methodology could perhaps add a different perspective to the research. The exclusion of male participants might have limited the study as their lived experiences could enhance future women leadership frameworks.

7.3.3 Empirical recommendations

A cross-sectional study was conducted to research several functional characteristics within a limited period from which the PLIF framework was constructed. The recommendation is that a longitudinal study be performed using the PLIF to observe whether there was a change in the women leaders' organisational status and WLB. Future research could also include the development of a measuring instrument in a quantitative research design based on the PLIF.

Future research could also consider including male leaders as participants in the study to gather their lived experiences with the rapid changes brought by regulations that seem to empower women.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The Positive leadership identity formation framework was constructed on three central positive psychology concepts: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Institutional capital as interdependent variables. Aspects within these categories need to be optimally integrated to create a conducive environment for women leaders to overcome barriers of intersectionality and WLB. While women leaders may adopt self-leadership to progress in their careers, institutional support should also be practised to change the dismal picture of women's representation in senior and top management positions depicted throughout this study.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM

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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

18 September

Ref#: 2020_SBL_DBL_019 _FA

Name of applicant:

Dear Ms Seopela

[Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Ms B Seopela, (bolediseooela@gmail.com , 083 774 6203)

Supervisor: Prof PP Mnguni, (mnaunoo@unisa.ac.za , 011652 0374)

Project Title: Women Leaders, Work-Life Balance: An Intersectional Perspective

Qualification: Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL)

Expiry Date: October 2022

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 for t e duration of the Project

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 17/09/2020

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

45 Building leaders who go beyond

SBL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP UNISA

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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.

Prof R Ramphal
Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee

011 - 652 0363 or ramohrr@unlsa.ac.za

Msweli

Prof P
Executive Dean (Acting): Graduate School of Business Leadership

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APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INVITATION

INTERVIEW INVITE

RESEARCH TOPIC: POSITIVE LEADERSHIP IDENTITY FORMATION FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN LEADERS TOWARDS OVERCOMING INTERSECTIONALITY

I am a doctoral student registered at UNISA School of Business Leadership (SBL). I am conducting research entitled*: "***Women Leaders, Work-Life Balance: An Intersectional Perspective**". This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how women leaders experience work-life balance and subsequently develop a conceptual framework that demonstrates the multifaceted nature of WLB.

As a woman leader in South Africa, you are requested to participate in this research study as part of the completion of my PhD.

Your confidentiality will be protected in that we will allocate numbers instead of your real identity.

Your support is highly appreciated and will go a long way in helping me to complete my study.

_____ _____

Boledi Seopela Date:

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

RESEARCH TOPIC: Women Leaders, Work-Life Balance: An Intersectional Perspective

Student number: 70437165

Boledi Seopela
Thesis
Doctor of Business Leadership
University of South Africa (UNISA)
Promoter: Prof. Sanchen Henning

Date, time and venue: **Number of Participant:**
Gender and race of participants:
Management experience and qualifications:
Position of the participant in the organisation:

Introduction and Preliminaries:

i. Good day, and welcome. My name is Boledi Seopela. I am a doctoral student registered at UNISA School of Business Leadership (SBL). I am conducting research entitled*: "***Women Leaders, Work-Life Balance: An Intersectional Perspective**". This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how women leaders experience work-life balance and subsequently develop a conceptual framework that demonstrates the multifaceted nature of WLB.
ii. Thank you for accepting to do this interview with me. Your support is highly appreciated and will go a long way in helping me to complete my study.
iii. Please feel at ease and free to express your thoughts regarding the issues to be discussed in this interview.
iv. Please note that the interview will take approximately 40 minutes to 1 hour and will be, *with your permission,* audio recorded.

Section 1: Early Life Experiences, Family and School Life

- Q1. As a woman leader today, how did your childhood background shape the leader that you are currently? **Obj.1**
- Q2. How would you describe your family background and its influence on your career choice? Was gender an issue**? Obj.1**
- Q3. How have your family background and childhood experience informed your perceptions and experience of Work-Life Balance (WLB)? **Obj. 2**

Section 2: Work-Life Balance Experience (Organisational and Society)

In this part of the interview, I would like to know more about your professional life and the balance with your family life.

External and Internal factors influencing professional and personal life.

- Q5. What has been your top 3 career highlights? Why do you regard them as such? **Obj.1**
- Q6. Describe how identities such as race, gender and class inhibit your performance as a Woman leader. **Obj. 1 and 2**
- Q7. What has been your greatest challenge as a woman leader? How has race or gender played a role? **Obj 1 and 2**
- Q.8 As a woman leader, describe how a balanced work and family life facilitates a positive work environment. **Obj.2**
- Q9. How has starting a family affected your career path and journey? Were you expected to make some compromises?
- Q10. Describe to what extent intersectional social identities, i.e. race, gender, class, influence your WLB experiences as a woman leader in an organisation. **Obj.4**
- Q.11. To what extent do you think race, gender and class influence your management style? **Obj.1**
- Q12. Describe the impact organisations and society have on working women and the different standards displayed, especially in leadership positions. What has been your personal experience? **Obj.4**

Focus on your experience as a Woman Leader and Organisational Dynamics

- Q13. How would you describe what is considered a 'boys club' or glass ceiling for women leaders? What has been your experience in this regard**? Obj.2**
- Q14. With young women leaders emerging, do you think there is a different expectation (standard) for them as opposed to the previous generations? How, describe **Obj.3**

Organisational Experience:

- Q15. What is your view of the current work environment? Does it encourage women to start families and realise WLB? Especially women in leadership roles and young women? **Obj. 1 and 2**
- Q16. With our history as a country, women are still at the lowest on the pyramid. What do you think is the biggest problem? **Obj.1 and 2**
- Q17. As a female leader in South Africa, are there still barriers or enablers to achieving WLB in organisations and society? Describe your experience. **Obj. 4**
- Q18 What would you recommend as practical guidelines to alleviate gender-related constraints and under-representation at the senior management level for women? **Obj.2**

Positive Psychology Concepts:

- Q19. Describe how feelings of hope empower women leaders to overcome the challenges of intersectional identities.
- Q20.How does a healthy self-esteem enhance the ability of women leaders to overcome the challenges of intersectional identities?
- Q21. How does resilience enhance the ability of women leaders to overcome the challenges of intersectional identities?
- Q22. How does resilience facilitate Work-Life Balance for women in leadership positions?

In closing, on a personal note, in hindsight, what are some of the things (choices) you would have done differently both in your career and personal life?

Do you have anything more to share? Any final thoughts or questions?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCES.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Background

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, you must understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if anything is unclear or need more information.

The purpose of this study

To gather information from women leaders across South Africa about work-life balance. The researcher will gain an in-depth understanding of how participants experience work-life balance and subsequently develop a conceptual framework that demonstrates the multifaceted nature of WLB.

Risk

The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to others. You may decline to answer any or all questions and terminate your involvement at any time during the study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to participate in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After deciding to participate in this study, you will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving any reason. You are further free not to answer any question(s). This will not affect the relationship with the researcher.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you for participation in this study. However, the researcher hopes that the study might make it possible for employees to be good workers and caregivers,

help employers retain the best employees loyal to the organisation, and build families and societies. It will also assist in establishing a framework and strategies that will inform the establishment of gender-sensitive policies and programs.

Alternative Procedures

If you decide not to be in the study, you may choose not to participate.

Recording of Interviews

I am asking you to permit me to tape-record the interview to accurately record what is said to improve my data analysis.

Confidentiality/Privacy

Your responses will be kept anonymous. Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one can connect you to the answers you give. The data will be kept strictly confidential.

Costs to subject

There are no costs to you for your participation in this study.

Compensation

There is no monetary compensation to you for your participation in this study.

By signing this consent form, I _____ confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I

voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____/_____/2019

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN